

*Vespasiano*

RENAISSANCE  
PRINCES, POPES,  
AND  
PRELATES

*The Vespasiano Memoirs*

Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century

TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM GEORGE AND EMILY WATERS

Introduction to the Torchbook edition

by

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V: STATESMEN

COSIMO DE' MEDICI (1389-1464)

COSIMO DI GIOVANNI DE' MEDICI was of most honourable descent, a very prominent citizen and one of great weight in the republic. He was well versed in Latin letters, both sacred and secular, of capable judgment in all matters and able to argue thereupon. His teacher was Roberto dei Rossi, a good Greek and Latin scholar and of excellent carriage. At this time many other youths of good station were his fellow-pupils: Domenico di Lionardo Buoninsegni, Bartolo Tebaldi, Luca di Messer Maso degli Albizzi, Messer Alessandro degli Alessandri and many others who came together regularly for instruction. Roberto lived in his own house, unmarried, and when he went out he was usually accompanied by the above-named, who were held in much esteem both for their good conduct and learning: moreover, Roberto would often entertain his pupils at table. He made a most excellent will which divided his large library of books written by his own hand—and he was one of the finest of scribes—amongst his pupils.

Returning to Cosimo, he had a knowledge of Latin which would scarcely have been looked for in one occupying the station of a leading citizen engrossed with affairs. He was grave in temperament, prone to associate with men of high station who disliked frivolity, and averse from all buffoons and actors and those who spent time unprofitably. He had a great liking for men of letters and sought their society, chiefly conversing with the Fra Ambrogio degli Agnoli, Messer Lionardo d' Arezzo, Nicolao Nicoli, Messer Carlo d' Arezzo and Messer Poggio. His natural bent was to discuss matters of importance; and, although at this time the city was full of men of distinction, his worth was recognised on account of his praiseworthy qualities, and he began to find employment in affairs of every kind. By his twenty-fifth year he had gained

great reputation in the city, and, as it was recognised that he was aiming at a high position, feeling ran strong against him, and the report of those who knew roused a fear that he would win success. The Council of Constance, gathered from all parts of the world, was then sitting; and Cosimo, who was well acquainted with foreign affairs as well as those of the city, went thither with two objects: one to allay the ill-feeling against him, and the other to see the Council which had in hand the reform of the Church, now greatly vexed by divisions. After staying some time at Constance, and witnessing the procedure of the Council, he visited almost all parts of Germany and France, spending some two years in travel. He hoped thus to let cool the ill-feeling against him which had greatly increased. He understood his own disposition which made him discontented with low estate, and made him seek to rise out of the crowd of men of small account. Many people remarked this tendency, and warned him that it might lead him into danger of death or exile. By way of lessening this resentment he began to absent himself from the palace, and to consort with men of low estate without either money or position, all by way of temporising; but his foes took this in bad part, affirming that what he did was a mere pretence to abate the suspicions of others.

While matters stood thus, about two years before he was exiled, there came to Florence Fra Francesco da Pietrapane, a man of the saintliest life, who, being well known to Nicolao Nicoli as a good man and a student of Greek and Latin, became also a friend of Cosimo. He called on Cosimo, and during his visit warned him to be watchful, for he would soon be in danger of death or of exile.\* Cosimo, knowing the holiness of Fra Francesco, took good heed of this saying, and began to be greatly in fear. For he knew the character of the Florentines, and on this account he withdrew, as has been already noted, from frequenting the palace. But his foes knew in what high esteem he was held, both within and without the city, and how his fame increased every day. Wherefore they made a plan which proved the ruin of the city. The

\* The charge subsequently made against Cosimo was one of embezzlement during the war with Lucca. During the operation against the city Filippo Brunelleschi was employed as an engineer to inundate the country around. Macchiavelli, *Flor. Hist.*, p. 205.

*borse*\* were closed and very few names were put in them for the gonfaloniers of justice; indeed, in the quarter of S. Giovanni only two citizens were qualified for the office, Bernardo Guadagni and another. But Bernardo was on the *Specchio*,† wherefore some of his faction paid his debts in order to remove his disability, so that, by this means, they might bring about a revolution in the state and take off Cosimo's head. Bernardo consented to act as they desired. When the names were drawn, Bernardo was chosen, and when the Pratica‡ was held he followed up the plot and agreed with his associates to send for Cosimo and take his life.

On the eighth day of September, 1433, they sent to bid Cosimo come at once to the Signoria. On his way thither he met at Or San Michele his kinsman and friend Alamanno Salviati, who bade him not go, or he would lose his life; whereupon Cosimo answered, "However that may be, I must obey the Signori," not suspecting their attitude towards him. When he arrived at the palace, without further parley, he was taken into a prison in the bell tower called the Berghettina; the Signori were still bent on making an end of him, believing that by no other means could they hold the government, so great was his power, within the city and without. While he was thus imprisoned, he learned the intention of his foes and feared greatly for his life, so he refused to eat any of the food that was brought to him, in order that they should not poison him. While things were in suspense, some of Cosimo's friends tried to induce the gonfaloniere to spare his life and banish him, and they promised five hundred ducats if he would do this. The heads of the faction who had elected the gonfaloniere clamoured for the execution of Cosimo, pointing out that, if through kindness he should be spared, he would soon be recalled from exile and would prove their ruin; but the gonfaloniere prevailed with his associates to spare Cosimo's life, and let him be exiled to Venice. Thus it came about that Cosimo and Lorenzo with-

\* The bags in which were placed the names of those qualified.

† This was the book in which were inscribed the names of those in debt to the state. They were ineligible for all office. Cf. Macchiavelli, *Flor. Hist.*, p. 211. London, 1905. Sismondi, *Republiques Italiennes*, IX, p. 58. The money was found by Rinaldo degli Albizzi.

‡ *Vide* Appendix.

drew to Venice; and certain other citizens, including Puccio and his brother, to Aquila. In this year, 1433, on the eighth day of September, they altered the form of the state. They proposed a *Balia*\* and held a scrutiny, keeping the *borse* open for several months. Then they set up the *Balia* and closed the *borse*.

Now Cosimo being exiled his enemies in Florence used every means to ruin his credit both in Rome and in the city. But his wealth was so great that he was able to send to Rome enough money to re-establish his position. In fact, his credit increased vastly everywhere, and in Rome many who had withdrawn their money brought it back to his bank. In Venice Cosimo was held in the highest esteem, and those who had banished him—men of no reputation and with no idea of order in the state—did not realise that they would have to deal with such a powerful foe. They were new to the art of government, having had no practice in the same, and knew not how to rule. When trouble arose they soon changed their course, desiring to return to peaceful ways and let the city resume its tranquil and comfortable life in which no one citizen had more power than another, except those who had been placed by lot in posts of dignity. And though they had established a *Balia* and closed the ballot, they now ordered another scrutiny which deprived no citizen of his privileges, but gave them to all who had a right thereto. While Cosimo tarried at Venice, he was greatly esteemed by all the Venetians, who determined to despatch an ambassador to encourage the Signoria and those in power to recall him from exile. They began to favour him in divers ways, secretly, and to arrange for his return; and as many in Florence were on his side, before a year had passed they made a plan to procure his recall by the help of the Priorato† which was friendly to

\* After the restoration of the Guelfs in 1382 the dominant party found it necessary to set up occasionally what came to be known as a *Balia*. It was the temporary delegation of sovereignty to an assembly of citizens of varying number and elected by open voting. It could be elected for any period. The last *Balia* was called in 1466. *Vide Appendix*.

