

lifeinthemix

The Medici

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Most readers here would be aware this was the last Encyclopaedia Britannica published before the Rockefellers bought it out.

MEDICI. This family is renowned in Italian history for the extraordinary number of statesmen to whom it gave birth, and for its magnificent patronage of letters and art, It emerged from private life and rose to power by means of a very subtle policy that was persistently pursued from generation to generation. The origin of the family is buried in obscurity. Some court historians indeed declare it to have been founded by Perseus, and assert that Benvenuto Cellini's bronze Perseus holding on high the head of Medusa was executed and placed in the Loggia dei Lanzi to symbolise the victory of the Medici over the republic. But this only proves that the real origin of the family is unknown, and equally unknown is the precise signification of the Medicean arms, six red balls on a field of gold.

The name appears in Florentine chronicles as early as the close of the 12th century, although only casually mentioned in connection with various offices of the republic. The first of the family to be a distinct figure in history was Salvestro dei Medici, who, in the year 1378, took an active part in the revolt of the Ciompi so-called because it was led by a wool-carder (ciompo), one Michele di Lando, and because the chief share in it was taken by the populace, who held the reins of government for some time, and sought to obtain extended political rights.

But, although Michele di Lando was the nominal chief of the revolt, Salvestro dei Medici was its real leader. The latter, although a member of the greater guilds, had joined the lesser and sought to be at their head, in order to lay the foundation of his own power and that of his kindred by attacking the Albizzi, who were the leading men of the greater guilds.

The victory of the Ciompi, however, was brief, for the excesses of the lower classes brought about a reaction, in which they were crushed, and Michele di Lando sent into banishment. Nevertheless the lesser guilds had gained some ground by this riot, and Salvestro dei Medici the great popularity at which he had aimed. His policy during that period had traced the sole possible road to power in liberty-loving Florence. And this was the road henceforth pursued by the Medici.

On Salvestro's death in 1388 the Albizzi repossessed themselves of the government, and conducted the wars of the republic. Vieri dei Medici, who seems to have been the next head of the family, understanding the temper of the times, abstained from becoming a popular leader, and left it to his successors to prosecute the task under easier conditions.

Then, in the person of Giovanni, son of Bicci dei Medici (1360-1429), another branch of the family arose, and became from that time forward its representative branch. Indeed this Giovanni may be considered the actual founder of Medicean greatness. He took little part in political affairs, but realised an immense fortune by trade, establishing banks in Italy and abroad, which in his successors' hands became the most efficient engines of political power. The council of Constance (1414-1418) enabled Giovanni dei Medici to realise enormous profits.

Besides, like his ancestor Salvestro, he was a constant supporter of the lesser guilds in Florence. Historians record his frequent resistance to the Albizzi when they sought to oppress the people with heavier taxation, and his endeavours to cause the chief weight to fall upon the richer classes. For this reason he was in favour of the so-called law of *catasto*, which, by assessing the property of every citizen, prevented those in power from arbitrarily imposing taxes that unjustly burdened the people. In this way, and by liberal loans of money to all who were in need of it, he gained a reputation that was practically the foundation-stone of the grand family edifice.

Giovanni dei Medici died in 1429 leaving two sons, Cosimo (1389-1464) and Lorenzo (1395-1440). From the former proceeded the branch that held absolute sway for many generations over the nominal republic of Florence, and gave to Italy popes like Leo X. and Clement VII. On the extinction of this elder line in the 16th century, the younger branch derived from Lorenzo, Cosimo's brother, seemed to acquire new life, and for two centuries supplied grand-dukes to Tuscany. Cosimo, surnamed Cosimo the Elder, to distinguish him from the many others bearing the same name, and honoured after his death by the title of *Pater patriae*, first succeeded in solving the strange problem of becoming absolute ruler of a republic that was keenly jealous of its liberty, without holding any fixed office, without suppressing any previous form of government, and always preserving the appearance and demeanour of a private citizen.

Born in 1389, he had already reached the age of forty at the time of his father's death. He had a certain amount of literary culture,

and throughout his life showed much taste and an earnest love both for letters and art. But his father had mainly trained him to commerce, for which he had a special liking and aptitude. In fact he was devoted to business to the day of his death, and like his forefathers derived pecuniary advantage from his friendly relations with the papal court. He accompanied Pope John XXIII to the council of Constance, transacted a vast amount of business in that city, and made very large gains. He then travelled in Germany, and after his return to Florence discharged several ambassadorial missions.

At the death of his father he was possessed of a vast fortune and an extended experience, and inherited the leadership of the opposition to the then dominant party of the greater guilds headed by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, Palla Strozzi, and Niccolò da Uzzano. Of gentle and kindly manners, generous in lending and even in giving money whenever he could gain popularity by that means, at critical moments he frequently came to the succour of the Government itself. He was very dexterous in turning his private liberalities to account for the increase of his political prestige, and showed no less acumen and still fewer scruples in making use of his political prestige for purposes of pecuniary profit. Indeed, whenever his own interests were at stake, he showed himself capable of positive villainy, although this was always tempered by calculation.

Cosimo proved his skill in these knavish arts during the war between Florence and Lucca. He had joined the Albizzi in urging on this war, and many writers assert that he turned it to much pecuniary advantage by means of loans to the Government and other banking operations. When, however, military affairs went badly, Cosimo joined the discontented populace in invectives against the war and those who had conducted it. This won him an enormous increase of popularity, but the hatred of the Albizzi and their friends augmented in equal degree, and a conflict became inevitable.

The Albizzi, who were far more impetuous and impatient than Cosimo, were now bent upon revenge. In 1433 one of their own friends, Bernardo Guadagni, was elected gonfalonier, and thereupon Cosimo dei Medici was called to the palace and summarily imprisoned in the tower. A general assembly of the people was convoked and a *balia* chosen, which changed the Government and sent Cosimo into exile. Undoubtedly the Albizzi party would have preferred a heavier sentence, but they did not dare to attempt their enemy's life, being well aware of the great number of his adherents. Cosimo had some apprehension that

he might be poisoned in prison, but Federigo dei Malavolti, captain of the palace guard, showed him the utmost kindness, and, in order to soothe his fears, voluntarily shared his meals. On the 3d October the prisoner was sent to Padua, his allotted place of exile.

The Albizzi speedily saw that they had done either too much or too little. While seeking to keep the government entirely in their own hands, they beheld the continual growth of the Medici party. When it was necessary to make a campaign in Romagna against the mercenary captains commanding the forces of the duke of Milan, it was plainly seen that in banishing Cosimo the republic had lost the only citizen banker in a position to assist it with considerable loans. The Florentines were defeated by Piccinino in 1434, and this event greatly increased the public exasperation against the Albizzi.

Meanwhile Cosimo, who had gone to Padua as a private individual, was entertained there like a prince. Then, being permitted to transfer his residence to Venice, he entered on a course of lavish expenditure. He was overwhelmed with letters and appeals from Florence. Finally, on the 1st of September 1434, a signory was elected composed of his friends, and his recall was decreed. Rinaldo degli Albizzi determined to oppose it by force, and rushed to the Piazza with a band of armed men; but his attempt failed, and he left the country to return no more. The Medici were now reinstated in all their former dignities and honours, and Cosimo, on the evening of September 6th, rode past the deserted mansions of the Albizzi and re-entered his own dwelling after an exile of a year. For three centuries, dating from that moment, the whole history of Florence was connected with that of the house of Medici.

Cosimo's first thought was to secure himself against all future risk of removal from Florence, and accordingly he drove the most powerful citizens into exile to all parts of Italy. Nor did he spare even his former political adversary, Palla Strozzi, although the latter had been favourable to him during the recent changes. His rigour in this particular case was universally censured, but Cosimo would tolerate no rivals in the city, and was resolved to abase time great families and establish his power by the support of the lower classes. He was accustomed to say that states could not be ruled by paternosters. Still, when cruelty seemed requisite, he always contrived that the chief odium of it should fall upon others.

When Neri Capponi, the valiant soldier and able diplomatist, gained great public favour by his military prowess, and his influence was further increased by the friendship of Baldaccio d'Anghiari, captain of the infantry, Cosimo resolved to weaken his position by indirect means.

