

ambition and perceived the possibility and the necessity of uniting the whole peninsula in a single State under a single master. At the same time, in Florence and the greater Tuscan communes the crisis of republican institutions clearly takes shape, and it becomes obvious that the Signoria is not far off. At Florence and Siena more especially, the insurrection of the town proletariat, led by men of the Lesser Arts hitherto excluded from power, shews that the Commune has been captured by a populace unprepared for the task of governing it, and hence that first the bourgeois reaction and then the Signoria will be able to solve a problem otherwise insoluble.

The history of republican Florence from the death of Dante to the close of the fourteenth century presents characteristic features of profound interest. As we have said, for defence against Henry VII she had given herself to the Signoria of King Robert; later for defence against the Tuscan Ghibellines to that of the Duke of Calabria; and finally, to prosecute the war against the Pisans for the acquisition of Lucca, she had created Signore Walter of Brienne, Duke of Athens and Count of Lecce, the nephew of King Robert (1342). In actual fact no political faction and no stratum of society desired the tyranny; but the magnates, always oppressed by laws of exception and restive under the rein of the Ordinances of Justice (1293), after having attempted a *coup d'état* in October 1341, hoped that the *condottiere* suddenly exalted to the Signoria would wreak revenge for them on the *popolani*, both *grassi* and *minuti*; the Priors of the republic, hesitating and surprised by events, were unable to arrest his course towards the Signoria; and the *popolani minuti*, always excluded from the government but ever more aggressive and numerous owing to the natural increase of industrial production, blindly acclaimed Walter as they had Corso Donati in open strife with the Commune forty years before. Thus on 8 September 1342, supported by his soldiers and by the enthusiasm of the *popolani minuti*, and urged on by his ambition and the incitements of the magnates, the Duke of Athens was proclaimed Signore. But he could only pursue his private interests, for he had neither statesmanship nor generosity, while those who had aided him expected something very different. The magnates saw themselves betrayed; the *popolani minuti* found that they had been cheated; and the ancient possessors of power, the *popolani grassi*, prepared for a reaction. On 26 July 1343 there broke out a general and furious insurrection, and in a few hours the duke's power was gone. On 1 August he renounced the Signoria and on the night of 5-6 August, escorted by a band of Sieneese troops, he left the city for ever. The brief adventure was ended; the Commune was restored in its traditional form, and the social conflict recommenced with savage violence.

From the fall of the Duke of Athens to the outbreak of the revolt of the Ciompi the constitutional crisis grew worse and became steadily more complicated with fresh factors. The traditional classes were profoundly

transformed; Guelfism and Ghibellinism lost their ancient meaning and were made the pretext for mutual accusations and reprisals. The Greater Arts, *i.e.* the industrial and mercantile associations which since the Peace of Cardinal Latino (1280) had monopolised political power, had been inwardly transmuted and refined in measure as the ever richer manufacturers and merchants entered into closer multifarious relations everywhere in Italy and abroad, adopting the life of *grands seigneurs* and shewing marked tendencies to oligarchy. Lastly, the *popolo minuto* did not participate in politics save very indirectly in the train of the Lesser Arts, themselves always in the background and always longing to regain a share of power. The question of the proletariat attained greater dimensions daily. According to Giovanni Villani the Arte della Lana alone employed 30,000 persons, and the dependants of the other arts were many in number. Certainly, the figures of the chroniclers are not to be trusted, and the most recent studies on the statistics of population have not reached concrete results; but it is clear all the same that *c.* 1350 the workmen of each Art had become exceedingly numerous, and could not but be a permanent danger to the safety of the State. They had no right of self-organisation in any way, and since the unorganised are outside the State and hence its enemies, the workmen felt no allegiance to the old republic which meant for them the most degrading of servitudes. How could they fight with legal weapons when legal weapons were not allowed to them? Only revolt remained; and in 1345, led by an ardent and genuine proletarian, Ciuto Brandini, the Florentine proletariat made its first attempt at revolution. The agitator naturally was put to death, and the crowd which eagerly sympathised with him had not the power to snatch him from the hangman. The Priors imagined that they had extinguished with one man's voice the discontent of which he was the spokesman; but the problem only became more urgent and complex.