† When Rinaldo degli Albizzi found that this election had gone in Cosimo's favour he tried to annul it and make another *Balia*, but Palla Strozzi and other moderate men refused to support him. After the appeal to the Pope a new *Balia* was made which recalled Cosimo and exiled his enemies. Macchiavelli, *Flor. Hist.*, pp. 215-19.

him. At the end of the year his adversaries took up arms, being suspicious as to what might be the results of his return, whereupon Pope Eugenius, like a good pastor, appeared as a mediator to arrange a peace between the two parties of citizens. Those of the government of 1433, who had taken up arms, laid them down and submitted themselves to the good faith of the Pope. But though they were under the Papal guarantee, they were exiled after Cosimo's return. In this matter Pope Eugenius was deceived, for he believed that good faith would be kept on both sides and the city pacified.

Cosimo having come back to Florence, to the great satisfaction of the citizens and of his own party, his friends procured the banishment of divers of those who had opposed his recall, and of those who were neutral; at the same time bringing forward new people. He rewarded those who had brought him back, lending to one a good sum of money, and making a gift to another to help marry his daughter or buy lands, while great numbers were banished as rebels. He and his party took every step to strengthen their own position, following the example of those of the government of 1433. In Florence there were many citizens who were men of weight in the state; and, as they were friendly to Cosimo and had helped to recall him, they retained their influence. Cosimo found that he must be careful to keep their support by temporising and making believe that he was fain they should enjoy power equal to his own. Meantime he kept concealed the source of his influence in the city as well as he could. I have no wish to set down here everything that I could tell, for what I write is only by way of memorandum. I leave the rest to anyone who may write his life. But I say that anyone who may be fain to bring new forms into the state, that those who wrought the changes in 1433, brought ruin to themselves and to the state also. Many leading citizens, men of weight, never wished for these changes, declaring they had no wish to dig their own graves.\*

Cosimo, after he had settled the government, called for a

\* Macchiavelli, *Flor. Hist.*, p. 215. At this time, 1434, Duke Filippo broke the league with Florence by attacking Imola, and in 1436 Rinaldo degli Albizzi went to Milan to urge the Duke to war with Florence. Ultimately a peace for ten years was made between Venice, Florence and Milan.

## STATESMEN

Balia which banished many citizens. At this time Duke Francesco was in command of the allied forces of Florence and Venice near Lucca ; the two republics having agreed to share the cost of the soldiers' pay, but now the Venetians refused to contribute their part. Whereupon, after several letters had been sent in vain, Cosimo, as one highly esteemed in Venice, was sent to request the Venetians to hold to their promise and to pay the sum due to Duke Francesco.

On Cosimo's arrival all the citizens deemed that the Signory should take a new line and observe the promise they had made. Cosimo pressed his claims with the strongest arguments, but the Venetians kept obstinately to their view, for they were determined that the Florentines should not get Lucca without paying for it. When Cosimo perceived that they were set on this policy, and that they declined to recognise the benefits they had received, he grew to hate them on account of their bad faith ; so he wrote to Florence asking leave to withdraw and return by way of Ferrara, where Pope Eugenius had gone with all his court. When he arrived, he waited upon the Pope according to his commission and made complaint of the ingratitude of the Venetians. But Eugenius made light of this, knowing their character, and the College of Cardinals was of the same mind. From the way in which the Venetians bore themselves towards the Pope, they greatly roused his anger, as it appeared from what happened later. Cosimo went on several embassies and brought back great honour to the city.

Now Cosimo, having applied himself to the temporal affairs of the state, the conduct of which was bound to leave him with certain matters on his conscience—as is the case with all those who are fain to govern states and take the leading place—awoke to a sense of his condition, and was anxious that God might pardon him, and secure to him the possession of his earthly goods. Wherefore he felt he must needs turn to pious ways, otherwise his riches would be lost to him. He had prickings of conscience that certain portions of his wealth—where it came from I cannot say—had not been righteously gained, and to remove this weight from his shoulders he held conference with Pope Eugenius, who was then in Florence, as to the load which lay on his conscience.

## COSIMO DE' MEDICI

Pope Eugenius had settled the Observantist Order in S. Marco ; but, as their lodging there was inadequate, he remarked to Cosimo that, if he was bent on unburdening his soul, he might build a monastery. After he had spent ten thousand without providing all that was wanted, he afterwards completed the monastery, spending more than forty thousand florins over the work. Beyond building the house he fitted it with everything necessary for residence. He gave all the musical books for the church and the greater part of those are now in the library, and furthermore provided the sacristy with everything needful for Divine worship. And because the Dominican brothers may not hold goods of their own, he paid all the charges of their life in common in order that they might enjoy their fine convent during their lives. For the daily outlay he settled with his bank what weekly sum should be paid to them, thus providing all they wanted. To save personal application to himself, much occupied with affairs, he gave orders to the bank that whatever sum of money might be marked on the bill should be paid and charged to his account.

As soon as he had completed the convent he wished to begin the church ; but he was anxious to demolish certain chapels with the full consent of those to whom they belonged, but in this he was frustrated, and accordingly he suspended the building. Cosimo did not possess books enough to furnish the library as it deserved, so the executors of the will of Nicolao Nicoli agreed to transfer to S. Marco all his books by way of carrying out the wishes of the testator, and letting the books be at the general service of all those who might like to use them. Moreover, in every book there was a note telling that the book was part of the estate of Nicolao Nicoli. Out of these books Nicolao left forty to the executors of his will, Cosimo and Lorenzo his brother. As soon as Cosimo got possession of Nicolao's library he went through the catalogue to see what books were missing. He searched everywhere for them and wherever he found them he bought them back, and in addition caused many more to be transcribed. All these charges for the library were defrayed by the bank on the order of Fra Giuliano Lapacino. When the library was finished as it now stands it did not satisfy him, so he was fain

## STATESMEN

to add thereto all the books it lacked, but, being overtaken by death, he could not do this.

Having completed S. Marco he began to build at Mugello al Bosco a house of Observantist Franciscans, spending more than fifteen thousand florins over the convent and part of the church; and, during this work, there came to him certain friars of Jerusalem who told him that their house, Il Santissimo Spirito, was in ruins and wanted rebuilding. Cosimo agreed to do the whole work, and he arranged through his house at Venice that the money should be paid according to the needs of the friars by a draft on his bank. They built there a vault over their church which they decorated, and anyone who may go to the Holy Land may see it with Cosimo's arms sculptured thereon. There is in Paris a college, called Florentine after a cardinal of our city who built it, standing beside the house of Bernardetto dei Medici. This college was almost in ruins, many repairs being needed, and likewise a well, so those in care of it applied to Cosimo, begging him to undertake these charges, to which he consented and did all the necessary work, which still remains.

Lorenzo, his brother, began to build S. Lorenzo, and in his lifetime completed the sacristy, a noble work, but left his task unfinished at his death. When Cosimo took up the work the first thing he did was to demolish the priests' lodgings, wretched hovels unworthy even of a country village, and to build new ones, which still exist. When he was questioned why he had begun with the houses rather than with the church, he replied that, if he had not built them they would never have been done, whereas many would have undertaken the church for the sake of the honour to be gained thereby. He next set about the church and completed a good part of it before he died. At the same time he was engaged on the Badia of Fiesole, and while he was carrying out these two buildings one of his officials in the bank at Florence, in closing the accounts for the year, found that there had been spent on the Badia seven thousand florins, and on S. Lorenzo five thousand. He made this reckoning in order to alarm Cosimo and to induce him to hold his hand. He went to Cosimo and told him this, whereupon Cosimo answered, "I understand what you say. Those in charge at S. Lorenzo deserve blame

because they have done so little work, and those at the Badia deserve praise because they have done more than the others." Knowing that this official was ignorant and avaricious, he wished to reprove him on both counts. Just then it chanced that some of his friends went to visit him, for he was tied to the house by gout, and he was full of complaints about this official to whom he had just given a lesson in spending. Cosimo was liberal in all respects. Over the lodgings at S. Lorenzo and part of the church he spent more than sixty thousand ducats, and then came the Badia, where he completed the lodgings, and a good part of the church which he enlarged and decorated. He used all possible haste to complete this, but was always in fear that his time would be too short.