Accordingly, when in 1441 a partisan of the Medici was elected gonfalonier, Baldaccio was instantly summoned to the palace, imprisoned, murdered, and his body hurled from the window. No one could actually fix this crime upon Cosimo, but the majority believed that he had thus contrived to rid himself of one enemy and cripple another without showing his hand.

It was impossible for Cosimo openly to assume the position of tyrant of Florence, nor was it worth his while to become gonfalonier, since the term of office only lasted two months. It was necessary to discover some other way without resorting to violence ; he accordingly employed what were then designated civil methods.

He managed to attain his object by means of the *balia*. These magistracies, which were generally renewed every five years, placed in the ballot bags the names of the candidates from whom the signory and other chief magistrates were to be chosen. As soon as a *balia* favourable to Cosimo was formed, he was assured for five years of having the government in the hands of men devoted to his interests. He had comprehended that the art of politics depended rather upon individuals than institutions, and that he who ruled men could also dictate laws.

His foreign policy was no less astute. His great wealth enabled him to supply money not only to private individuals, but even to foreign potentates. Philippe de Comines tells us that Cosimo frequently furnished Edward IV of England with sums amounting to many hundred thousand florins. When Tommaso Parentucelli was still a cardinal, and in needy circumstances, Cosimo made him considerable loans without demanding guarantees of payment. On the cardinal's accession to the tiara as Nicholas V. he was naturally very well disposed towards Cosimo, and employed the Medici bank in Rome in all the affairs of the curia, which brought immense profits to the house.

At the time when Francesco Sforza was striving for the lordship of Milan, Cosimo foresaw his approaching triumph, showed him great friendship, and aided him with large sums of money. Accordingly, when Sforza became lord of Milan, Cosimo's power was doubled.

Without the title of prince, this merchant showed royal generosity in his expenditure for the promotion of letters and the fine arts. Numerous edifices were raised and public works accomplished with his purse. Besides his palace in the city, he constructed noble villas at Careggi, Fiesole, and other places. He built the basilica of Fiesole, and that of St Lorenzo in Florence, and enlarged the church and monastery of St Mark. Even in distant Jerusalem he endowed a hospice for the use of pilgrims.

The artists of the day comprised men like Donatello, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Luca della Robbia, and many others, and Cosimo's magnificent commissions not only developed their powers but stimulated other men of wealth to the patronage of art.

Without being a scholar, Cosimo had a genuine taste for letters, and gave them much and efficient patronage. He purchased many Greek and Latin manuscripts; he opened the first public library at St Mark's at his own expense, and founded another in the abbey of Fiesole. The Greek refugees from Constantinople found a constant welcome in his palace. During the council of Florence (1439-1442), Gemisthus Pletho spoke to him with enthusiasm of the Platonic philosophy. Cosimo was so deeply attracted by the theme that he decided to have the young Marsilio Ficino trained in philosophy and Greek learning in order to make a Latin translation of the complete works of Plato. And thus a version was produced that is still considered one of the best extant, and that Platonic academy was founded which led to such important results in the history of Italian philosophy and letters. On the 1st of August 1464 Cosimo breathed his last, at the age of seventy-five, while engaged in listening to one of Plato's dialogues.

The concluding years of his life had been years of little happiness for Florence. Being old and infirm, he had left the government to the management of his friends, among whom Luca Pitti was one of the more powerful, and they had ruled with disorder, corruption, amid cruelty.

The lordship of Florence accordingly did not pass without some difficulty and danger into the hands of Piero, surnamed the Gouty, Cosimo's only surviving legitimate son. Afflicted by gout, and so terribly crippled that he was often only able to use his tongue, the new ruler soon discovered that a plot was on foot to overthrow his power.

However, showing far more courage than he was supposed to possess, he had himself borne on a litter from his villa to Florence, defeated his enemies' designs, and firmly re-

established his authority. But his success may be mainly attributed to the enormous prestige bequeathed by Cosimo to his Posterity.

Piero died at the end of five years reign, on the 31 December 1469, leaving two sons, Lorenzo (1449-92) and Giuliano (1453-78). The younger, the gentler and less ambitious of the pair, was, as we shall presently see, quickly removed from the world. Lorenzo, on the contrary, at once seized the reins of state with a firm grasp, and was, chronologically, the second of the great men bestowed upon Italy by the house of Medici.

In literary talent he was immensely superior to Cosimo, but greatly his inferior in the conduct of the commercial affairs of the house, for which he had neither aptitude nor inclination. In politics he had nobler conceptions and higher ambitions, but he was more easily carried away by his passions, less prudent in his revenge, and more disposed to tyranny. He had studied letters from his earliest years under the guidance of Ficino and other leading literati of the day, who were constant habitues of the Medici palace. At the age of eighteen he visited the different courts of Italy in order to gain experience of the world and mankind.

At his father's death he was only twenty-one years old, but instantly showed his determination to govern Florence with greater despotism than his father or grandfather. He speedily resorted to the system of the *balia*, and was very dexterous in causing the first to be chosen to suit his Purpose. He then proceeded to humiliate the great families and exalt those of little account, and this was the policy he constantly pursued. His younger brother Giuliano, being of a mild and yielding disposition, had only a nominal share in the government. Lorenzo's policy was not exempt from danger, but, although prosecuted with less caution, it was still the old astute and fortunate policy initiated by Cosimo.

But the grandson bestowed no care upon his commercial interests, although squandering his fortune with far greater lavishness. Accordingly he was sometimes driven to help himself from the public purse without ever being able to assist it as Cosimo had done. All this excited blame and enmity against him, while his greed in the matter of the alum mines of Volterra, and the subsequent sack of that unhappy city, were crimes for which there was no excuse.

Among his worst enemies were the Pazzi, and, as they formed a very powerful clan, he sought their ruin by competing with them

even in business transactions. They were just on the point of inheriting the large property of Giovanni Borromeo when, in order to prevent this, Lorenzo hurriedly caused a law to be passed that altered the right of succession. The hatred of the Pazzi was thereby exasperated to fury.

And in addition to these things there ensued a desperate quarrel with Pope Sixtus IV., a man of very impetuous temper, who, on endeavouring to erect a state on the frontiers of the Florentine republic for the benefit of his nephews, found a determined and successful opponent in Lorenzo. Consequently the Pazzi and Archbishop Salviati, another enemy of Lorenzo, aided by the nephews of the pontiff, who was himself acquainted with the whole matter, determined to put an end to the family.

On the 26th April 1478, while Giuliano and Lorenzo were attending high mass in the cathedral of Florence, the former was mortally stabbed by conspirators, but the latter was able to beat back his assailants and escape into the sacristy. His life saved; and, no longer having to share the government with a brother, Lorenzo profited by the opportunity to wreak cruel vengeance upon his foes.

Several of the Pazzi and their followers were hanged from the palace windows; others were hacked to pieces, dragged through the streets, and cast into the Arno, while a great many more were condemned to death or sent into exile. Lorenzo seemed willing and able to become a tyrant. But he stopped short of this point. He knew the temper of the city, and had also to look to fresh dangers threatening him from without. The pope had excommunicated him, put Florence under an interdict, and, being seconded by the Neapolitan king, made furious war against the republic.

These hostilities speedily assumed alarming proportions, and the Florentines began to tire of submitting to so many hardships in order to support the yoke of a fellow-citizen. Lorenzo's hold over Florence seemed endangered. But he did not lose heart, and, on the contrary, rose superior to the difficulties by which he was encompassed.

He boldly journeyed to Naples, to the court of King Ferdinand of Aragon, who was reputed to be as treacherous as he was cruel, and succeeded in obtaining from him an honourable peace, that soon led to a reconciliation with Sixtus. Thus at last Lorenzo found himself complete master of Florence, and was in a position to turn his power to account. But, as the *balia* changed every five years, it was always requisite, in order to retain his

supremacy, that he should be prepared to renew the usual manoeuvre at the close of that term and have another elected equally favourable to his aims. This was often a difficult achievement, and Lorenzo showed much dexterity in overcoming all obstacles.