The Black Death of 1348 strikingly diminished the city's population and did not spare the smaller neighbour towns or the countryside; but when the scourge was past the pulse of Florence soon regained the fevered beat now habitual to it. Two nuclei of forces formed in mutual opposition and prepared for civil war: the Parte Guelfa and the *popolo minuto*. The Parte Guelfa had arisen as an association of injured faction partisans when the Guelfs were for the first time driven from the city in February 1249; it had gained possession of the Ghibellines' property in consequence of the Guelf reform of 1266-67; and little by little, even when the memory of those times had faded, it had become a most powerful society, both economic and political, with rich revenues, with its own statutes and officials, often a creditor of the republic for large sums, and always the vigilant guardian of the political interests of the *popolo grasso* and of those magnates who had succeeded in entering the governing class in the first decades of the fourteenth century. After the Black Death the prepotency of the Parte Guelfa increased, and culminated with the

laws of 27 August 1354 and 24 April 1358, under which on any kind of suspicion of Ghibellinism the most terrible persecutions were possible and the very lives of thousands of citizens of every rank could be and were at the mercy of the Captains of the Parte. It was in truth an intolerable situation, against which there was a reaction in Provisions (3 November, 8 December 1366, and 26 March 1367) intended to wrench the dreaded weapon of "admonition" for suspicion of Ghibellinism from the hands of the Parte Guelfa. No one could feel safe from the blows of the Parte, and many of those whose interests seemed involved in its predominance were among the authors of the Provisions which limited its omnipotence.

The *popolo minuto* on its side had been fatally favoured by the violence of the plague, since the shortage of labour had markedly increased, and wages had risen sharply; but then the rise in the cost of living had annulled this transitory advantage and had aroused in the minds of the working folk the most evil designs. In August 1368, in consequence of one of the frequent dearths which during the last forty years had afflicted not only Tuscany but a great part of Italy, the *popolani minuti* rioted furiously in the corn-market and then rushed into the Piazza dei Priori with shouts of "Viva il Popolo!" Soon after, the resistance of the employers and the demands of the workmen met at an impasse: the masters declared that they could not raise wages, and the workmen insisted on a large increase. There resulted a real strike, for the dyers refused to work in the hope of forcing from the Arte della Lana the rise in wages hitherto asked in vain. In 1371 the same thing happened at Siena, where the workmen threatened to massacre the masters, a palpable sign that the evil lay in the foundations of the economic system of the commune, and that the commune-State had not succeeded in finding a remedy. In Florence the Parte Guelfa took measures of defence by forcing through the law of 27 January 1372, which tended to make any democratic reaction extremely difficult. For six years each side strengthened itself in unconscious preparation for the explosion of 1378. The Lesser Arts won some successes, such as the entry of two of their representatives into the tribunal of the Mercanzia (1372), and in carrying about the same time a severe inquest into the finances of the commune and the conduct of their administrators. Lastly, the creation of the Ten of Liberty (1372)—composed of two magnates, two *popolani minuti*, and six *popolani grassi*—shewed that the offensive of the Parte Guelfa had encountered obstinate and unforeseen obstacles.

The "War of the Eight Saints" quieted for a time the civil strife. The relations between the Church and Florence had become very strained when Cardinal Guillaume de Nollet during the dearth of 1374-75 had impeded the exportation of food-stuffs from Romagna into Tuscany, and had become extremely bad in June 1375 when the company of Sir John Hawkwood, following the truce concluded in Bologna between the Church and Bernabò Visconti, fell upon the Florentine *contado*. It was necessary