He next considered how he might best gather together in these lodgings a company of worthy and learned men. First, he determined to collect a suitable lot of books, and one day, when I was with him, he said: "What plan can you suggest for the formation of this library?" I replied that if the books were to be bought, it would be impossible, for the reason that they could not be found. Then he went on, "Then tell me what you would do in the matter." I said it would be necessary to have the books transcribed, whereupon he wanted to know whether I would undertake the task. I said that I would, whereupon he replied that I might begin when I liked, that he left everything to me, and that, as for the money for daily costs, he would order Don Archangelo, the prior, to present the cheques at the bank where they would be duly paid. He was anxious I should use all possible despatch, and, after the library was begun, as there was no lack of money, I engaged forty-five scribes and completed two hundred volumes in twenty-two months, taking as a model the library of Pope Nicolas and following directions written by his own hand, which Pope Nicolas had given to Cosimo.

First came the Bibles and Concordances with comments ancient and modern. The first of the commentators was Origen, who showed the way to all his followers. He wrote in Greek, and a portion of his work, "On the five books of Moses," was translated by S. Jerome. There were the works of

S. Ignatius the martyr, who also wrote in Greek, and was a pupil of S. John the Evangelist, most zealous for Christianity as a writer and as a preacher; those of S. Basil of Cappadocia, a Greek; those of S. Gregory Nazianzen, of Gregory of Nice his brother, of S. John Chrysostom, of S. Athanasius of Alexandria, of S. Ephrem the monk, of Giovanni Climaco, a Greek, and of all the Greek doctors which are translated into Latin, and after these came all the sacred works of the Latin doctors beginning with Lactantius.

As soon as the library was finished he provided the church with fitting books for the choir, and a fine psalter in many volumes. He gave hangings, missals, and chalices for the sacristy and all necessary utensils. The whole cost from what I have heard was seventy thousand ducats. At S. Croce he built the Noviciate with a chapel and a choir close to the sacristy at a cost of eight thousand florins or more, and he built his palace in the city from the foundations, spending sixty thousand ducats. At Careggi he built the greater part of what we now see and the same at Cafaggiuolo in Mugello at a cost of fifteen thousand ducats. These works maintained many poor men who laboured thereon. There was not a year when he did not expend on building from fifteen to eighteen thousand florins, all of which went to the state. He was most particular as to his payment. He gave the contract for the building of Careggi to a master surveyor; and, by the time it was half done, Cosimo saw that before it should be finished the man would lose several thousand florins. So he said to the contractor, "Lorenzo, you have taken this work in hand, and I know that in the end you will be a loser of several thousands of florins. That was never my intention, but rather that you should make a profit. Go on with your work. You shall not lose, and whatever may be right I will give you." And he did what he had promised. Most men would have held that after the master surveyor had made the contract he should have kept it, but Cosimo with rare liberality thought otherwise. In all his dealings he never wished that those who worked for him should lose, but that they should be paid for their trouble.

I once heard Cosimo say that the great mistake of his life was that he did not begin to spend his wealth ten years

earlier; because, knowing well the disposition of his fellow-citizens, he was sure that, in the lapse of fifty years, no memory would remain of his personality or of his house save the few fabrics he might have built. He went on, "I know that after my death my children will be in worse case than those of any other Florentine who has died for many years past; moreover, I know I shall not wear the crown of laurel more than any other citizen." He spake thus because he knew the difficulty of ruling a state as he had ruled Florence, through the opposition of influential citizens who had rated themselves his equals in former times. He acted privately with the greatest discretion in order to safeguard himself, and whenever he sought to attain an object he contrived to let it appear that the matter had been set in motion by someone other than himself and thus he escaped envy and unpopularity. His manner was admirable; he never spoke ill of anyone, and it angered him greatly to hear slander spoken by others. He was kind and patient to all who sought speech with him: he was more a man of deeds than of words: he always performed what he promised, and when this had been done he sent to let the petitioner know that his wishes had been granted. His replies were brief and sometimes obscure, so that they might be made to bear a double sense.

He had a very long memory which retained everything. One evening at home, when he wished for the love of God to give some more books to S. Marco—which books had lain for a long time in a press—he recalled all the books by name, and noted especially one of them, the *Digesto vecchio*, and said: "Make a note mentally that there is thereon the singular name of a certain German who formerly possessed it," remembering thus both the name of the book and of the German. When he came upon it he said, "I once owned it forty years ago and I have never seen it since." So great was his knowledge of all things, that he could find some matter of discussion with men of all sorts; he would talk literature with a man of letters and theology with a theologian, being well versed therein through his natural liking, and for the reading of the Holy Scripture. With philosophy it was just the same, also with astrology, of which he had complete knowledge from having practised it with Maestro Pagolo and

## STATESMEN

other astrologers. Indeed, he put faith in it, and always made use of it in his affairs. He took kindly notice of all musicians, and delighted greatly in their art. He had dealings with painters and sculptors and had in his house works of divers masters. He was especially inclined towards sculpture and showed great favour to all worthy craftsmen, being a good friend to Donatello and all sculptors and painters; and because in his time the sculptors found scanty employment, Cosimo, in order that Donatello's chisel might not be idle, commissioned him to make the pulpits of bronze in S. Lorenzo and the doors of the sacristy. He ordered the bank to pay every week enough money to Donatello for his work and for that of his four assistants. And because Donatello was wont to go clad in a fashion not to Cosimo's taste, Cosimo gave him a red mantle and a cowl, with a cloak to go under the mantle, all new, and one festal day in the morning he sent them in order that Donatello might wear them. After a day or two of wear he put them aside, saying that he would not wear them again as they were too fine for him. Cosimo was thus liberal to all men of worth through his great liking for them. He had good knowledge of architecture, as may be seen from the buildings he left, none of which were built without consulting him; moreover, all those who were about to build would go to him for advice.

Of agriculture he had the most intimate knowledge, and he would discourse thereupon as if he had never followed any other calling. At S. Marco the garden, which was a most beautiful one, was laid out after his instructions. Hitherto it had been a vacant field belonging to some friars who had held it before the reformation of the order by Pope Eugenius. In all his possessions there were few farming operations which were not directed by him. He did much fruit planting and grafting; and, wonderful as it may seem, he knew about every graft that was made on his estates; moreover, when the peasants came into Florence, he would ask them about the fruit trees and where they were planted. He loved to do grafting and lopping with his own hand. One day I had some talk with him when, being then a young man, he had gone from Florence—where there was sickness—to Careggi. It was then February, when they prune the vines, and I found him engaged

in two most excellent tasks. One was to prune the vines every morning for two hours as soon as he rose (in this he imitated Pope Boniface IX, who would prune certain vines in the vineyard of the papal palace at Rome every year in due season. Moreover, at Naples they have preserved till this day his pruning-knife with two silver rings, in memory of Pope Boniface). Cosimo's other employment, when he had done with pruning, was to read the *Moralia* of S. Gregory, an excellent work in thirty-five books, which task occupied him for six months. Both at his villa and in Florence he spent his time well; taking pleasure in no game, save chess, of which he would occasionally play a game or two after supper by way of pastime. He knew Magnolino, who was the best chess player of his age.