In 1480 he compassed the institution of a new council of seventy, which was practically a permanent *balia* with extended powers, inasmuch as it not only elected the chief magistrates, but had also the administration of numerous state affairs. But, this permanent council of his own devoted adherents once formed, his security was firmly established. By this means, the chroniclers tell us,

liberty was buried, but the chief affairs of the state were always conducted by intelligent and experienced men, who promoted the public prosperity. Florence was still called a republic; the old institutions were still preserved, if only in name.

Lorenzo was absolute lord of all, and virtually a tyrant. His immorality was scandalous; he kept an army of spies, and frequently meddled in the citizens most private affairs, and exalted men of the lowest condition to important offices of the state. Yet, as Guicciardini remark, if Florence was to have a tyrant, she could never have found a better or more pleasant one.

In fact all industry, commerce, and public works made enormous progress. The civil equality of modern states, which was quite unknown to the Middle Ages, was more developed in Florence than in any other city of the world. Even the condition of the peasantry was far more prosperous than elsewhere. And Lorenzo's authority was not confined to Tuscany, but was also very great throughout the whole of Italy.

He was on the friendliest terms with Pope Innocent VIII, from whom he obtained the exaltation of his son Giovanni to the cardinalate at the age of fourteen. This boy cardinal was afterwards Pope Leo X. From the moment of the decease of Sixtus IV, the union of Florence and Rome became the basis of Lorenzo's foreign policy. By its means he was able to prevent the hatreds and jealousies of the Sforzas of Milan and the Aragonese of Naples from bursting into the open conflict that long threatened, and after his death actually caused, the beginning of new and irreparable calamities. Hence Lorenzo was styled the needle of the Italian compass.

But the events we have narrated cannot suffice for the full comprehension of this complex character, unless we add the record of his deeds as a patron of letters and his achievements as a writer. His palace was the school and resort of illustrious men. Within its walls were trained the two young Medici afterwards known to the world as Leo X. and Clement VII. Ficino, Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola, and all members of the Platonic academy were its constant habitus. It was here that Pulci gave readings of his *Morgante*, and Michelangelo essayed the first strokes of his chisel.

Lorenzo's intellectual powers were of exceptional strength and versatility. He could speak with equal fluency on painting, sculpture, music, philosophy, and poetry. But his crowning superiority over every other Maecenas known to history lay in his active participation in the intellectual labours that he promoted. Indeed at certain moments he was positively the leading spirit among the literati of his time. He was an elegant prose writer, and was likewise a poet of real originality.

At that period Italians were forsaking erudition in order to forward the revival of the national literature by recurring to the primitive sources of the spoken tongue and popular verse. It is Lorenzo's lasting glory to have been the initiator of this movement. Without being as some have maintained a poet of genius, he was certainly a writer of much finish and eloquence, and one of the first to raise popular poetry to the dignity of art. In his *Ambra*, his *Caccia del Falcone*, and his *Nencia da Barberino*, he gives descriptions of nature and of the rural life that he loved, with the graphic power of an acute and tasteful observer, joined to an ease of style that occasionally sins by excess of homeliness. Both in his art and in his politics he leant upon the people.

The more oppressive his government, the more did he seek in his verses to incite the public to festivities and lull it to slumber by sensual enjoyments. In his *Ballate*, or songs for dancing, and more especially in his carnival songs, a kind of verse invented by himself, Lorenzo displayed all the best qualities and worst defects of his muse. Marvellously and spontaneously elegant, very truthful and fresh in style, fertile in fancy and rich in colour, they are often of a most revolting indecency. And these compositions of one filling a princely station in the city were often sung by their author in the public streets, in the midst of the populace.

Lorenzo left three sons, Pietro (1471-1503), Giovanni (1475-1521), and Giuliano (1479-1516).

He was succeeded by Pietro, whose rule lasted but for two years. During this brief term Pietro performed no good deeds, and only displayed inordinate vanity and frivolity.

His conduct greatly helped to foment the hatred between Lodovico Sforza and Ferdinand of Naples, which hastened the coming of the French under Charles VIII, and the renewal of foreign invasions. No sooner did the French approach the frontiers of Tuscany than Pietro, crazed with fear, hastened to meet them, and, basely yielding to every demand, accepted terms equally humiliating to himself and the state. But, returning to Florence, he found that the enraged citizens had already decreed his deposition, in order to reconstitute the republic, and was therefore compelled to escape to Venice. His various plots to reinstate himself in Florence were all unsuccessful. At last he went to the south of Italy with the French, was drowned at the passage of the Garigliano in 1503, and was buried in the cloister of Monte Cassino.

The ensuing period was averse to the Medici, for a republican government was maintained in Florence from 1494 to 1512, and the city remained faithful to its alliance with the French, who were all-powerful in Italy.

Cardinal Giovanni, the head of the family, resided in Rome, playing the patron to a circle of literati, artists, and friends, seeking to increase his popularity, and calmly waiting for better days. The battle of Ravenna wrought the downfall of the fortunes of France in Italy, and led to the rise of those of Spain, whose troops entered Florence to destroy the republic and reinstate the Medici.

Pietro had now been dead for some time, leaving a young son, Lorenzo (1492-1519), who was afterwards duke of Urbino. The following year (1513) Cardinal Giovanni was elected pope, and assumed the name of Leo X. He accordingly removed to Rome, leaving his brother Giuliano with his nephew Lorenzo in Florence, and accompanied by his cousin Giulio, who was a natural son of the Giuliano murdered in the conspiracy of the Pazzi, and was soon destined to be a cardinal and ultimately a pope. Meanwhile his kinsmen in Florence continued to govern that city by means of a *balia*, although preserving an empty show of republican institutions.

And thus, being masters of the whole of central Italy, the Medici enjoyed great authority throughout the country, and their ambition plumed itself for still higher flights. This was the moment when Niccol Machiavelli, in his treatise *The Prince*,

counselled them to accomplish the unity of Italy by arming the whole country, and expelling its foreign invaders.

Leo X., who is only indirectly connected with the history of Florence, gave his name to the age in which he lived in consequence of his magnificent patronage of art and letters in Rome. But he was merely a clever amateur, and had not the literary gifts of his father Lorenzo. He surrounded himself with versifiers and inferior writers, who enlivened his hoard and accompanied him wherever he went. He liked to lead a gay and untroubled life, was fond of theatrical performances, satires, and other intellectual diversions.

His patronage of the fine arts, his genuine affection for Raphael, and the numerous works he caused to be executed by him and other artists, have served to confer an exaggerated glory on his name.

He failed to comprehend the significance of the great religious movement already stirring in Germany, and had not the remotest idea of the grave importance of the Reformation, which indeed he unconsciously promoted by his reckless and shameless sale of indulgences. The whole policy of Pope Leo X. consisted in oscillating between France and Spain, in always playing fast and loose, and deceiving both powers in turn. Yet the evil results of this contemptible policy never seemed to disturb his mind. He finally joined the side of the emperor Charles V., and in 1521, at the time of the defeat of the French by the Spanish troops on the River Adda, he ceased to breathe at his favourite villa of Magliana.

Giuliano dei Medici had died during Leo's reign, in 1516, without having ever done anything worthy of record. He was the husband of Philiberta of Savoy, was duke of Nemours, and left a natural son, Ippolito dei Medici (1511-1535), who afterwards became a cardinal.

Lorenzo, being of more ambitious temper, was by no means content to remain at the head of the Florence Government hampered by many restrictions imposed by republican institutions, and subject to the incessant control of the pope.

In his eagerness to aggrandise his kinsmen, the latter had further decided to give Lorenzo the duchy of Urbino, and formally invested him in its rights, after expelling on false pretences its legitimate lord, Francesco Maria della Rovere. This prince, however, soon returned to Urbino, where he was joyously welcomed by his subjects, and Lorenzo regained possession only

by a war of several months, in which he was wounded. In 1519 he also died, worn out by disease and excess.

By his marriage with Madeleine de la Tour d Auvergne, he had one daughter, Caterina dei Medici (1519-89), married in 1533 to Henry, duke of Orleans, afterwards king of France. She played a long and sinister part in the history of that country.

Lorenzo also left a natural son named Alessandro, inheriting the frizzled hair and projecting lips of the negro or mulatto slave who had given him birth. His miserable death will be presently related. Thus the only three surviving representatives of the chief branch of the Medici, Cardinal Giulio, Ippolito, and Alessandro were all of illegitimate birth, and left no legitimate heirs.