to pay the condottiere 130,000 florins to evacuate Florentine territory; and partly to prepare for the conflict which all thought imminent, partly owing to the disturbances in the States of the Church, and partly owing to the misconduct of the papal legates so vigorously condemned by St Catherine of Siena (1347-80), the Florentines created a special magistracy, the Eight of War, who were called later in mid-conflict the Eight Saints, in defiance of their excommunication by the Pope. On 4 January 1376 by order of the Florentine Priors an epistle was sent by the chancellor, Coluccio Salutati, to the Romans in order to induce them to rebel; on 19 March the Bolognese revolted and drove out the papal troops; on 31 March Pope Gregory XI launched an excommunication against Florence. He expelled ruthlessly from Avignon some 600 Florentine merchants as a reprisal, and sent a new Legate into Italy, Cardinal Robert of Geneva, at the head of 4000 horse and 6000 foot. Contemporaneously, whether for political reasons or moved by the fiery letters of St Catherine, he came himself, landing at Porto Pisano on 7 November 1376; but his presence only added to the ferment. The revolt of Cesena owing to the oppression exercised by the cardinal's soldiers, and the horrible butchery that followed (3 February 1377)—in which 2000-3000 citizens were killed—were the signal for a violent anti-papal movement in Florence and her allied towns; and since Bologna, contrary to the alliance and the demands of the Eight Saints, made a truce with the enemy, and the League threatened to dissolve, the republic resolved at all costs to detach Hawkwood from the Church; and it gained its point (April 1377). But then the Florentine captain, Rodolfo da Varano, angry at this transfer and allured by the Pope's promises of the vicariate of Tolentino and Sanginesio, abandoned the republic and in the Pope's service took command of the Company of Bretons still reeking with the blood of the Cesenese. The Eight Saints took the boldest measures: in October 1377 they violated the interdict, reopening the churches and ordering the clergy to resume their functions. The Pope replied with new severities, and the Parte Guelfa, playing their own game (which was that of a reactionary circle of magnates) against the war party, dared to domineer in the city so far as to "admonish" seventy citizens in one year. But all were weary of a war that was a stalemate, and the mediation of Bernabò Visconti was accepted by both sides; early in March 1378 a peace congress was opened at Sarzana. The negotiations, interrupted by the death of Gregory XI (27 March), were gladly resumed by the Florentines directly a new, Italian Pope was elected in Urban VI, and led to the peace of Tivoli on 28 July.

But by the time that the peace with the Church was concluded, a real revolution had for some days broken out in Florence. Already in April 1378 the Parte Guelfa had dared to touch one of the Eight Saints, Giovanni Dini, a spicer, substituting for him an extreme Guef, Niccolò Gianni; and immediately afterwards, in May and June, its opposition to

Salvestro de' Medici, the Gonfalonier of Justice¹, assumed an aspect and meaning definitely adverse both to the *popolo grasso* and to the *popolo minuto* rather than to the long war with the Church. Hence on 22-23 June both sorts of *popolani* were at one in taking the offensive against the Parte Guelfa, and many houses were burnt in a riot. On the 23rd an extraordinary Balía² of eighty citizens was appointed and took office, and began to draft reforms which should restrain the excesses of the Parte Guelfa and disarm the *popolani* in revolt; and when the new Priors (*Signoria* in Florentine parlance) entered office, with Luigi Guicciardini as Gonfalonier of Justice, on 1 July 1378, it seemed that tranquillity would soon return. But there followed continuous mutual accusations and suspicions. The magnate groups feared the meetings of *popolani minuti* which were being secretly held here and there; the *popolani* accused the Parte Guelfa of trampling underfoot the reforms of the Eighty; the Priors were uncertain and unready. At last it became known that the "subjects" of the Arts, that is the workmen, were gathered at Ronco outside the gate of San Pier Gattolini in contravention of the statutes and the unbroken tradition of centuries, and that they had taken dangerous resolutions. It seems that Salvestro de' Medici supported them with wise advice. In this crisis the Priors decided to act and mobilised the citizen forces, *i.e.* the few armed men at their disposal, for 20 July with the view of intimidating the *popolani* and arresting the ringleaders. But all was upset by an unforeseen revolutionary tornado, for the Ciompi, *i.e.* the populace and the poorest workmen, led by a wool-carder, Michele di Lando, attacked the Palazzo of the Commune and scoured the city burning and destroying. From 21 to 24 July the republic was in the hands of the insurgents; Michele di Lando was Gonfalonier of Justice; and the Signoria was driven from office. Between 24 July and 8 August three new Arts (the Dyers, the Jerkin-makers, and the so-called Ciompi) were officially recognised, each with their own consuls and banners, like the seven Greater and fourteen Lesser Arts; Michele seemed master of the situation. But a few days sufficed to shew the workmen and the mob that they had won a nearly barren victory; they desired absolute control of the commune, and they were not content with their chief. On 27 August they assembled in the Piazza San Marco to the number of 3000-5000 to enforce revolutionary measures on the new Signoria, which elected in a riot and by rioters was afraid of not seeming revolutionary enough; and either just before or just after, in a solemn meeting in Santa Maria Novella, they elected the "Eight of Santa Maria Novella" and swore to be "a single body and a single will"; they were famished, for the shops were closed, and there was no work to be had; and hunger inspired violence.

Thus at the end of August a new flood threatened to submerge the commune. The crowd rushed furiously to the houses of the magnates,

¹ *I.e.* practically the chief of the College of Priors.