It happened once that one of the chief citizens, having taken offence with Cosimo, complained of him to divers others. This, and much else which had not been said, was brought back to him; but he held his tongue, and answered nothing to those who had repeated to him the slander which had been spoken of him. Because he was one of his greatest friends, he treated this citizen as he had never treated anyone else, for he sent for him and assured him that he was wrongfully aggrieved. And because he was a man of much weight, Cosimo addressed him thus: "You concern yourself with infinite, I with finite affairs. You raise your ladder to the heavens, while I rest mine upon earth lest I should mount so high that I may fall. Now it seems to me only just and honest that I should prefer the good name and honour of my house to you: that I should work for my own interest rather than for yours. So you and I will act like two big dogs who, when they meet, smell one another and then, because they both have teeth, go their ways. Wherefore now you can attend to your affairs and I to mine." On this occasion Cosimo spake more openly than ever before; and the offence which this citizen took proved his total ruin through his ill-carriage, and his belief in evil advisers, wherefore the effect of Cosimo's plain speaking was not what he had intended, which was to silence this man and have no further speech with him. Certain rivals of Cosimo informed him that this citizen was still speaking against him, thinking to stir up enmity, and in this

## STATESMEN

they succeeded. After Cosimo's death these same men set to work to injure the fame of Piero his son, now that the field was clear, as they would not have dared to do during Cosimo's life. Having made their attempt against Piero after his father's death, the whole affair came down about their ears. Had they gone to work more temperately it might have had a different ending and the city would not have been injured as it was by the parliament of 1466. But as to what then happened I leave others to write.\*

Cosimo used the greatest caution in his answers, the mark of a prudent man. One day, when I was in his room, there entered one who had some dispute with another citizen who had offered him violence and had occupied certain of his lands. He complained vehemently to Cosimo who listened, keeping silence the while, but asked how recently he had visited these lands. He answered that he had just been there, whereon Cosimo said, "Go there often, take good care of them, and manage them well, and see that they want nothing." This cautious answer of his really meant that he knew nothing about the matter: but the petitioner replied, "See how honestly he has spoken in maligning no one. In saying you should go often to visit these lands which another has occupied, is to say that they are your own, and that you should defend your possession of them." All his answers were seasoned with wit. Many citizens came to consult him on their affairs, and one day came a man who had taken a wife and had been sworn to her several months. Meantime the dame's honesty came under suspicion, and the husband told the story to Cosimo and asked what he should do. Cosimo waited a little, and then said, "As to that horn which seems to you to be growing on your head, you had better swallow it, and then take a walk by the town wall. Then halt at the first ditch you come to, and, having brought up the horn, throw it into the ditch and bury it so that no one may see it." The man at once took Cosimo's meaning and, seeing that he had erred in talking about the business, kept silence afterwards and took the lady as an honest woman.

\* The writer here refers to the attempt of Diotisalvi, Luca Pitti, Soderini, Agnolo Acciaiuolo and others against Piero in 1466. *Vide* Macchiavelli, p. 339; also Muratori, *Annals*, IX, p. 296.

## COSIMO DE' MEDICI

While Fra Roberto was preaching to great crowds at the Osservanza, Cosimo showed him much favour, giving him liberal alms and denying him nought he asked, according to his practice towards all worthy churchmen. Fra Roberto had preached some time in Milan, where Duke Francesco had greatly honoured him and given him rich offerings. After this he changed his habits: he left the Observantists and took up a freer way of life. Duke Francesco gave him some Flemish cloth, very rich and costly, out of which he had made a fine cope and, having quitted Milan, he went to Florence, where he put aside spiritual things and lived in fine style as a layman. He waited on Cosimo, not knowing his humour, and Cosimo, having heard of his changed habits, no longer had the same feeling for him. He made Fra Roberto sit down beside him and, marking his sumptuous array, he put his hand on the fine cope which looked like silk and enquired, "Fra Roberto, what is this fabric?" Fra Roberto answered that Duke Francesco had given it to him, whereupon Cosimo said, "I asked not who gave it to you, but what it was." Fra Roberto wrapped himself up and could not answer. After Cosimo had been minded to reprove him becomingly for the changed manner of his life, he drew near and, whispering in Cosimo's ear, begged of him the loan of two hundred ducats, but Cosimo, speaking fairly, told him he could not do this on account of the change in his ways. What he had formerly given was by way of alms: what he now withheld was by way of reminding Fra Roberto of his error. This reproof was given in such seemingly wise that none of those present perceived it. But when Fra Roberto was gone he explained, becomingly, how obnoxious his present carriage was.

Cosimo was always liberal, especially to men of merit. The majority of men who affect letters, without any other profitable employ, are poor in goods; men like Friar Ambrogio degli Agnoli, a man of religion, very holy and devoted to his order. Cosimo helped his monastery in all its needs, and a day seldom passed when he did not repair to the Agnoli, where he would find Nicolao Nicoli and Lorenzo his own brother, and would spend several hours with them. While Friar Ambrogio would translate S. John Chrysostom on the Epistles of S. Paul—as is told in his life—Nicolao wrote down what Fra Ambrogio



translated, and, rapidly as Nicolao could write, he could not write fast enough for Fra Ambrogio's dictation and often was forced to beg him to go slower. This I heard from Cosimo who was present.

Nicolao had spent most of his substance in books and wanted for necessaries—as we may read in his Life. Cosimo, hearing of this, bade him not stint himself and told him that the bank had been ordered to advance him what he wanted, which the cashier would pay on receiving his bill. Nicolao duly took advantage of Cosimo's liberality; most praiseworthy because it served the needs of so illustrious a man as Nicolao. During his life he drew from the bank five hundred ducats, thus making a good show before the world, which he could hardly have done but for Cosimo, who, when he went to Verona to avoid the plague, took with him no buffoons or heralds but Nicolao Nicoli and Messer Carlo d' Arezzo with whom he could discuss literature. Cosimo made no demand on Nicolao for the five hundred ducats, having always treated this loan as a gift, and in this fashion he succoured all good and learned men in their need. They are indeed good men who practise liberality like Cosimo.

I must not forbear to tell of his great generosity to Maestro Tomaso da Serezana, afterwards Pope Nicolas, while he was Bishop of Bologna, without income, seeing that Bologna had rebelled against the Church. Pope Eugenius sent him, together with Messer Giovanni Carvagialle, on an embassy into France, but being short of funds he could give them but little for the journey. Messer Tomaso being in Florence, I, as a scribe, went to see him, whereupon he desired me to wait upon Cosimo on his behalf to beg for a loan of a hundred ducats, because Pope Eugenius had not given him money enough for so long a journey. When I had done this errand Cosimo, without much consideration, said, "Tell him I will send to him Roberto Martelli, and will let him have what money he wants." I had only just returned to him when Roberto appeared with a general letter of credit to all Cosimo's agents, instructing them to pay to Maestro Tomaso whatever sum he might want and without limit. When Maestro Tomaso read of this unheard-of liberality—for he was only known to Cosimo by his good name—he expressed to Roberto

his unbounded gratitude, in that more had been done for him than he had asked for, whereupon Roberto said that it was but a trifle granted on account of Cosimo's goodwill.

On his travels he drew two hundred ducats on his letter of credit; and, on his return to Florence, found himself still in want of money to go on to Rome. There was a pardon at S. Giovanni and there Messer Tomaso met Cosimo coming out of church and thanked him for all he had done. He went on to tell him that he wanted another hundred ducats to take him to Rome, whereupon Cosimo said he would send Roberto with a commission for whatever he might want, and when he came Tomaso would accept no more than a hundred ducats. While he was at Viterbo a cardinal's hat was sent to him, and also one for his companion Giovanni Carvagialle, a Spaniard. Before the year was out he was made Pope, taking his title, Nicolas, from the Cardinal of S. Croce who had advanced him. After his election one of his first acts was to make Cosimo his banker in acknowledgment of the benefits he had received. In the year of Jubilee some hundred thousand ducats came to the Church, and Cosimo was well repaid for his generous accommodation. Cosimo had a beneficent eye, always friendly to men of merit, and knowing how to estimate their worth and to serve them. He was always ready to do what was asked of him, and besides he did much of his own accord.