Cardinal Giulio, who had laboured successfully for the reinstatement of his family in Florence in 1512, had been long attached to the person of Leo X. as his trusted factotum and companion, he had been generally regarded as the mentor of the pope, who had no liking for hard work. But in fact, his frivolity notwithstanding, Leo X. always followed his own inclinations. He had much aptitude for command, and pursued his shuffling policy without any mental anxiety. Giulio, on the contrary, shrank from all responsibility, muddled his brains in weighing the reasons for and against every possible decision, and was therefore a better tool of government in others hands than he was fit to govern on his own account.

When Giuliano and Lorenzo died, the pope appointed the cardinal to the government of Florence. In that post, restricted within the limits imposed by republican institutions, and acting under the continual direction of Rome, he performed his duties fairly well. He caressed the citizens with hopes of extended liberties, which, although never destined to be fulfilled, long served to keep men's minds in a pleasant flutter of expectation; and when the more impatient spirits attempted to raise a rebellion he speedily quenched it in blood. When, after the death of Leo X. and the very brief pontificate of Adrian VI, he was elected pope (1523) under the name of Clement VII, he entrusted the government of Florence to Cardinal Silvio Passerini conjointly with Alessandro and Ippolito, who were still too young to do much on their own account.

The pontificate of Leo X. had been a time of felicity to himself if of disaster to Italy and the church. The reign of Clement, on the contrary, was fatal to himself as well, a result chiefly due to his hesitating temper and continual uncertainty of mind. His policy,

like that of Leo X., consisted in perpetual oscillation between France and Spain. By his endeavours to trick all the world, he frequently ended in being tricked himself. In 1525 he was the ally of the French, who then suffered a terrible defeat at Pavia, where their king Francis I. was taken prisoner. The armies of Charles V. triumphantly advanced, without Clement being able to oppose any effectual resistance. Both Rome and Florence were threatened with a fearful catastrophe.

Thus far we have had no occasion to speak of the younger branch of the Medici, descended from Lorenzo, brother to Cosimo the Elder. Always in obscurity, and always held in check by the elder line, it now seemed to acquire new life, and first entered the arena of history when the other was on the point of extinction.

In fact the most valiant captain of the papal forces was Giovanni dei Medici, afterwards known by the name of Giovanni delle Bande Nere. His father was Giovanni, son of Pier Francesco, who was the son of Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo dei Medici. History has little to tell of the elder Giovanni; but his wife Caterina Sforza, of whom he was the third husband, was a woman of more than masculine vigour. Giovanni dei Medici married her in 1497, but died in 1493, leaving her with one son who was christened Lodovico, but afterwards took his father's name of Giovanni (1498 1526).

Trained to arms from his earliest years, this youth inherited all the energy of his mother, whose Sforza blood seemed to infuse new life into the younger branch of the Medici. Notwithstanding his extreme youth, he had already achieved the title of the best captain in Italy. He always fought with immense dash and daring, and was devotedly loved and obeyed by his soldiery. He was the only leader who opposed a determined resistance to the imperial forces. He was seriously wounded at Pavia when fighting on the French side.

On his recovery he joined the army of the League, and was much enraged by finding that the duke of Urbino, commander of the Venetian and papal forces, would never decide on attacking. When the imperial troops were struggling through the marshes of Mantua, surrounded on every side, and without stores or ammunition, Giovanni could not resign himself to inactivity like his colleagues in command. He was ignorant that the imperialists had just received supplies and artillery from the duke of Ferrara, and therefore daringly attacked them with a small body of men without taking any precautions for defence. One of the first shots fired by the enemy injured him so fatally that he died a few days

after. He was married to Maria Salviati, by whom he had one son, Cosimo (1519-1574), born, as we shall see, to lofty fortunes, for he became the first grand-duke of Tuscany, and indeed the founder of the grand-duchy and the new dynasty.

Meanwhile the imperial army pursued its march upon Rome, captured the Eternal City after a few hours combat, and cruelly sacked it during many days (1527). Thanks to his perpetual shuffling and excessive avarice, the pope found himself utterly forsaken, and, being unable to defend the city, was obliged to seek refuge in the castle of St Angelo, whence he only effected his escape after some months. He then signed a treaty of alliance with the emperor (1529), who sent an army to besiege Florence and restore the Medici, whom the people had expelled in 1527 on the re-establishment of the republic. After a heroic defence, the city was forced to surrender (1530); and, although it was expressly stipulated that the ancient liberties of Florence should be respected, every one foresaw that the conditions would be violated.

In fact, pope and emperor immediately began to dispute as to which should be the new lord of the city. Clement VII had inherited the traditional family dislike for the younger branch of his kin, and so the choice lay between the two bastards Ippolito and Alessandro. The former being a cardinal, the latter was chosen.

Alessandro, who already bore the title of duke of Città di Penna, came to Florence in 1531, and by imperial patent was nominated head of the republic. According to the terms of this patent, the former liberty enjoyed under the Medicean rule was to remain intact. But no previous ruler of the city had enjoyed hereditary power confirmed by imperial patent, and such power was incompatible with the existence of a republic. Moreover, Clement VII showed dissatisfaction with the uncertainty of the power conferred upon his kinsman, and finally succeeded in obtaining additional privileges.

On the 4th of April 1532 a parliament was convoked for the last time in Florence, and, as usual, approved every measure proposed for acceptance. Accordingly a new council was formed of two hundred citizens elected for life, forty-eight of which number were to constitute a senate.

Alessandro, as duke of the republic, filled the post of gonfalonier, and carried on the government with the assistance of three senators, changed every three months, who took the place of the suppressed signory.

The duke's chief advisers, and the contrivers of all these arrangements, were Baccio Valori, Francesco Vettori, and above all Francesco Guicciardini, men, especially the latter two, of lofty political gifts and extensive influence.

The mind and character of Duke Alessandro were as yet comparatively unknown. At first he seemed very anxious to win the favour of the people, and disposed to rule with justice and prudence. But soon encountering difficulties that he was unable to overcome, he began to neglect the business of the state, treated his new office as affording the means for increased indulgence in pleasure and vice, and acted as if the sole function of government consisted in lulling the people by festivities and corrupting it by the dissolute life of which he set the example. The question of the moment was the transformation of the old republican regime into a principedom; as an unavoidable result of this change it followed that Florence was no longer to be the ruling city to whose inhabitants alone belonged the monopoly of political office.

When the leading Florentine families realised, not only that the republic was destroyed, but that they were reduced to equality with those whom they had hitherto regarded as their inferiors and subjects, their rage was indescribable, and hardly a day passed without the departure of influential citizens who were resolved to achieve the overthrow of their new ruler. They found a leader in Cardinal Ippolito dei Medici, who was then in Rome, embittered by the preference given to Alessandro, and anxious to become his successor with the least possible delay.

Under the pressure of terror the duke at once became a tyrant. He garrisoned the different cities, and began the erection in Florence of the Fortezza da Basso, built chiefly at the expense of Filippo Strozzi, who afterwards met his death within its walls.

In 1534 Clement VII died, and the election fell on Paul III, from whom Cardinal Ippolito hoped to obtain assistance for his designs. Accordingly the principal Florentine exiles were dispatched on a mission to the emperor Charles V. with complaints of Alessandro's tyranny and his shameless violation of the terms upon which the city had surrendered. Cardinal Ippolito also represented his own willingness to carry on the government of Florence in a more equitable manner, and promised the emperor a large sum of money. Reply being delayed by the emperor's absence, he became so impatient that he set out, accompanied by several exiles, to meet Charles in Tunis, but on

the 10th of August 1535 died suddenly by the way, at Itri, poisoned by order of Alessandro.

Such at least was the general belief, and it was confirmed by the same fate befalling other enemies of the duke about the same time. On the emperor's return from Africa, the exiles presented themselves to him in Naples, and the venerable patriot Jacopo Nardi pleaded their cause. Duke Alessandro, being cited to appear, came to Naples accompanied by Francesco Guicciardini, who by speaking in his defence rendered himself odious to all friends of liberty, and irretrievably tarnished his illustrious name. The cardinal being dead, it was hard to find a successor to Alessandro. On this account, and perhaps to some extent through the emperor's personal liking for the duke, the latter rose higher than before in the imperial favour, married Margaret of Austria, the natural daughter of Charles, and returned to Florence with increased power.