² *I.e.* a commission with full powers to govern and reform.

to the palace of the Priors, to the shops, without definite aim or policy; and on 31 August two envoys of the Eight of Santa Maria Novella came to the Signoria to impose new conditions. The terrified Priors would perhaps have agreed to anything, but Michele di Lando, in whom a few weeks of government had developed a sense of responsibility and proportion, drove out the envoys, put himself at the head of the armed force, and immediately scattered the insurgents. The revolution was over. The two Arts of Dyers and Jerkin-makers sought their safety, the rebels were pitilessly hunted down, and, without gaining any thanks for his services either first to the *popolo minuto* or later to the State, Michele di Lando shortly afterwards vanished from Florentine history. Naturally the victory had been due to the coalition of all the threatened interests, and therefore the government which followed, and in spite of frequent difficulties ruled the destiny of the commune for three years, was a coalition government, in which the strongest element was formed by the Lesser Arts including those two new Arts which had escaped the ruin of the Ciompi. The laws of 11 and 18 September provided for the reorganisation of the State put out of gear by the revolt: the Parte Guelfa lost its ancient prestige and power, the *popolo grasso* was compelled to make the hardest terms in order not to be excluded from the new régime. This situation lasted till early in 1382, when the *popolo grasso* succeeded in recovering power, profiting by the effecteness of the democratic government and by the economic crisis which afflicted city and *contado*. Salvestro de' Medici and Michele di Lando were driven into exile; the two Arts of the *popolo minuto* were abolished; the exiles were recalled; the Priorate was made up of four members of the Greater Arts and four of the Lesser; in all offices of the commune the Greater Arts were given a majority; and the Parte Guelfa could reconquer the ground it had lost. The laws of 27 February and 15 March 1382 consolidated the new régime, and opened officially the period of about forty years which slowly rendered inevitable the Signoria of the Medici. It is the time of the oligarchy, when a few rich and aggressive families domineered over the commune. One of them, the Medici, in the person of Cosimo the elder (1389-1464), was to control completely the republic, and with that the commune of Florence really ended.

Events at Siena had the same import in that latter half of the fourteenth century which for long fixed the destiny of the provinces of Italy. There the government of the Nine had lasted from 1280 to 1354; it was a typical government of merchants, *i.e.* of a very limited group which naturally was opposed by both nobles and *popolani*. In fact, during the first half of the fourteenth century both nobles and *popolo* several times tried vainly, sometimes together and sometimes apart, to overthrow the régime of the Nine. But the Arts of Siena had always been less developed than those of Florence, and consequently there was lacking a numerous and aggressive middle class able to restrain the Nine and to balance their power. In 1355, however, nobles and *popolo* profited by the arrival of

the Emperor Charles IV in the city to rise in revolt (25 March), and won the day at a moment when the commune was in extreme difficulties owing to the raids of the Free Companies. The result was the government of the Twelve. Supported by the armed citizen companies and the renewed and increased power of the Captain of the Popolo, this time not a foreigner but a citizen, it lasted till 1369, amid the opposition and risings of the nobles and the dispersed and humiliated faction of the Nine. In 1371 it was altered in a popular direction after a strike by the workmen of the Arte della Lana, and demagogues ruled until 23 March 1385, harassed indeed by the external war with the Free Companies and by the plots of those excluded from the government. On that day the nobles, scouring the city and promising peace and plenty, succeeded in overthrowing the democratic government; they acted probably in understanding with the Florentine oligarchs, and were aided by a part of the *popolo* which was most severely hit by the unceasing war and by the economic crisis which continually grew worse. Exile and persecutions diminished the citizens, and the republic lost its energy in regard to both friends and enemies. As in Florence, the fall of communal institutions was not distant.

The destiny of the Pisan republic was not different. Exhausted by the war with Genoa which was decided at Meloria (1284), constantly plotted against by Florence which needed an outlet on the sea, torn within by the implacable dissensions of classes and factions, Pisa had already fallen in the first decades of the fourteenth century into the hands of Ugucione della Faggiuola and Castruccio Castracani, remaining a republic only in name. Later, racked by the discord of the Borgolini and the Raspanti, she submitted in August 1365 to the dictatorship of Giovanni dell' Agnello; but that "Doge" was overthrown in September 1368 with the aid of the members of the Arts and many of his previous supporters. A few months after, in February 1369, there returned from exile Pietro Gambacorta, who had made his first attempt at government fifteen years earlier, and had shewn his deep knowledge of the passions of the mob and the interests of the republic. Within a year he was master of the State and felt secure in a city which the war between Florence and the Visconti had reduced to a wretched condition. The general reform of 27 October 1370 was the basis of his government and was maintained almost without change till his fall (21 October 1392). He had pursued a pro-Florentine policy which had angered all classes of citizens; and then Gian Galeazzo Visconti had skilfully undermined his power with eventual success. Pisa continued to struggle in the talons of domestic despotism and that of the Visconti for a little over ten years, and then ended under the dominion of Florence (1406).