When he was at Careggi he went to visit a very learned preaching friar, an Observantist Franciscan. He was much pleased with the friar's discourse and, at parting, asked him whether he had a Bible in which he could consult the texts which men brought out therefrom, to which the friar answered "No," whereupon Cosimo added that he would have more to say later. Meantime he bought a beautiful hand-Bible which he sent to the friar, begging for his prayers. This the friar accepted with much gratitude. It was through Cosimo's instrumentality that Giovanni Argiropolo came to lecture at Florence to the great profit of the citizens. He showed him much favour, and Giovanni often went to see him, because he did not then go abroad; and on feast days, when he was free, Messer Giovanni and certain of his scholars would visit him. Cosimo questioned him on various matters: on the immortality of the soul and other questions of theology and

## STATESMEN

philosophy. Through long practice with men of letters Cosimo possessed a sound judgment and his answers were very satisfactory; but a man who could satisfy Cosimo needed to be very skilful and discreet. One day, when Messer Giovanni and Messer Otto Niccolini were with him, he asked the first whether the writings of the jurisconsults were in accordance with moral philosophy, or by what philosophy they were inspired. Messer Giovanni replied that the writings of the jurisconsults were to be put beneath those of the moral philosophers, since they possessed nothing of the essence of philosophy, but Messer Otto maintained the contrary, and there was angry argument between the two. Cosimo was satisfied himself that jurisprudence must yield to moral philosophy, but he was minded to hear Messer Otto's defence, which was difficult to set forth, as it had to be proved by reasonable argument. Finally the dispute was left in indecision; but Cosimo was greatly pleased therewith and with the various pleas employed.

He also befriended Marsiglio, son of Ficino, a man of good talent and carriage and learned in Greek and Latin. His means were small, and to keep him from poverty Cosimo bought for him a house in Florence and a farm at Careggi, giving him thus income sufficient to allow him to live with one or two companions, and generally to serve his need. A servant of his had worked hard for many years at a wage agreed upon of so much a month; and when incapacitated he paid the man just the same, whereas many others would have just given him house-room, or handed him over to some guild to support. Cosimo was fain to support his servant out of his own purse, not out of that of others, so he gave him a house and farm out of which he might gain a living for himself and his wife as a recompense for his labour.

99  
Having spoken of the praiseworthy way of life followed by Cosimo, specially in his management of things spiritual and temporal as well as of those appertaining to the honour of God, I will add that his fame was known throughout the world so that all men of worship passing that way desired to visit him. There was at Ferrara a bishop of Fünfkirchen,\* a Hungarian, a man of great learning and high station, who,

\* *Vide Life*, p. 192.

## COSIMO DE' MEDICI

having finished his studies, was recalled to his country, but was unwilling to depart till he should first have visited Florence and seen the three illustrious men who then dwelt there, Cosimo de' Medici, Messer Giovanni Argiropolo and Messer Poggio. When he arrived in Florence he told me he desired to see all three before leaving, and as Cosimo was then at Careggi I accompanied him thither. I told Cosimo of his wish, and introduced him, and the two conversed a long time. After the bishop had left, Cosimo told me he was the most remarkable ultramontane he had ever met. The bishop was greatly struck with Cosimo's marvellous presence and ready wit, saying that in all his life he had never conversed with a more extraordinary man. The presence of Cosimo took nothing away from his fame, which greatly increased, and numberless men of worship sought him through his world-wide reputation.

In his time lived many men of mark, both lay and cleric, and in literature of all sorts. They were to be met, not only in Florence, but in every part of Italy and foreign lands. First of all in his day lived Pope Martin, who reformed the Church of God which had long been vexed by schism and discord. Then came Pope Eugenius, and Pope Nicolas not inferior to either of these two. Outside Italy reigned the Emperor Sigismund, who held, besides the imperial dominion, the kingdom of Hungary, a valiant foe of the impious Turk, as is plainly manifest, because in his reign they were kept within their own limits and not suffered to oppress Christian people as in former days. Then there was King Alfonso, the paragon of the rulers of his time through the noble qualities which graced him, and Duke Filippo of Milan, who, though certain faults were blended with his undoubted merits, wielded such power that, when he was engaged with the Florentines and the Venetians at the same time, he gave them plenty to think about. To him succeeded Duke Francesco, a master of the art of war, who by his own strength made himself master of Milan. The Doge of Venice was Francesco Foscari, by whose valour and skilful policy the Venetians acquired almost all their territories on the mainland. Cosimo de' Medici was inferior to no one of these distinguished men in his remarkable qualities and outstanding merits.

## STATESMEN

Fortune favoured him in all his undertakings. He had to deal with King Alfonso, who advanced with a powerful army against the Florentines; and with the Venetians who were allied with Duke Francesco. Cosimo was always apprehensive of the effect of any further aggrandisement of Venice which would place Florence in peril; so he did his utmost to prevent it. Duke Francesco saw clearly what the result would be if the Milanese failed to support him with supplies—as they afterwards did fail—because the Venetians had offered to Giannozzo Manetti at Rome, by the hand of their ambassador, Pasquale Malapieri, a blank treaty which they agreed to ratify, after it should have been set in order by the Florentines. After the business had been in hand some six months, Cosimo realised the situation and, because the Venetians had retreated into their own country, he felt he need not trouble further about them, and he was right in his endeavour to break their power. While Duke Francesco was fighting with the Venetians, Florence waged a successful war with King Alfonso and drove his army back over his borders.\* At the end of this war there was peace for twelve years through Cosimo's skilful policy in bringing the Italian powers—especially in the case of Venice—to an equality of strength. Peace lasted as long as he lived, but as soon as he died† Venice again declared war on Florence, a step she would never have taken had he been alive. They despatched Bartolomeo of Bergamo with a strong army, so strong that His Majesty King Ferdinand and Duke Galeazzo and the Florentines with their combined forces had difficulty in resisting it. And as the Venetians realised that they were the victors in this expedition, they broke all their oaths and promises made by the mediation of Pope Nicolas: they also disregarded all his ecclesiastical censures, and paid no regard to any of these things. Having thus narrated these deeds of Cosimo by way of record, I have not been able to keep the same order I should have followed, had I been writing his Life, and on this account the details are set down irregularly; but this record will suffice for future biographers, and will give them much information.

To return to Cosimo. It happened that a certain of his kinsmen—who indeed was very rich—never met him without

\* 1448.

† 1464.

pouring out grievances, declaring that he was poverty-stricken, and every day he would tell the same tale. Cosimo made up his mind not to answer him so as to escape this worry, but one day, in the Piazza de' Signori, he met this kinsman who straightway began to repeat the same old tale. When he had come to an end Cosimo called him by name and said to him, "You are my kinsman, and nothing is more displeasing to me than your constant cry of poverty; because the man who proclaims himself a pauper always suffers hurt thereby. Otherwhere than in Florence everyone makes himself out to be richer than he really is, but in Florence the custom is the opposite: so that a man gains in one respect and loses in all the rest, which is a grave matter. Reverting to your own case, can a man be called poor who has sixty thousand florins with the Lombards: who is concerned with trade in Rome, in Florence and in divers other places: who holds possessions, like you, on all sides, which you have bought regardless of price, outbidding all the rest: who builds sumptuous town and country houses: who lives in the state you and your family maintain with your horses and fine attire, the handsomest in Florence?" Thus Cosimo laid the situation before him: he could make no reply as it was all true. This natural medicine cured him completely and he never grumbled again.

It happened that the surveyor of his building works cheated him of a large sum of money. Having investigated the business, Cosimo, like the wise man he was, did not fly into a rage, but simply withdrew the commission from the surveyor, and told him that he had no further need of his services, and that he had advanced to him as his agent a sum of money amounting to a hundred thousand florins. The story of this man and what he had done was soon spread all about the city; men talked of little else, and wherever he went he met with blame. One day he met Cosimo, whom he had robbed and in my presence thus addressed him: "Cosimo, all over Florence men are saying that I robbed you and that on this account you dismissed me from the surveyorship of your buildings." Cosimo in his reply did not repeat that this man had robbed him (as indeed he had), but said, "What would you have me do?" Said the other, "I would that should anyone ask you whether

## STATESMEN

I had robbed you, you should answer, 'No.'" Then said Cosimo, "Get some one to ask me this question and I will tell the whole story." Some others, who were by, when they heard him began to laugh and said nothing about the matter, nor was anyone bold enough to comment on anything a man of worship like Cosimo might say. No other would have shown such great patience.