And now Alessandro indulged unchecked in the lowest excesses of tyranny, and although so recently a bridegroom gave way to increased libertinism, His whole time was passed in vicious haunts and in scandalous adventures. [n order to conceal the obscurity of his birth, he left his mother to starve, and it was even asserted that he finally got rid of her by poison.

His constant associate in this disgraceful routine was distant kinsman Lorenzo, generally known as Lorenzino dei Medici. Of the younger branch of the Medici, the latter was second cousin of the Cosimo already mentioned as the son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere. He had much culture and literary talent, but led an irregular life, sometimes acting like a madman and sometimes like a villain. He was a writer of considerable elegance, the author of several plays, one of which, the *Aridosio*, was held to be among the best of the age, and he was a worshipper of antiquity. Notwithstanding these tastes, when in Rome he knocked off the heads of some of the finest statues of the age of Adrian, an act by which Clement VII was so incensed that he threatened to have him hanged. Thereupon Lorenzino fled to Florence, where he became the friend of Duke Alessandro and his partner in the most licentious excesses. They went together to houses of ill-fame, and violated private dwellings and convents. They often showed themselves in public mounted on the same horse. All Florence eyed them with disgust, but no one foresaw the tragedy that was soon to take place.

On the evening of January 5th, 1537, after a day passed in the usual excesses, Lorenzino led the duke to his own lodging, and

left him there, promising shortly to return with the wife of Leonardo Ginori. Alessandro, worn out by the exertions of the day, fell asleep on the couch while awaiting Lorenzino's return. Before long the latter came accompanied by a desperado known as the Scoronconcolo, who aided him in falling on the sleeper. Roused by their first thrusts, the duke fought for his life, and was only despatched after a violent struggle. The murderers then lifted the body into bed, hid it beneath the clothes, and, Lorenzino having attached a paper to it bearing the words, *vincit amor patriae, laudumque immenza cupida*, they both fled to Venice.

In that city Lorenzino was assassinated some ten years later, in 1548, at the age of thirty-two, by order of Alessandro's successor. Thus he was only about twenty-two at the time he committed the murder. He wrote an Apologia, in which he defended himself with great skill and eloquence, saying that he had been urged to the deed solely by love of liberty. For this reason alone he had followed the example of Brutus and played the part of friend and courtier. The tone of this Apologia is so straightforward, sometimes even so eloquent and lofty, that we should be tempted to give it credence were it possible to believe the assertions of one who not only by his crime but by the infamy of his previous and subsequent career completely gave the lie to his vaunted nobility of purpose.

By Alessandro's death the elder branch of the Medici became extinct, and thus the appearance of the younger line was heralded by a bloody crime. When the duke's absence from his own palace was discovered on the morning of January 6th, he was at first supposed to have spent the night with one of his mistresses; but soon, some alarm being felt, search was made, and Cardinal Cybo was the first to discover the murder. Enjoining the strictest secrecy, he kept the corpse concealed for three days, and then had it interred in the sacristy of San Lorenzo. Meanwhile he had hastily summoned Alessandro Vitelli and the other captains, so that, by the time Alessandro's death was made public, the city was already filled with troops. The cardinal then convoked the council of forty-eight to decide upon a successor. Alessandro's only issue was a natural son named Giulio, aged five. The cardinal favoured his election, in the hope of keeping the real sovereignty in his own hands. But he speedily saw the impossibility of carrying out a design that was ridiculed by all.

On the other hand, Guicciardini, Vettori, and others of the leading citizens favoured the choice of Cosimo, the son of Giovanni delle

Bande Nere. He was already in Florence, was aged seventeen, was keen-witted and aspiring, strong and handsome in person, heir to the enormous wealth of the Medici, and, by the terms of the imperial patent, was Alessandro's lawful successor.

Charles V. approved the nomination of Cosimo, who without delay seized the reins of government with a firm grasp. Like Alessandro, he was named head of the republic ; and Guicciardini and others who had worked hardest in his cause hoped to direct him and keep him under their control. But Cosimo soon undeceived them by proving that, his youth notwithstanding, he had a will of his own, and was resolved to rule unshackled by republican forms and unhampered by advisers disposed to act as mentors. The Florentines had now an absolute prince who was likewise a statesman of eminent ability.

On learning the death of Alessandro and the election of Cosimo, the exiles appreciated the necessity for prompt action, as all delay would be fatal to the overthrow of the Medicean rule. They had received money and promises from France; they were strengthened by the adhesion of Filippo Strozzi and Baccio Valori, who had both become hostile to the Medici through the infamous conduct and mad tyranny of Alessandro; and Strozzi brought them the help of his enormous fortune and the prowess of that very distinguished captain, his son Piero. The exiles accordingly met, and assembled their forces at Mirandola. They had about four thousand infantry and three hundred horse; among them were members of all the principal Florentine families; and their leaders were Bernardo Salviati and Piero Strozzi. They marched rapidly, and entered Tuscany towards the end of July 1537.

Cosimo on this occasion displayed signal capacity and presence of mind. Fully informed of the exiles movements by means of his spies, he no sooner learned their approach than he ordered Alessandro Vitelli to collect the best German, Spanish, and Italian infantry at his disposal, and advance against the enemy without delay.

On the evening of July 31 Vitelli marched towards Prato with seven hundred picked infantry and a band of one hundred horse, and on the way fell in with other Spanish foot soldiers who joined the expedition. At early dawn the following morning he made a sudden attack on the exiles advanced guard close to Montemurlo, an old fortress converted into a villa belonging to the Nerli. Having utterly routed them, he proceeded to storm Montemurlo, where Filippo Strozzi and a few of his young comrades had taken refuge and barricaded the gates. Knowing

that they must either conquer or die, they made a desperate resistance for some hours, and then, overwhelmed by superior numbers, were obliged to yield themselves prisoners.

The main body of the army was still at some distance, having been detained in the mountains by heavy rains and difficult passes, and, on learning the defeat at Montemurlo, its leader refused to advance, and turned back by the way he had come. Alessandro Vitelli then reentered Florence with his victorious army and his fettered captives. Cosimo had achieved his first triumph.

All the prisoners, who were members of great families, were brought before Cosimo, and were received by him with courteous coldness. Soon, however, a scaffold was erected in the Piazza, and on four mornings in succession four of the prisoners were beheaded. Then the duke saw fit to stay the executions. Baccio Valori, however, and his son and nephew were beheaded on the 20th of August in the courtyard of the Bargello. Filippo Strozzi still survived, confined in the Fortezza da Basso, that had been built at his expense. His family was illustrious, he had numerous adherents, and he enjoyed the protection of the French king.

Nevertheless Cosimo only awaited some plausible pretext to rid himself of this dreaded enemy, he brought him to trial and had him put to the question. But this cruelty led to nothing, for Strozzi denied every accusation and bore the torture with much fortitude. On December 18th he was found dead in his prison, with a blood-stained sword by his side, and a slip of paper bearing these words *exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*. It was believed that having renounced all hope of his life being spared, Strozzi had preferred suicide to death at the hands of the executioner. Some, however, thought that Cosimo had caused him to be murdered, and adopted this mode of concealing the crime.

The young prince's cold-blooded massacre of his captives cast an enduring shadow upon his reign and dynasty. But it was henceforward plain to all that he was a man of stern resolve, who went straight his end without scruples or half measures. Before long he was regarded by many as the incarnation of Machiavelli's Prince, inasmuch as he joined daring to talent and prudence, was capable of great cruelty, and yet could practise mercy in due season.

Guicciardini, who still pretended to act as mentor, and who on account of his many services had a certain influence over him, was obliged to withdraw from public life and busy himself with

writing his History at his villa of Arcetri. He died in this retreat in 1540, and it was immediately rumoured that the duke had caused him to be poisoned. This shows the estimation in which Cosimo was now held. It was true that he punished with death all who dared to resist his will.