When, therefore, Gian Galeazzo Visconti—called the Count of Virtù from the fief of Vertus in Champagne which was the dowry of his wife Isabella of France—began his brief and crowded career, the political situation of all Italy was peculiarly favourable for the boldest schemes.

He was twenty-five when he succeeded his father Galeazzo II (4 August 1378) in his share of the Visconti dominions as partner of his uncle Bernabò, who continued his cruel tyranny over Milan and his other possessions. Most accomplished in feigning and dissembling, subtle and receptive, immoderately and insatiably ambitious, he began to spread his net for his uncle and cousins, and on 6 May 1385, under pretext of greeting Bernabò during his pilgrimage to the Madonna del Monte near Varese, he succeeded in capturing him and his sons Lodovico and Rodolfo. A few months later, in December, Bernabò died, it may be by poison, in the castle of Trezzo d'Adda. Gian Galeazzo was absolute master of all the Visconti territory, and immediately gave thanks to heaven by laying the foundations, in 1386, of Milan cathedral. He quickly shewed his determination to exploit circumstances to the utmost by intervening in the war between the Scaligeri and the Da Carrara, at first as a mediator and then almost at once as an impatient and greedy enemy; and he succeeded in seizing Verona, Vicenza, and Padua (1386-88). Thence, like the Archbishop Giovanni Visconti, he aimed at the rich plain of Emilia, at Romagna and Tuscany; and seeing that Siena, after the occupation of Arezzo by Florence (20 November 1384), was in continual dread of her too-powerful rival, Gian Galeazzo fanned the flame with a view to war. And a murderous war broke out from Bologna and extended over all parts of Tuscany; but Florentine gold and Hawkwood's generalship ended in carrying hostilities into Lombardy, the Veneto, and even Piedmont, and in straining severely the resources of Visconti. So a peace was made in January 1392 which seemed to dissipate his dreams. He consoled himself by provoking the fall of Pietro Gambacorta and then that of Giacompo d'Appiano, tyrants of Pisa, and a little later, in September 1395, bought for 100,000 florins the title of Duke of Milan from Wenceslas, King of the Romans.

The duke could now aim higher, but to prevent any possible opposition from France he abandoned Genoa to her. Like Florence, Siena, and all the surviving communes, the republic of St George was racked with intestine discords and by the revolt of the poorest classes. Defence against both sorts of enemies, those within and without, was impossible; and therefore when the Duke of Orleans, called in by a group who forgot their patriotism in the violence of faction hatred, occupied Savona, promising the town very liberal municipal reforms and complete independence of Genoa, the Genoese Doge Antoniotto Adorno was caught between two fires—the French pressure and the civil war carried on with mad fury by two fallen Doges, Antonio di Montalto and Antonio di Guarco. He thought that only a foreign Signore could save the city from disaster; nobles and people ended by accepting his view, and on 25 October 1396 the republic gave itself to the King of France. Gian Galeazzo hid his wrath at so unwelcome an event, and turned towards Tuscany. He knew well that the possession of Tuscany would open his way to the States of the Church, torn by chronic anarchy and the Schism as well, and from Rome no

one could hinder his march on Naples. It was a mirage; perhaps he dreamed of the crown of Italy. The "Viper" first struck at Pisa. Gherardo d'Appiano, son of Giacopo, sold him the city for 200,000 florins, and on 31 March 1399 the Pisan banners were bowed before him in the castle at Pavia. A few months after (November) civil strife and the fear of Florence gave him Siena, which he had long coveted, and the same deep-rooted general causes made Perugia follow Siena's example (January 1400). Assisi and Spoleto could not resist him, and Paolo Guinigi, Signore of Lucca, proclaimed him his protector.