Cosimo used to say that in most gardens there grew a weed which should never be watered but left to dry up. Most men, however, watered it instead of letting it die of drought. This weed was that worst of all weeds, Envy, and that there were few except the truly wise who did not make shipwreck through it. In his latter days Cosimo fell into irresolute mood, and would often sit for hours without speaking, sunk in thought. In reply to his wife who remarked on his taciturnity he said, "When you propose to go into the country, you trouble yourself for fifteen days in settling what you will do when you get there. Now that the time has come for me to quit this world and pass into another, does it not occur to you that I ought to think about it?" For about a year before he died his humour was to have Aristotle's Ethics read to him by Messer Bartolomeo da Colle, the chancellor of the palace, and he brought Donato Acciaiuoli to arrange in order the writings on the Ethics which he had collected under Messer Giovanni,\* and when these came to Cosimo, Messer Bartolomeo read them to him, after emendation by Donato, and this emended text of the Ethics is the one now in use. Many other things might be told of Cosimo by one who purposed to write his Life, but I am not set on this task. I have only set down matters concerning him which I myself have seen or heard from trustworthy witnesses. I leave all the rest to anyone who may undertake the work of writing the Life of so worthy a citizen, the ornament of his age. What I have written is the actual truth according to what I have heard and seen, neither adding nor omitting anything. Whoever may put together this Life may be vastly more lengthy than I have been, and let things be more clearly portrayed.

\* Giovanni Argiropolo.

## PALLA DI NOFERI DEGLI STROZZI

PALLA DI NOFERI DEGLI STROZZI (1372-1462)

Messer Palla di Noferi degli Strozzi, of a noble family which has produced many illustrious scions, was notable for his high qualities and his knowledge of Greek and Latin letters. Devoted to literature he held it in the highest esteem and raised it to a position in Florence it had never before attained. Latin was far better known than Greek, which he determined to encourage and raise to an equal level. Wherefore he brought into Italy Manuello Grisolora, a Greek, and paid the greater part of his charges. As Grisolora had no books Messer Palla bought a number of Greek texts for him; the *Cosmographia di Tolomeo* with illustrations, the Lives of Plutarch, the works of Plato and many more. Messer Lionardo made his translation of Aristotle's politics from Messer Palla's copy. Through Palla's introduction of Manuello Lionardo d' Arezzo, Guerinio of Verona, Friar Ambrogio, Antonio Corbinegli, Roberto dei Rossi, Lionardo Gustini, Francesco Barbero, Piero Pagolo Vergerio, and Ser Filippo di Ser Ugolino, one of the finest Latin scholars of the time, became Manuello's pupils. Nicolao Nicoli also studied under him, especially in letters. This was the rich harvest which sprang from Manuello's coming; one which is being reaped to-day, which we owe to Messer Palla's generosity and noble mind. Messer Lionardo d' Arezzo said in praise of him: "In all the gifts, mental and physical, which made for human happiness he was more richly endowed than any other man of his time." He was a fine scholar in Greek and Latin; he had marvellous ability and great personal beauty, so that if anyone, who did not know him, chanced to meet him, he would straightway exclaim: "This must be Messer Palla." He had a family of sons and daughters, the most seemly in Florence; the girls having been educated by Madonna Marietta, the most accomplished woman of her time. They intermarried with the highest families as will appear from their pedigree. Neri di Donato Acciaiuoli, Francesco Soderini and Tomaso Sacchetti all men of high rank. Palla was highly esteemed in the city from which he received all possible honour. He was sent as ambassador on all the most important missions, and everywhere did well for the honour

## STATESMEN

and benefit of the state. Beyond this he was scrupulously upright, and he ardently desired that his children might be the same. On this account he put them under the care of Messer Giovanni da Imola, and when the young people went about the city they were known to all from their distinguished carriage. When it was found necessary to improve the teaching classes in Florence, Messer Palla, from his well-known love of letters, was put in charge of the reforms which might give the city a good school of instruction. He at once set up classes for the study of the highest subjects, and the fame of the teachers he engaged attracted students from all parts of the world. From 1422 to 1433 Florence flourished greatly, rich in schools of learning and in illustrious citizens who strove to outdo one another in good works, and her good government made her feared and respected universally.

Messer Palla had always kept in his house learned and worthy tutors to teach his children; he set even more store on good manners and conduct than on learning. Besides Giovanni da Imola he engaged Messer Tomaso da Sarzana, afterwards Pope Nicolas V, who had come from Bologna to Florence through poverty. Florence was a true *Alma Mater*, and he lived for two years in the houses of two generous citizens, M. Rinaldo degli Albizzi and M. Palla Strozzi. During this time he earned enough to enable him to return to Bologna and complete his studies; and after he became Pope he was able to befriend the sons of his Florentine benefactors. Maso, the son of Rinaldo, was involved in a charge of rebellion, not altogether through his own fault, whereupon Pope Nicolas found for him an honourable office; and Carlo, the son of Messer Palla, became the Pope's private chamberlain and shortly afterwards was made cardinal on account of his high qualities.

To return to Messer Palla. As a citizen he was habitually modest, and in all his dealings and in his public administration his chief care was to avoid envy, knowing how pernicious it might prove to be in a city like Florence, especially when incurred by men in high public position. He always avoided publicity. He never went into the Piazza except when he was sent for, nor into the Mercato Nuovo. In going to the Piazza, so as to avoid observation, he would go by S. Trinità

## PALLA DI NOFERI DEGLI STROZZI

and turn into the Santo Apostolo as far as the Via Messer Bivigliano. Then he would reach the Piazza and enter the Palazzo without delay. He never wasted time by loitering, but returned home after business and spent his time in studying Greek and Latin, Being greatly devoted to letters he bought a fine collection of books which he housed in a handsome building in S. Trinità for the use of the public. He wished to furnish it with books on all subjects, but this project came to nothing on account of the misfortunes which befell him.

Messer Palla's position in Florence was a fortunate one. His son Bartolomeo was one of the most charming youths in the city. His father held him dearer than any other of his children on account of his gentle manners and virtuous disposition. He profited rapidly from the teaching of the professors his father kept in the house, and soon showed a real taste for letters. But in his early youth he was stricken with illness and died in spite of all the efforts made to save his life. On account of the universal love and regard felt for him his death was greatly lamented in the city. All may realise how deep was the grief felt by Messer Palla at the loss of his beloved son, and all Florence knew that no heavier stroke could have fallen upon him. But being a wise man he saw that he needs must fight against his natural grief and show that he was indeed the man the Florentines deemed him to be. Having pondered this matter as a stricken father he determined to compose his soul in peace, seeing that there was no remedy, and that this stroke was the will of God towards some good end. He resolutely put his grief behind him, and would say to any who came to console him that he had taken leave of Bartolomeo, and that he had rather they should speak of him no more; that what had pleased Almighty God must also please him. Thus he indulged in no vain repining, showing the greatness of his soul in this as in other matters.

Another trouble assailed him. He was so heavily taxed that his income did not suffice to meet his expenditure, wherefore he was forced to borrow money from divers citizens. His debts were eight hundred florins or more, and on this sum he repaid three *per mensem*, which was not enough. Therefore

## STATESMEN

he did what every good citizen would have done. He went as ambassador to give his city the fruit of his judgment and to secure the payment of his debts.

He was the intimate friend of Giovanni de' Medici, with whom he went as ambassador to Venice, also with Cosimo—Giovanni's son. They met at Lucca in 1420 when they fled from the city on account of the plague. Now Cosimo had told him that if he was in want of money he could have what he wanted from the Medici bank, the officials having been instructed to pay him whatever money he might need, Messer Palla also authorised his bankers to repay this sum to the Medici when they wanted it.