By 1540 sentence of death had been pronounced against four hundred and thirty contumacious fugitives, and during his reign one hundred and forty men and six women actually ascended the scaffold, without counting those who perished in foreign lands by the daggers of his assassins.

He reduced the old republican institutions to empty forms, by making the magistrates mere creatures of his will. He issued the sternest edicts against the rebels, particularly by the law known as the Polverina, from the name of its proposer Jacopo Polverini. This law decreed not only the confiscation of the property of exiles, but likewise that of their heirs, even if personally acquired by the latter.

Cosimo ruled like the independent sovereign of a great state, and always showed the capacity, firmness, and courage demanded by that station. Only, his state being small and weak, he was forced to rely chiefly upon his personal talent and wealth. It was necessary for him to make heavy loans to the different European sovereigns, especially to Charles V., the most rapacious of them all, and to give enormous bribes to their ambassadors. Besides, he had to carry on wars for the extension of his dominions, and neither his inherited wealth nor the large sums gained by confiscating the estates of rebellious subjects sufficed for all this outlay. He was accordingly compelled to burden the people with taxes, and thus begin at once to diminish its strength.

Cosimo bore a special grudge against the neighbouring republics of Siena and Lucca. Although the latter was small and weak, and the former garrisoned by Spaniards, yet the spectacle of free institutions at the frontiers of his own state served as a continual incitement to subjects disaffected to the new regime. In fact Francesco Burlamacchi, a zealous Lucchese patriot, had conceived the design of re-establishing republican government in all the cities of Tuscany. Cosimo, with the emperor's help, succeeded having him put to death. Lucca, however, was an insignificant state making no pretence of rivalry, whereas Siena was an old and formidable foe to Florence, and had always given protection to the Florentine exiles. It was now very reluctantly submitting to the presence of a Spanish garrison, and, being stimulated by promises of prompt and efficacious assistance

from France, rose in rebellion and expelled the Spaniards in 1552.

Cosimo instantly seized the opportunity, wrote to the emperor in terms that appealed to his pride, asked leave to attack Siena, and begged for troops to ensure the success of his enterprise. As no immediate answer arrived, he feigned to begin negotiations with Henry II of France, and, by thus arousing the imperial jealousy, obtained a contingent of German and Spanish infantry. Then came a long and bloody war.

Siena was besieged for fifteen months, and its inhabitants, aided by the valour of Piero Strozzi, who fought under the French flag, made a most heroic resistance, even women and children helping on the walls. But fortune was against them. Piero Strozzi sustained several defeats, and finally the Sienese, having exhausted their ammunition and being decimated by famine and the sword, were obliged to capitulate on honourable terms that were shamelessly violated. By the varied disasters of the siege and the number of fugitives the population was reduced from forty to eight thousand inhabitants. The republicans, still eager to resist, withdrew to Montalcino.

Cosimo now ruled the city and territory of Siena in the name of Charles V., who always refused him its absolute possession. After the emperor's abdication, and the succession of Philip II. to the Spanish throne, Cosimo at last obtained Siena and Pontoferra by giving up his claim to a sum of 200,000 ducats that he was to have received from Charles V. In 1559 he also captured Montalcino, and thus formed the grand-duchy of Tuscany, but he continued to govern the new state i.e., Siena and its territories separately from the old.

His rule was intelligent, skilful, and despotic; but his enormous expenses drove him to raise large sums of money by special contrivances unsuited to the country and the people. Hence, notwithstanding the genius of its founder, the grand-duchy held from the first the elements of its future decay.

Cosimo preferred to confer office upon men of humble origin in order to have pliable tools, but he also liked to be surrounded by a courtier aristocracy on the Spanish and French pattern. As no Tuscan aristocracy any longer existed, he created new nobles, and tempted foreign ones to come by the concession of various feudal privileges; and, in order to turn this artificial aristocracy to some account, he founded the knightly order of St Stephen, charged with the defence of the coast against pirates, which in course of time won much honour by its prowess.

He also established a small standing army for the protection of his frontiers; but, as we have seen, he generally employed German and Spanish troops for his wars, and always had a foreign bodyguard. At the commencement of his reign he opposed the popes in order to maintain the independence of his own state; but later, to obtain help, he truckled to them in many ways, even to the extent of giving up to the Inquisition his own confidant, Piero Carnesecchi, who, being accused of heresy, was beheaded and burnt in 1567.

In reward for these acts of submission, the popes showed him friendship, and Pius V. granted him the title of grand-duke, conferring the patent and crown upon him in Rome, although the emperor had always withheld his consent. Finally, however, the latter confirmed the title to Cosimo's successor.

The measure most injurious to Tuscany was the fiscal system of taxes, of which the sole aim was to extort the greatest possible amount of money. The consequent damage to industry, commerce, and agriculture was immense, and, added to the devastations caused by the Sienese war, led to their utter ruin. Otherwise Cosimo did not neglect useful measures for the interior prosperity of his state. He was no Maecenas, hut nevertheless restored the Pisan university, enlarged that of Siena, had the public records classified, and also executed public works like the Santa Trinita bridge. During the great inundations of 1557 he turned his whole energy to the relief of the sufferers.

In 1539 he had espoused Eleonora of Toledo, daughter of the viceroy of Naples, by whom he had several children. Two died in 1562, and their mother soon followed them to the grave. It was said that one of these boys, Don Garcia, had murdered the other, and then been killed by the enraged father. Indeed Cosimo was further accused of having put his own wife to death; but neither rumour had any foundation. He now showed signs of illness and failure of strength. He was not old, but worn by the cares of state and self-indulgence.

Accordingly in 1561 he resigned the government to his eldest son, who was to act as his lieutenant, since he wished to remain the virtual head of the state and have power to resume the sceptre on any emergency. In 1570, by the advice of Pius V., he married Camilla Martelli, a young lady of whom he had been long enamoured. In 1574 he died, at the age of fifty-four years and ten months, after a reign of thirty-seven years, leaving three sons and one daughter besides natural children. These sons were

Francesco, his successor, who was already at the head of the government, Cardinal Ferdinand, and Piero.

Francesco I., born in 1541, began to govern as his father's lieutenant in 1564, and was married in 1565 to the archduchess Giovanna of Austria. On beginning to reign on his own account in 1574, he speedily manifested his real character. His training in the hands of a Spanish mother had made him suspicious, false, and despotic. Holding everyone aloof, he carried on the government with the assistance of a few devoted ministers. He compelled his stepmother to retire to a convent, and kept his brothers at a distance from Florence. He loved the privileges of power without its burdens.

Cosimo had known how to maintain his independence, but Francesco cast himself like a vassal at Austria's feet. He reaped his reward by obtaining from Maximilian II. the title of grand-duke, for which Cosimo had never been able to win the imperial sanction, but he forfeited all independence. Towards Philip II. he showed even greater submissiveness, supplying him with large sums of money wrung from his over-taxed people. He held entirely aloof from France, in order not to awake the suspicions of his protectors.

In short, under his rule the history of Tuscany was reduced to a mere record of local and municipal events. To increase his funds, he traded on his own account, thus creating a monopoly that was ruinous to the country at large, and led to an enormous number of failures. He raised the tax upon corn to so high a rate that few continued to find any profit in growing it, and thus the Maremme, already partly devastated during the war with Siena, were converted into a desert. Even industry declined under this system of government; and, although Francesco founded porcelain manufactories and pietra dura works, they did not rise to any prosperity until after his death.

His love of science and letters was the only Medicean virtue that he possessed. He had an absolute passion for chemistry, and passed much of his time in his laboratory. Sometimes indeed he gave audience to his secretaries of state standing before a furnace, bellows in hand. He took some useful measures to promote the rise of a new city at Leghorn, which at that time had only a natural and ill-sheltered harbour. The improvement of Leghorn had been first projected by Cosimo I., and was carried on by all the succeeding Medici.

Francesco was a slave to his passions, and was led by them to scandalous excesses and deeds of bloodshed. His example and

neglect of the affairs of the state soon caused a vast increase of crime even among the people, and, during the first eighteen months of his reign, there occurred no less than one hundred and sixty-eight murders. In default of public events, the historians of this period enlarge upon private incidents, generally of a scandalous or sanguinary kind.

In 1575 Orazio Pucci, wishing to avenge his father, whom Cosimo had hanged, determined to get up a conspiracy, but, soon recognising how firmly the Medicean rule had taken root in the country, desisted from the attempt. But the grand-duke, on hearing of the already abandoned plot, immediately caused Pucci to be hanged from the same window of the Palazzo Vecchio, and even from the same iron stanchion, from which his father before him had hung. His companions, who had fled to France and England, were pursued and murdered by the ducal emissaries. Their possessions were confiscated, and the Polverina law applied so that the conspirators heirs were reduced to penury, and the grand-duke gained more than 300,000 ducats. Next year Isabella dei Medici, Francesco's sister, was strangled in her nuptial bed by her husband, Paolo Giordano Orsini, whom she had betrayed. Piero dei Medici, Francesco's brother, murdered his wife Eleonora of Toledo from the same motive.

Still louder scandal was caused by the duke's own conduct. He was already a married man, when, passing one day through the Piazza of St Mark in Florence, he saw an exceedingly beautiful woman at the window of a mean dwelling, and at once conceived a passion for her. She was the famous Bianca Cappello, a Venetian of noble birth, who had eloped with a young Florentine named Pietro Buonaventuri, to whom she was married at the time that she attracted the duke's gaze. He made her acquaintance, and, in order to see her frequently, nominated her husband to a post at court. Upon this, Buonaventuri behaved with so much insolence, even to the nobility, that one evening he was found murdered in the street. Thus the grand-duke, who was thought to have sanctioned the crime, was able to indulge his passion unchecked. On the death of the grand-duchess in 1578 he was privately united to Bianca, and afterwards married her publicly. But she had no children, and this served to poison her happiness, since the next in succession was her bitter enemy, the cardinal Ferdinand.

The latter came to Florence in 1687, and was ostentatiously welcomed by Bianca, who was most anxious to conciliate him. On October 18th of the same year, the grand-duke died at his villa of Poggio a Caiano, of a fever caught on a shooting

excursion in the Maremme, and the next day Bianca also expired, having ruined her health by drugs taken to cure her sterility. But rumour asserted that she had prepared a poisoned tart for the cardinal, and that, when he suspiciously insisted on the grand-duke tasting it first, Bianca desperately swallowed a slice and followed her husband to the tomb. Such was the life of Francesco dei Medici, and all that can be said in his praise is that he gave liberal encouragement to a few artists, including Giovanni Bologna, who executed for him the group of the Rape of the Sabines. He was the founder of the Uffizi gallery, of the Medici theatre, and the villa of Pratolino ; and during his reign the Della Cruscan academy was instituted.

Ferdinand I. was thirty-eight years of age when, in 1587, he succeeded his brother on the throne. A cardinal from the age of fourteen, he had never taken holy orders. He showed much tact and experience in the management of ecclesiastical affairs. He was the founder of the Villa Medici at Rome, and the purchaser of many priceless works of art, such as the Niobe group and many other statues afterwards transported by him to Florence. After his accession he retained the cardinal's purple until the time of his marriage.

He was in all respects his brother's opposite. Affable in his manners and generous with his purse, he chose a crest typical of the proposed mildness of his rule, a swarm of bees with the motto Majesty without tumult. He instantly pardoned all who had opposed him, and left his kinsmen at liberty to choose their own place of residence. Occasionally, for political reasons, he committed acts unworthy of his character; but he re-established the administration of justice, and sedulously attended to the business of the state and the welfare of his subjects.

Accordingly Tuscany revived under his rule and regained the independence and political dignity that his brother had sacrificed to love of ease and personal indulgence, he favoured commerce, and effectually ensured the Prosperity of Leghorn, by an edict enjoining toleration towards Jews and heretics, which led to the settlement of many foreigners in that city. He also improved the harbour and facilitated communication with Pisa by means of the Naviglio, a canal into which a portion of the water of the Arno was turned.

He nevertheless retained the reprehensible custom of trading on his own account, keeping banks in many cities of Europe. He successfully accomplished the draining of the Val di Chiana, cultivated the plains of Pisa, Fucecchio, and Val di Nievole, and

executed other works of public utility at Siena and Pisa. But his best energies were devoted to the foreign policy by which he sought to emancipate himself from subjection to Spain.

On the assassination (1559) of Henry III of France, Ferdinand supported the claims of the king of Navarre, undeterred by the opposition of Spain and the Catholic League, who were dismayed by the prospect of a Huguenot succeeding to the throne of France. He lent money to Henry IV, and strongly urged his conversion to Catholicism; he helped to persuade the pope to accept Henry's abjuration, and pursued this policy with marvellous persistence until his efforts were crowned with success.

Subsequently, however, Henry IV showed faint gratitude for the benefits conferred upon him, and paid no attention to the expostulations of the grand duke, who then began to slacken his relations with France, and showed that he could guard his independence by other alliances.

He gave liberal assistance to Philip III for the campaign of the latter in Algiers, and to the emperor for the war with the Turks. Hence he was compelled to burden his subjects with enormous taxes, forgetting that while guaranteeing the independence of Tuscany by his loans to foreign powers he was increasingly sapping the strength of future generations. He at last succeeded in obtaining the formal investiture of Siena, which Spain had always considered a fief of her own.

During this grand-duke's reign the Tuscan navy was notably increased, and did itself much honour on the Mediterranean. The war-galleys of the knights of St Stephen were despatched to the coast of Barbary to attack Bona, the headquarters of the corsairs, and they captured the town with much dash and bravery. And in the following year (1605) the same galleys achieved their most brilliant victory in the archipelago over the stronger fleet of the Turks, by taking nine of their vessels, seven hundred prisoners, and a store of jewels of the value of 2,000,000 ducats.

Ferdinand I. died in 1609, leaving four sons, of whom the eldest, Cosimo II, succeeded to the throne at the age of nineteen. He was at first assisted in the government by his mother and a council of regency. He had a good disposition, and the fortune to reign during a period when Europe was at peace and Tuscany blessed with abundant harvests. Of his rule there is little to relate. His chief care was given to the galleys of St Stephen, and he sent them to assist the Druses against the Porte. On one

occasion he was involved in a quarrel with France. Concino Concini, the Marshal d Ancre, being assassinated in 1617, Louis XIII claimed the right of transferring the property of the murdered man to De Luynes. Cosimo opposed the decision, and, refusing to recognise the confiscation decreed by the French tribunals, demanded that Concini's son should be allowed to inherit. Hence followed much ill-feeling and mutual reprisals between the two countries, finally brought to an end by the intervention of the duke of Lorraine.

Like his predecessors, Cosimo II, studied to promote the prosperity of Leghorn, and he deserves honour for abandoning all commerce on his own account. But it was no praiseworthy act to pass a law depriving women of almost all rights of inheritance. By this means many daughters of the nobility were driven into convents against their will.

He gave scanty attention to the general affairs of the state. He was fond of luxury, spent freely on public festivities, and detested trouble. Tuscany was apparently tranquil and prosperous; but the decay of which the seeds were sown under Cosimo I. and Ferdinand I. was rapidly spreading, and became before long patent to nil and beyond all hope of remedy. The best deed done by Cosimo II was the protection accorded by him to Galileo Galilei, who had removed to Padua, and there made some of his grandest discoveries. The grand-duke recalled him to Florence in 1610, and nominated him court mathematician and philosopher.

Cosimo died in February 1621, after twelve years of a quiet reign marked by no great event. Feeling his end draw near, when he was only aged thirty and all his sons were still in their childhood, he hastened to arrange his family affairs. His mother, Cristina of Lorraine, and his wife, Maddalena of Austria, were nominated regents and guardians to his eldest son Ferdinand II, a boy of ten, and a council of four appointed, whose functions were regulated by law.

Accordingly, after Cosimo's death, the young Ferdinand was sent to Rome and Vienna to complete his education, and the government of Tuscany remained in the hands of two jealous and quarrelsome women. Thus the administration of justice and finance speedily went to ruin.