Who could check the Duke of Milan on his determined road? Venice was anxious over the Levant, and loath for war in Italy; Naples was a prey to the troubles which preceded and followed the coronation of Ladislas; the Bentivoglio and the Gozzadini fought over Bologna; the Papacy was timid and decadent; the house of Savoy was hampered by the minority of Amadeus VIII and the long conflict with the princes of Achaia. Only Florence could make an effort not to lose independence and liberty, and she took for her ally Rupert, Elector Palatine, who had been elected King of the Romans on the deposition of Wenceslas (20 August 1400). Florence promised 200,000 florins down, and the same amount after Rupert had warred for four months in Visconti's dominions. The king descended into Italy, but was defeated under the walls of Brescia on 14 October 1401, and loitering by Padua and Venice (always negotiating for the balance of florins) he returned to Germany. There was still Bologna to defend; but Gian Galeazzo launched against her the veteran troops of Jacopo dal Verme and Alberico da Barbiano, and the Florentines and Bolognese suffered a bloody defeat at Casalecchio (26 June 1402). Bologna surrendered, while the Sienese Simone Serdini (called the Saviozzo da Siena) in very passable verse urged the duke to make himself master of Italy. Gian Galeazzo needed no urging. Florence seemed lost, and as was to be expected rebellion and treason muttered and ripened in the oppressed *contado*. Sir John Hawkwood was dead; the army was scattered and dispirited; the treasury exhausted. But sudden and incredible came the news that on 3 September 1402 the duke had expired at Melegnano, a few days after leaving Milan where the plague was spreading. With him vanished his "Italian" dream.

But it found a new dwelling in a bold and adventurous spirit, King Ladislas of Naples. When Charles of Durazzo was murdered in Hungary on 7 February 1386, he left behind him at Naples his widow Margaret and two young children, Joanna born in 1371 and Ladislas born in 1376. Margaret declared her son king, but the party of Louis II of Anjou, the incurable anarchy of the barons, the pro-Angevin policy of the Pope at Avignon, and the very ambitions of the Roman Pope, Urban VI, on the South caused the loss of Naples in 1387 and the flight of Margaret with her children first into Castel dell'Ovo and then to Gaeta. After Urban's death (15 October 1389), however, and the election of the Neapolitan Pietro

Tomacelli as Pope Boniface IX, the young king was solemnly crowned at Gaeta (1390) by the Pope's wish. It seemed that victory was near, but it was only obtained nine years later in consequence of one of those profound revulsions of public opinion which often take place in poor and disorganised lands. Naples was retaken, many barons abandoned Louis II, and in a few months the Angevin was compelled to return to France. The year before, Boniface IX had succeeded in subduing the republican government of Rome. Thus, when Gian Galeazzo died, Ladislas had already established his authority in his kingdom, a success all the more important because, in consequence of the duke's testament, a rapid dissolution began of the State which with such boldness and good fortune he had raised. On the other side, the Schism had thrown Western Christendom into indescribable confusion, and most of all Rome itself, where there was a veritable revolt against the new papal domination on the death of Boniface IX (1 October 1404) and the election of Innocent VII.

Ladislas saw that it was possible to intrude himself astutely into Roman affairs as arbiter between the Romans and the Pope, and that even if the immediate results of his intervention were not brilliant, it would increase his prestige, and would give him useful connexions in the pursuit of his policy. After the death of Innocent VII (6 November 1406), the rival pontiffs were Benedict XIII of Avignon and the new Roman Pope Gregory XII (the Venetian cardinal Angelo Correr); and since their mutual suspicions prevented them meeting at Savona, as was proposed, or elsewhere, Benedict sent some galleys to the mouth of the Tiber, while Gregory XII was residing at Lucca¹. Ladislas then executed his long-planned stroke: he swiftly occupied Latium and Umbria. Since Gregory XII could not defend his State, still less reconquer it, he took the most singular resolution: to sell the States of the Church to Ladislas for 25,000 florins, and to further his designs (1409). But in these months the Council of Pisa deposed both Popes and elected a third, Alexander V (26 June 1409). The new pontiff could not but see the meaning of the king's actions, and he therefore urged a new invasion by Louis II of Anjou and followed blindly the advice of the Cardinal-legate of Bologna, the *condottiere* Baldassare Cossa. Ladislas, however, was not disturbed; he actually chose this moment to make an unsuccessful bid for the crown of Hungary, as if to shew his enemies that they could not hamper any audacity of his. *Aut Caesar aut nullus* was his motto, and arms, capacity, and boldness were its natural concomitants.

But fortune did not favour him. At first, when Genoa revolted from France (3 September 1409), it seemed as if the coalition of the Pope, the Angevin Louis II, and the Tuscan cities, aided by the forces of the most eminent *condottieri* of the day, could do nothing against him. But the treachery of Paolo Orsini at Rome, and the unwearied activity of Florence and Siena overturned his dominion in the States of the Church (October

¹ See *infra*, Chap. x.