Now as he had borrowed twenty thousand florins from the Medici, and divers sums from others, it seemed to him that he was spending excessively—not counting money paid for interest—wherefore he resolved to repay all his debts and get rid of the interest. There was in Florence a friend of Palla and Cosimo, by name Piero Bonciani, with whom Palla discussed this project, but Bonciani doubted whether there was the wherewithal to pay, considering the condition of Palla's affairs. Palla told Piero to ask Cosimo to meet him at the hospital of Lemmo on the morrow and that he would have ready all his accounts, so that he might be able to pay all his debts. One afternoon later on Bonciani met Cosimo and, in all good faith, told him that he would lose a good part of what he had lent. But Cosimo, who knew well the state of Palla's affairs, laughed and said, "I shall get every soldo that is due to me, and if he wants more I will let him have it." On the following day he went to the appointed place, and, having investigated Palla's estate, found he would be well off after all his debts should have been discharged. After the investigation Palla said to Cosimo: "I owe you twenty thousand florins, and now request you to pay no more money to my bank, for I will pay you this debt. There are my estates at Empoli and at Prato. You can repay yourself out of these." This Cosimo did, taking from these estates enough to reimburse himself. Palla did the same with all his other creditors. He owed money to Agnolo di Filippo Pandolfini who, as a kinsman, had helped him. Palla gave him parts of his estate and a house at Empoli, still held by the children of Messer

## PALLA DI NOFERI DEGLI STROZZI

Carlo. So Palla paid all who had lent him money and was in debt to no one. He also paid a large sum to the Commune for the heavy debt he owed for tax.

Thus Messer Palla spent his life, prosecuting his studies, giving counsel to the republic, going as ambassador or serving with the Ten of the Balìa whenever the state had need of his services. Florence had long been at peace, the people lived easy and opulent lives, and they soon began to desire to extend their boundaries and hence arose the attempt against Lucca which led to the gravest political discords. The best and wisest of the leaders were opposed to it, such as Messer Palla, Cosimo de' Medici, Agnolo di Filippo and many estimable citizens who had the interest of the state at heart. Those who desired it were led by Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi and those of his party. Thus, from this clash of will, the city was divided and, as Messer Lionardo d' Arezzo writes in his *History*, the war with Lucca was the beginning of the civil discords and the cause of all the evils which befell Florence; and Nicolo da Uzzano spake truly when he declared that the first man who should propose a public assembly would be digging a grave for himself; therefore, as a wise man of weight, he opposed all changes in the state, foreseeing the evils which would follow.

After these troubles, Nicolo being dead, the Balìa of 1433 was formed. Palla vehemently opposed its enactments, being certain they would lead to disaster, but the movement was too strong for him to withstand. It was set going by the great crowd of ignorant and turbulent citizens. This was the first trial of such a parliament in Florence, and these men were its promoters.\* Palla recognised whither things were tending and the evil consequences which must follow; so, being unable to do any good was unwilling to do mischief, he let the madness of the leaders run its course in the powerlessness to stem the calamity, as he surely would have done as a foe of all civil strife. In the end the parliament of 1433 banished Cosimo, and, but for Palla, would have done worse. In no case would he have assented to it, nor would it have been carried out if he had possessed enough influence with those

\* Vespasiano forgot the Balìa of 1378. *Vide* Macchiavelli, *Fior. Hist.*, p. 165.

## STATESMEN

who promoted it. Moreover, there was his friendship with Giovanni de' Medici and his son Cosimo, who had helped him in his difficulties as has been told. After Cosimo and the others had been banished the city fell into confusion and uproar; the leaders of '33 seized power and closed the ballot and set up the Balìa, wherefore Cosimo's party set themselves to win a majority at the next election of the priors and thereby to secure his recall. The leaders of '33, by way of giving an air of decency to the recent scrutiny, had not deprived all their adversaries of political rights; and when '34 had come Cosimo's friends deemed that the time was ripe for his recall, and negotiated with those of the Signoria whom they could trust for the change of the state at the end of the year. When the leaders of '33 heard this they at once took up arms and bade their friends do the same. The Piazza was filled with armed men, and when Palla heard of this gathering he, like a man of peace, remained at home, fearing riot and rapine. He also asked that soldiers might be sent to guard his house. Messer Rinaldo now called upon Palla to join his faction with his armed troop, judging that this support would be greatly to his own interest and feeling sure of victory should Palla consent. But Palla steadily refused, saying that he had no mind to destroy what he had not made—to wit, the state, which Rinaldo's party were leading to certain ruin—and that he wished all men to know how entirely he disagreed with them and the changes on which they were bent.

There were some who made rude remarks about him because he refused to show himself, declaring he was poor spirited and that his abstention at this moment would mean his ruin. Palla held firm to his resolve, but certain of his kinsfolk, men of weight, urged him to refuse and to have no dealings with these madmen. To those who urged him on he replied that he had no fear of suffering hurt through well-doing, that, as they all knew, he had always kept clear of dishonour and had censured all those who might strive to provoke it. By this firm attitude he greatly weakened Rinaldo's position and influence; indeed, it may be said that it was the cause of his downfall. Rinaldo's foes were heartened and his friends cast down. Not only did Palla injure Rinaldo's reputation, for, as this change was a new

## PALLA DI NOFERI DEGLI STROZZI

departure and all men were full of fear, those who would have joined the party of revolution, had Palla gone out, held aloof because he stayed at home. They saw it rested with him whether this party should conquer or be conquered. But he was ill-rewarded for all the good he accomplished. As things stood Palla's followers took courage and Pope Eugenius intervened to still the discord. He sent for all the leaders who had taken up arms and brought about a truce. A new Balìa was formed and Cosimo and all those exiled by the last were recalled.

After Cosimo's return everyone thought that affairs would settle down, but the troubles caused by the first Balìa were followed by many others. The majority of the citizens who were well disposed to him praised him highly for what he had done, and put him on the Balìa as one who had done good service to the state. His mind was at peace and he suspected nothing, but the envy of his foes was too much for him. Having gained control of the government, they held a ballot and formed a Balìa in favour of the Otto della Pratica and the captain of the forces. They also put on it Giovanni da Fermo, a brutal fellow. As soon as they thought the city was calming down, they began to exile certain citizens and to threaten others. All were greatly disturbed when they saw what was happening; this violent seizure of the executive power and notice of a fresh election. By way of carrying out their policy of change they disfranchised a large number of citizens by a scrutiny, working for their private ends and having no regard for the welfare of the state. At this time there was in Florence a party of overbearing men who held that Cosimo was bound to recognise them as the authors of his recall, wherefore he was obliged to be patient, and wary in his carriage, as there were many others who could not keep a cool head. Messer Palla and many citizens made no move, for this fresh step was not what they anticipated. The city being in a state of confusion, and a large number of citizens having been banished (for they banished anyone they would), all good men fell under the displeasure of the dominant faction. Messer Agnolo di Filippo and Bartolomeo Carducci, kinsfolk of Palla, one day got information that the banishment of Palla was contemplated. As they knew the great service he had

## STATESMEN

done in preventing the malcontents of 1433 from taking up arms by his refusal to join them, they were greatly astonished, and enquired indignantly of certain of those in power to hear whether the report was true. Those they consulted answered "No" by way of deceiving them, but at the same time advised Palla to retire into the country for a season, on account of the jealousy against him, and not to show himself in the city for several months. Agnolo and Bartolomeo believed this to be true and reported it to Palla.

Not long after this certain men made bold to say that no judge of appeal was wanted in Florence, and that it would be well to banish Palla, good citizen as he was. He had helped the city with wise counsel and financial aid—no one else paid so heavy a tax as his—but now this did not avail him. The hostile feeling against him was so strong that many of those in power consented to his exile so as to get rid of him, thinking that, were he out of sight, no one would be left to work to their detriment. Thus Palla and his son Noferi were sent into exile for ten years, innocent as they were. When Palla heard the length of the term he was grieved doubly over his son's fate, feeling that, if he himself were innocent, Noferi was doubly innocent.