Out of submissiveness to the pope, the regents did not dare to maintain their legitimate right to inherit the duchy of Urbino, and in 1623 sanctioned the transfer of that right to the holy see. They conferred exaggerated privileges on the new Tuscan

nobility, which became increasingly insolent and worthless. They resumed the practice of trading on their own account, and, without reaping much benefit thereby, did the utmost damage to private enterprise.

In 1627 Ferdinand II, then aged seventeen, returned to Italy and assumed the reins of government; but, being of a very gentle disposition, he decided on sharing his power with the regents and his brothers, and arranged matters in such wise that each was almost independent of the other, he gained the love of his subjects by his great goodness; and, when Florence and Tuscany were cruelly ravaged by the plague in 1630, he showed admirable courage, and carried out many useful measures. But he was totally incapable of energy as a statesman.

When the pope made bitter complaints because the board of health had dared to subject certain monks and priests to the necessary quarantine, the grand-duke insisted on his officers asking pardon on their knees for having done their duty. On the death in 1631 of the last duke of Urbino, the pope was allowed to seize the duchy without the slightest opposition on the part of Tuscany. As a natural consequence the pretensions of the Roman curia became increasingly exorbitant; ecclesiastics usurped the functions of the state; and the ancient laws of the republic, together with the regulations decreed by Cosimo I. as a check upon similar abuses, were allowed to become obsolete.

On the extinction of the line of the Gonzagas at Mantua in 1627, war broke out between France on the one side and Spain, Germany, and Savoy on the other. The grandduke, uncertain of his policy, trimmed his sails according to events. Fortunately peace was re-established in 1631. Mantua and Monferrato fell to the duke of Nevers, as France had always desired.

But Europe was again in arms for the Thirty Years War, and Italy was not at peace. Urban VIII wished to aggrandise his nephews, the Barberini, by wresting Castro and Ronciglione from Odoardo Farnese, duke of Parma and brother-in-law to Ferdinand. Farnese determined to maintain his rights, and marched his army through Tuscany into the territories of the pope, who was greatly alarmed by the attack. Naturally the grand-duke was drawn into the war to defend his own state and his kinsman. His military operations, however, were of the feeblest and often the most laughable character.

At last, by means of the French intervention, peace was made in 1644. But, although the pope was forced to yield, he resigned none of his ecclesiastical pretensions in Tuscany. It was during

Ferdinand's reign that the septuagenarian Galileo was obliged to appear before the Inquisition in Rome, which treated him with infamous cruelty. On the death of this great and unfortunate man, the grand-duke wished to erect a monument to him, but was withheld by fear of the opposition of the clergy. The dynasty as well as the country now seemed on the brink of decay. Two of the grand duke's brothers had already died childless, and Ippolito, the sole survivor, was a cardinal. Accordingly the only remaining heir was Cosimo III, married to a wife who held him in detestation, and did her best to have her marriage annulled or at least obtain a separation.

Like nearly all his predecessors, Ferdinand II gave liberal patronage to science and letters, greatly aided therein by his brother Leopold, who had been trained by Galileo Galilei, and who joined with men of learning in founding the celebrated academy Del Cimento, of which he was named resident. This academy took for its motto the words *Provando e riprovando*, and followed the experimental method of Galileo. Formed in 1657, it was dissolved in 1667 in consequence of the jealousies and dissensions of its members, but during its brief existence won renown by the number and importance of its works.

Cosimo III succeeded his father in 1670. He was weak, vain, bigoted, and hypocritical. In 1661 he had espoused Louise d'Orleans, niece of Louis XIV, who, being enamoured of Duke Charles of Lorraine, was very reluctant to come to Italy, and speedily detested both her husband and his country, of which she refused to learn the language. She had two sons and one daughter, but after the birth of her third child, Giovan Castone, her hatred for her husband increased almost to madness. She first withdrew to Poggia a Caiano, and then, being unable to get her marriage annulled, returned to France, where, although supposed to live in conventual seclusion, she passed the greater part of her time as a welcome visitor at court. Even her testamentary dispositions attested the violence of her dislike to her husband.

Cosimo's hypocritical zeal for religion compelled his subjects to multiply services and processions, that greatly infringed upon their working hours. He wasted enormous sums in pensioning converts even those from other countries and in giving rich endowments to sanctuaries. Meanwhile funds often failed for the payment of Government clerks and soldiers. His court was composed of bigots and parasites; he ransacked the world for dainties for his table, adorned his palace with costly foreign hangings, had foreign servants, and filled his gardens with exotic

plants. He purchased from the emperor the title of Highness in order to be the equal of the duke of Savoy. He remained neutral during the Franco-Spanish war, and submitted to every humiliation and requisition exacted by the emperor.

He had vague notions of promoting agriculture, but accomplished no results. At one time he caused eight hundred families to be brought over from the Morea for the cultivation of the Maremme, where all of them died of fever. But when, after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, French Huguenots offered to apply their labour and capital to the same purpose, the grand-duke's religious scruples refused them refuge. So ruin fell upon Tuscany. Crime and misery increased, and the poor, who only asked for work, were given alms and sent oftener to church. This period witnessed the rise of many charitable institutions of a religious character under the patronage of the grand duke, as for instance the congregation of San Giovanni Battista. But these could not remedy the general decay.

Cosimo's dominant anxiety regarded the succession to the throne. His eldest son Ferdinand died childless in 1713. The pleasure-loving Giovan Gastone was married to Anna Maria of Saxe-Lauenburg, widow of a German prince, a wealthy coarse woman wholly immersed in domestic occupations, and who seemed little likely to give birth to any children. After living with her for some time in a Bohemian village, Giovan Gastone yielded to his dislike to his wife and her country, withdrew to France, and ruined his health by his excesses. After a brief return to Bohemia he finally separated from his wife, by whom he had no family. Thus the dynasty was doomed to extinction.

Cosimo had a passing idea of reconstituting the Florentine republic, but, this design being discountenanced by the European powers, he determined to transfer the succession, after the death of Giovan Gastone, to his sister Anna Maria Louisa, who in fact survived him. For this purpose he proposed to annul the patent of Charles V., but the powers objected to this arrangement also, and by the treaty of 1718 the quadruple alliance of Germany, France, England, and Holland decided that Parma and Tuscany should descend to the Spanish Infante Don Carlos. The grand-duke made energetic but fruitless protests.

Cosimo III had passed his eightieth year at the time of his decease in October 1773, and was succeeded by his son Giovan Gastone, then aged fifty-three. The new sovereign was in bad health, worn out by dissipation, and had neither ambition nor aptitude for rule. His throne was already at the disposal of

foreign powers, and his only thought on ascending it was to regain strength enough to pass the remainder of his days in enjoyment. He dismissed the spies, parasites, and bigots that had formed his father's court, abolished the pensions given to converts, suppressed several taxes, and prohibited the organised espionage established in the family circle. He wished to live and let live, and liked the people to be amused. Everything in fact bore a freer and gayer aspect under his reign, and the Tuscans seemed to feel renewed attachment for the dynasty as the moment of its extinction drew near. But the grand-duke was too feeble and incapable to accomplish any real improvement.

Surrounded by gay and dissipated young men, he entrusted all the cares of government to a certain Guiliano Dami, who drove a profitable trade by the sale of offices and privileges. In this way all things were in the hands of corrupt individuals; while the grand-duke, compelled to pass the greater part of his time in bed, vainly sought diversion in the company of buffoons, and was only tormented by perceiving that all the world disposed of his throne without even asking his advice. And when, after prolonged opposition, he had resigned himself to accept Don Carlos as his successor, the latter led a Spanish army to the conquest of Naples, an event afterwards leading to the peace of 1735, by which the Tuscan succession was transferred to Francesco II, duke of Lorraine, arid husband of Maria Theresa. Giovan Gastone was finally obliged to submit even to this.

Spain withdrew her garrisons from Tuscany, and Austrian soldiers took their place and swore fealty to the grand-duke on the 5th of February 1737. He expired on the 9th July of the same year. Such was the end of the younger branch of the Medici, which had found Tuscany a prosperous country, where art, letters, commerce, industry, and agriculture flourished, and left her poor and decayed in all ways, drained by taxation, and oppressed by laws contrary to every principle of sound economy, downtrodden by the clergy, and burdened by a weak and vicious aristocracy.

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