1409). The death of Alexander V (3 May 1410) did not help him, for the new Pope, John XXIII, elected by the cardinals at Bologna, was his deadly enemy Cossa, who, the rumour went, had poisoned Alexander. The war blazed up again and on 9 May 1411 Louis II won a great victory at Roccasecca in the Terra di Lavoro. Ladislav escaped with difficulty, but then came better hopes: Bologna rebelled against the papal Vicar, the Prefect di Vico seized Civitavecchia, and the *condottiere* Muzio Attendolo Sforza changed over to the side of the King of Naples. John XXIII hastened to make peace with him (1412) and pretended to be engrossed in combating the heresy of Wyclif, convoking a council and hoping for the alliance of Sigismund, King of the Romans (3 March 1413). Ladislav, on his side, feigned adherence to this pacific policy; but when he thought he was ready, he began a violent offensive against the States of the Church. It was the first move to fresh conquests. Pope John was helpless: he had no troops, and was abandoned by Louis II, who, himself luckless and deserted by his friends, had returned to France. The Pope could only cling to Sigismund's alliance, and accepted his demand that Constance should be the place of assembly of the General Council. Meanwhile, Florence could give him no help, nor could the Duke of Milan. Florence was rent by discord and threatened with imminent ruin. Amid perils of every kind Filippo Maria Visconti, the younger son of Gian Galeazzo, was securing the heritage of his elder brother Giovanni Maria, who had been poniarded in the church of San Gottardo on 16 May 1412. Ladislav could therefore dream of making the possession of Rome the first step to the conquest of Italy; and in fact his treaty with Florence on 22 June 1414 seemed to protect his flank in the enterprise he had begun a few weeks before it. The little local tyrants, the republics, Pope John XXIII, King Sigismund, were all anxiously awaiting events when the news came that Ladislav, attacked by syphilis in his camp at Narni, had been carried to Naples and had there died on 6 August 1414.

The Italian powers seemed to awake from a nightmare. At Florence men felt in the felicitous words of Machiavelli that "death was the best friend of the Florentines and stronger to save them than any powers (*virtù*) of their own." Now John XXIII could more calmly await the meeting of the Council of Constance on 1 November 1414, while Naples under Joanna II fell back into the anarchy from which only a strong policy of expansion in Italy could have saved her. Amadeus VIII of Savoy was still a minor, and even later had no power to tread in the footsteps of Ladislav. The Church was only reunited, at least officially, by the election of Martin V (11 November 1417) to be followed by the recrudescence of schism when the Council of Basle deposed Eugenius IV in January 1438. Venice was preoccupied with the new Muslim peril of the Ottoman Turks in the Levant, and the Visconti could not renew the designs of Gian Galeazzo. Thus, if for a moment, a century before Machiavelli invoked a Prince to free Italy, the unification of the peninsula seemed

possible, the possibility soon disappeared and for many years no one could think of it again. The fifteenth century is the time when the Signorie become ordinary principates, the time of the splendour of the Medici (not to be wholly quenched for three centuries), and the time when the geographical discoveries fatally diverted the stream of commerce from the Mediterranean and brought on Italy a long and painful economic crisis without remedy and without the possibility of compensating advantages.

In 1414 the signs of decadence were still far off. The bourgeois class was then in its highest prosperity and for that very reason tended to quit the commune for the "principate." The fourteenth century was the golden age of merchants, manufacturers, speculators, and bankers. The Arts, which in the thirteenth century had long fought to enter the government and drive thence the magnates, in the fourteenth reached the apogee of their power both economic and political. Production, which at the dawn of the commune had been circumscribed by the city walls, reaching only over an insignificant radius without, had in the fourteenth century assumed the character of "great industry," and had made an advance in technique and internal organisation only surpassed by modern times with the extensive introduction of machinery. Strictly protectionist as they were, the Arts everywhere, in Lombardy, in Tuscany, in the Veneto, and in Emilia, wherever in fact they developed freely, succeeded in producing, without set-backs and without ruinous crises; they performed miracles of ability and resource in a time of political instability and danger, and in face of endless difficulties, such as more especially the supply of food and raw material and the formation of bodies of skilled craftsmen. By controlling the quantity and the quality of the output, the cost of production and the selling price, they ended, even when breaking the immutable economic laws of production, in transforming the dead little towns of the feudal age into powerful living organisms, since their innate protectionism and particularism were natural consequences of the constitution of the commune, and were weapons of offence and defence. Round about the year 1400 the original organisation of the Arts was attacked in many vital points by germs of deadly disease, but it had been able to overcome the perils of social and political transformation, and, at least in Tuscany and the regions where the Commune was longest lived, it still shewed a surprising durability.