He himself was sixty-two, an age when men desire to live at home with their friends and kinsfolk, nevertheless he still hoped that God might give him ten years more of life, and let him return and live in peace amongst his fellows, believing that he might placate the envy of his foes, but forgetting that those who injure never forgive. They exiled him to Padua, where he lived the life of a good citizen. He applied himself to letters, both Latin and Greek, living an upright life as did the philosophers of old. He always spoke well of his country and never complained of exile.

105  
He left his son Lorenzo in Florence to manage his estates, for he hoped he had done nothing which would lead to their confiscation; but his good name did not avail him, for in the fourth year of his exile his foes banished Lorenzo as well. Heavy as was this second stroke of ill-fortune, it did not break his spirit, for he went on in the same course of life. Other injuries followed, perhaps with the object of lessening his love for Florence and his desire to return. I have lived

## PALLA DI NOFERI DEGLI STROZZI

long enough to see those who persecuted him fall into the same case—a fate they never anticipated.

It is thus that civil wars and revolutions are caused—wise men have said that our parliament may bring fifty years of ruin on a state. Palla, in his study at Padua, found a tranquil port after many years of shipwreck. He engaged at a liberal salary Giovanni Argiropolo to read Greek with him, and another Greek scholar as well. With Argiropolo he read Aristotle's *Natural History*; and the other Greek read certain other works he selected. He wasted no time, but undertook the translation of Chrysostom from Greek into Latin. Noferi also attended these lectures and was a diligent student, rarely leaving the house, but when he went out all men honoured him by raising their caps. Whenever exiles from Florence might call upon him Messer Palla would always dismiss them, for he was determined no one should ever hear him speak disrespectfully of the city. When the Florentine ambassador to Venice passed through Padua he always waited on him and conversed with him. I heard Messer Giannozzo Manetti say that he could not sufficiently praise his good manners. When he went as ambassador to Venice he halted at Padua, where he met Messer Palla, who visited him constantly at his lodgings. He marvelled greatly to find Palla so courageous and cheerful and uncomplaining of his exile, scarcely deeming that he could be a banished man.

Thus Palla passed his ten years of exile, and at the end he hoped he had borne himself well enough to secure his recall, but the ill-will of his foes in Florence was active and they suspected that his presence would be an embarrassment to them. Having struck him once they determined to strike him again, and while he was hoping for a recall he heard that he was sentenced to a further exile of ten years. Still, he bore the blow with patience, but being now seventy-two years of age it must have been a heavy grief, seeing that he greatly desired to return. But his discreet carriage in the past availed him nothing. His patience failed him not, and he found comparative ease in his studies, putting his misfortunes aside. The second ten years of exile passed, and his foes were still unrelenting. When he heard that another ten years had been added he merely answered that he feared he would



not have time to see them out. In addition to exile many other calamities fell upon him. His son Lorenzo was murdered at Gubbio by a Florentine. Heavy grief fell upon him for the death of his son, and despair that he was being left alone in his old age. Soon after his son Noferi, a youth devoted to learning and best beloved by his father, died also, and to crown his sorrow the death of his wife, who had always been most tender and assiduous in her care of him. Misfortune had not yet finished with him. All his hopes now rested in Carlo, his third son, who had been educated for the priesthood. In his present misfortune Messer Palla had little hope of advancement for any son of his, but a career in the Church, seeing that Carlo was a youth of learning and virtue, seemed to promise that he might restore somewhat the fortunes of the house. Moreover, Thomas of Sarzana, who had formerly lived in the house of Messer Palla, was now Pope Nicolas V, a lover of all men of merit, and Palla hoped that Carlo might succeed by the Pope's aid. Carlo went to Rome and prospered, as his father had anticipated. He won the Pope's favour at once and was made private secretary. He was greatly liked by the College of Cardinals and by all about the court, so much so that it was commonly reported that the Pope would cause him to be elected cardinal at the next vacancy. But it pleased God to call the youth to Himself. One can hardly realise what the grief of the father must have been at the loss of this beloved son on whom all his hopes were based. Reft of this last hope there was nothing before him but death, for there was none left now to restore the fortunes of his house.

After Messer Carlo's death he gave himself entirely to the study of sacred things, thinking no more of his earthly state and letting his mind rest in peace. When his exile had lasted twenty years and he was eighty-two years of age, they added ten years more to his term. After this long exile, after the deaths of his wife and sons, he thought no more of a return to Florence, and cared for nought but his soul's health. Realising the sorrows of this life, and that the final cure thereof was to turn to God, he applied himself to the contemplation of the heavenly life and to do everything a faithful Christian ought to do to make a good end. When he had reached the ripe age of ninety-two, still sound in mind and body, he rendered back

his soul to God like a faithful Christian. If he had lived in the Roman republic when great men abounded, and if his life had been added to those of other illustrious men, it would have been equal to any. As no record of it has been written it has seemed to me fitting that one should be made—even in my humble way—so that the memory of such a man might be preserved as a model to those who are now living and to those who are to come. This example of the fate of an illustrious citizen of Florence should teach them not to trust too much to Fortune.

## MATTEO STROZZI

Matteo di Simone degli Strozzi was of the highest birth. He possessed a wide knowledge of Latin letters, but, not contented with this, he devoted himself to philosophy, and, together with Antonio Barbadoro, Benedetto degli Strozzi, Alessandro Arrighi and other citizens with whom he was intimate, heard the lectures of Messer Giannozzo on the Ethics of Aristotle. In the city he won all the civic honours within his reach, and bore himself in a way which gained for him a good name. He devoted himself entirely to letters, was a man of the soundest judgment and widest views and was also of most generous mind. And as the fateful happenings of '34 were distasteful to him and to others not inflamed by factious spirit, he deemed that, as he had always borne himself temperately and had never supported any revolutionary action in the city, he had deserved well and never dreamt of exile.

It never occurred to him that he had done aught to deserve it. Thus, his conscience being clear, he sought to be made gonfalonier of justice, and knowing that the ballot bags were opened and would soon be closed, he went to the registrar of the district to consult him about being made gonfalonier, and this man promised him it should be done. Next he sought a known friend who lived in Santo Spirito for further advice, and, as they discussed the affair, his friend asked him whether he had talked of it to anyone in the quarter, and he replied that he had, and that he had been informed by the registrar that the affair could be carried through. His friend, like an

STATESMEN

honest man, replied : " Then he was deceiving you, because he was one of those who in the canvassing brought forward your name in order that you might be banished. This will be your fate before fifteen days have passed, and there is no help for it."

When he heard this Matteo was greatly surprised and declared he knew nothing to account for this step. His friend replied that he was grieved then, but that nothing could be done. Fortune had decided that he should be banished, and here was evidence how much envy could do against him. Envy, and not any offences he had committed towards the state, was the cause of his exile. He was a man of quality, and in his quarter there were few who could be placed before him, since he was born of noble and learned parents, a man of good name and reputation who might well have gone as ambassador and enjoyed any honour the state could confer, but for this exile. Moreover, it was greatly to his hurt that he belonged to the same quarter as those who, fearing lest he should outstrip them, helped to banish him. There were some others of his own house who, if they had followed his counsel, would not have fallen into the pit where they ultimately found themselves. He had a clear outlook in all matters, and in his time the house of Strozzi could count more men of weight than any other in Florence. I say nothing of those who lived in Mantua, or in Ferrara in his time : men of mark and of the highest merit. In Florence Messer Palla di Noferi, Messer Marcello degli Strozzi and Benedetto di Peracone. Also at Mantua Messer Roberto, a man of the highest station ; at Florence the Count Lorenzo, and Messer Tito and Noferi di Messer Palla, and Messer Carlo his son, who was highly learned and came near to be made a cardinal, as is told in the Life of Palla.

AGNOLO PANDOLFINI (1360-1446)

He was born of honourable parents, who by their upright life had become kin to the best in the state. He was learned in Latin and philosophy, both moral and natural, beyond