Commerce by land and sea had developed on parallel lines. We need only think of the radius of the influence of the Pisan, Genoese, Venetian, Florentine, Siense, and Lombard merchants to reach unexpected conclusions. They frequented every corner of the then known world: the fairs of Champagne, the markets of the Netherlands, Germany, England, Africa, and the East knew and valued their methods, felt the influence of their law and policy, and added to their wealth. For Venice, Florence,

and Genoa commerce was an affair of State, the most delicate and fertile affair of State, so much so that their legislation, voluminous as it was, was inspired by mercantile interests; and these were so closely connected with the interests of politics and manufacture that no uncertainty of methods and aims seemed possible. For this reason Venice encountered Genoa in the Levant, and Florence aimed at the conquest of Pisa and the annihilation of Siena in order to open the roads to the sea and to Rome and the South, just as the policy of the precocious communes of the Po valley had been determined by the needs of traffic. The merchants were the first and ablest diplomatists, the first ambassadors at Naples, at Rome, in France, in England, in the Levant. Merchants were the founders of the most eminent families, the favourites of Popes and kings, the first ancestors of a new aristocracy which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was to live in splendid pomp amid the delicate refinements of courts and academies. It was merchants who amassed that surplus capital which fed the most varied forms of speculation at home and abroad.

But what most captures the historian's attention is that these merchants were bound in powerful associations which were perfectly elastic and responsive to their varying task in the world. The mercantile *societates*—the "Companies" of Florence, Siena, Perugia, the Veneto, and Lombardy—can bear comparison even with the most powerful organisations of to-day. Arising at first round the nucleus of some bold and fortunate family, they gradually became true joint-stock companies with directors and agents, with audited balance-sheets, with numerous shareholders all eager for speedy and large profits. They dealt in every kind of goods, and passed from the food supply of their city and its neighbourhood to the purchase of raw material, from ship-building to the great commerce of all the Mediterranean lands and the northern seas. Hence they speculated on prices of cost and of sale, on the exchange-rates of the varied coinages, on the frequent dearths, on destructive wars and recuperative peace, with attitudes and feelings which stood aloof from the habitual manifestations of the little city life, with its quarrels and narrowness. Often a wave of adversity submerged famous firms which had operated for years in foreign lands, and then there was a crisis both for men and property, which had its repercussions in private fortunes and the policy of the republic. But then the rift was closed, the wounds were healed, and the *societates* returned to the old paths or sought out new with indefatigable energy.

Such a dizzy movement of merchandise and capital would naturally not have been possible without adequate institutions of credit. Religious and economic prejudices and the deplorable insecurity of political institutions had for centuries condemned credit in its characteristic and spontaneous forms. But the Church itself, which in the most impecunious periods of medieval and modern history had the largest financial resources, and later

the most powerful sovereigns also were forced to recognise, in however decorous and veiled a way, that without credit commerce and production were impossible. And credit grew organised, reaching in Italy in the fourteenth century the form of the private bank, the first foundation of all State banks. Thus the traffic in money could be controlled legally and technically in so complete a way that modern times have been able to add, in substance, but few vital elements. The Bank of San Giorgio at Genoa and the Bank of San Marco at Venice have a history which has lost none of its interest. But since credit tends to become inflated, the Italian mercantile companies used and abused it till they were pledged within and without Italy for immense sums, and often could not avoid the consequence of too wide liabilities. There was the crisis and bankruptcy of the Bardi and Peruzzi in the years 1339, 1343, and 1346. They were excessively involved with Edward III of England, and with the wars in which Florence was engaged from 1332 until the *signoria* of the Duke of Athens. So the unsuccess of Edward's early French campaigns and the panic of their creditors at the first rumours of their insolvency were enough to provoke the painful crisis which Giovanni Villani endured as an investor and vividly described as a historian. These were incertitudes common to all speculations and deserve no more tears than other misfortunes. The fact remains that, wherever and however they began, institutions of credit had their greatest development in Italy, and that they meant the complete triumph of capitalistic economy over feudal, and also the social and political maturity of the early Italian bourgeoisie between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance.