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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

FRANCESCO SFORZA,

DUKE OF MILAN

WITH A PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF THE HISTORY
OF ITALY



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BOOK FIRST.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF ITALY FROM THE SUBVERSION OF THE ROMAN
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CHAPTER I.

RETROSPECT OF ITALIAN HISTORY.

THE narration of the life of any eminent public man, the investigation of the circumstances which contributed to his rise, and the exhibiting the individual qualities which enabled him to turn them to account, is generally supposed to afford a tolerably good exposition of the age in which he lived, and of the people among whom his lot was cast. Perhaps there never was a people whose history at any period may be better studied in this manner than the Italians of the middle ages, united as they were by the bond of superior civilization, by identity of language, and affinity of geographical position, but divided into a number of small communities frequently at war among themselves, whose separate history it is often difficult to trace, and tedious to narrate. In the last century of their independence there flourished among them one individual who was intimately connected with their politics and intrigues, who alternately served, waged war against, and outwitted them all, and who rose from being captain of a band of mercenary soldiers to be the arbiter of the general politics of the peninsula, and sovereign of one of the most powerful of its states. That individual was Francesco Sforza, the son of a peasant of Romagna, the founder of the last dynasty of dukes who reigned at Milan. I purpose to illustrate the state of the Hesperian peninsula, and the genius of its inhabitants, at the above-mentioned period, by writing the life and times of this remarkable man.

To attain a right understanding of the scene on which he played his part, and of the contemporary characters with whom he was associated, it will be necessary to take a slight retrospect of the fortunes of his country, from the time she was ruled by the mistress of the world, till he made his appearance in the great drama of her history.

The truth of a remark of a philosophical historian, that the physical geography of a land exercises a powerful influence over the destinies of its inhabitants, is nowhere more fully illustrated than in the fortunes of Italy. The portion of the globe at present known by that name is included between the Alps, the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean. As its limits are thus clearly defined, and as it is protected by the sea, and by a rampart of mountains inferior in height to few on the surface of the earth, it might seem, at first sight, to be adapted by nature to be the seat of a powerful and united nation. But, unfortunately for the peace of the country, there issues from the southern extremity of the Alpine rampart another mountainous chain, which, running diagonally across the peninsula, extends to the very edge of the Adriatic, and which, though inferior in height and ruggedness to the former, presents obstacles sufficient to impede the free current of nationality. From this dorsal spine innumerable ridges branch out to the sea on either side, thus rendering the country a meet scene for internal discords and strifes. The great plain to the north-east of this chain is intersected in its whole length by a wide river, which receives from the mountains innumerable tributaries, most of which have at different times formed the boundary of a state, or been the scene of a battle. From time immemorial, the divisions of the inhabitants have been in accordance with those which nature had already made. They never continued united, except as subjects of the empire, which ruled over all the countries lying between the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Atlantic, on one side; the Rhine, the Danube, and the great desert of Sahara on the other. Even then it was not without difficulty that they amalgamated in the nationality of Rome. The Cisalpine Gaul of ancient times did not differ more from the colonist of the

Lacedaemonian Tarentum, than did the Lombard of the middle ages from the descendant of the mixed race of Normans, Saracens, French, and Aragons, who in their turns have conquered and occupied the southern provinces. The contrast between the active and bustling Milanese of the present day and the indolent Calabrian, cannot fail to strike the eye of the most unobservant of travellers.

But whatever divisions may have been caused by the Apennines and the Po, with their ramifications and tributaries, there is one point of resemblance between all the provinces of the fair peninsula : they all possess the fatal gift of beauty. This was the cause of many of their misfortunes. The fertility of the basin of the Po presented a glittering allurement to the barbarians who had not long emerged from the forests of Sarmatia. The mild and congenial climate to be enjoyed in the valleys of the Apennines, where even the summer heats may be avoided by a temporary retreat to the mountains, could not fail to attract those who had hitherto been exposed to the inclement climate north of the Danube and the Rhine. The coasts of Apulia and Calabria offered the fairest of prizes to the Norman and Saracen pirates. In later times, the richness and opulence of the cities whetted the ambition and excited the avarice of the semi-civilized monarchs of feudal Europe.

It will be long to tell, and sad to trace the successive invasions, misfortunes, and revolutions of the land, from the decline of the Western Empire to the period when the cities, in whose fame and prosperity she may be said to have lived again, sprang, like so many goddesses of beauty, from an ocean of troubles. The universality of the fatal gift which has been already alluded to, made all its provinces alike suffer for the crimes, and expiate the guilt, of their imperial mistress. The Visigoths were the first of the barbarians to whom it was permitted by Providence to glut their ire on the spot where so many of their sires had expired in the brutal combats of the gladiators. After three sieges, the city, which had once been mistress of the world, was taken and plundered by the hordes of this great and terrible nation from the north. So great was the impression made by this event that the name of their leader, Alaric, was for some time afterwards a by-word of terror. Forty-two years later, the land was overrun by a fresh set of barbarians, who were led on by a man who had assumed for himself and his followers the title of Scourge of God, and had carried fire and pillage from the walls of China to the western Alps. Rome was, however, spared by these savages; but their invasion is remarkable for their having driven a number of people to take refuge on the sand-banks of the Adriatic, where they laid the foundations of the republic of Venice. Three years after their retreat, the imperial city was doomed to be taken a second time, and to undergo a pillage still more terrible than the former, by Genseric, king of the Vandals, who, in the words of the historian of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, carried off whatever he could find of sacred or profane wealth of public or of private treasure. The last emperors who reigned in the city of the Caesars, one of whom by a strange fatality was called Romulus Augustulus, thus bearing the names of the first of the kings, and the first of the acknowledged emperors, were conquered at Pavia by Odoacer, king of the Heruli, who deposed Romulus after his colleague had been slain in battle, and made himself king of Rome. Not long afterwards the ex-emperor was treacherously murdered by his uncivilized conqueror.

Though before the invasion of the Heruli Italy had been thrice overrun by nations totally differing in race and character from its old inhabitants, and though the seat of government had been twice taken, none of the conquerors had ventured to settle in the country, or to arrogate to themselves its sovereignty. The land, though it had been devastated and plundered by its savage conquerors, still remained subject to its old mistress. Its inhabitants, up to this period, corrupted and degenerated though they might have been, were the descendants of those who had triumphed under the Scipios, and devoted themselves to literature and the arts in the reign of Augustus. But we cannot, after the invasion of the Heruli, expect to find the same government, the same nation, or the same inhabitants, in the Hesperian peninsula, as in the days of her departed greatness. It is at this period, the 470th year of the Christian era, that the history of ancient Rome may properly be said to terminate, and that of modern Italy to begin. The depopulation and destruction of property had been so great, as to have considerably facilitated the formation of a new nation. Machiavelli, in his *History of Florence*, says, that if ever there was a period in the history of any country full of misfortune and woe to the inhabitants, it was that which in Italy intervened from the times of Arcadius and Honorius to the death of Odoacer. This opinion is fully borne out by two passages from

contemporary writers, quoted by Gibbon in his history of this period, which will enable us in some measure to judge of the deplorable state to which Italy, hitherto tenanted principally by its ancient masters, was at this time reduced. St Ambrose deplored the ruin of the populous district that had once been covered with such cities as Modena, Bologna, Reggio, and Piacenza. Pope Gelasius talks of Aemilia, Tuscany, and the contiguous provinces, as being left almost void of inhabitants. Although it is probable that these passages are not free from some tinge of exaggeration, they will nevertheless convey to us some notion of the diminished elements of Roman nationality, that were mingled in the fusion of the several races from which the modern Italians have spring. They will show, too, how the manners, language, character, and other traits which mark the individuality of a people, must have been modified by the successive hords of barbarians by whom the land still continued to be invaded.

The reign of Odoacer was short and inglorious. In his turn he was defeated, and afterwards slain by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, a prince whose name, as Gibbon says, still attracts and deserves the attention of mankind. In his time the land had repose from the troubles by which, for the space of nearly one century, she had been oppressed; and it seemed as if a new nation, sprung from the heterogeneous elements of the former and present possessors of Italy, was already about to live and to prosper. Theodoric, excelling alike in the arts of peace and war, was always victorious in the latter; and, from his attention to the former, he conferred incalculable benefits on his subjects. To prevent further disputes about the possession of the land, he assigned one-third of it to his own countrymen, and appointed them to all the military posts; while he endeavoured to encourage industrial occupations among the ancient inhabitants. But, with this single exception, as much favour was shown to the latter as to the former. Though, after the example of Valentinian, he established his principal residence at Ravenna, he had another palace at Verona, where he took up his quarters whenever his presence was necessary to protect the frontiers of his kingdom from a threatened invasion of barbarians. Security from without, and tranquillity and justice within, produced their natural consequences. Though many of the most renowned cities of the empire, which had been ruined during the convulsions of the preceding period, never rose again from their ashes, the origin or the recovery of others may be traced to this epoch, which became so famous in the mediaeval history of Italy. Among these may be mentioned Venice, Ferrara, Aquila, Chiusi, and Sienna, towns which, both for their ancient renown and the beautiful monuments of the arts to be found in them, attract the attention of every modern traveller. Florence, Genoa, Pisa, and Milan, hitherto places of minor importance, began to increase in wealth and population ; and on the site of the small watering-place of Parthenope there began to arise a new city, which became the second in the continent of Europe. Gibbon says that all these cities acquired, in the reign of Theodoric, the useful and splendid decorations of baths, churches, porticoes, and palaces. Though the metropolis of the ancient world was no longer the seat of government, the injuries done to her in three successive captures were repaired, and some attempt was made to restore her to her former splendour. It was about this time that, according to Machiavelli, new names began to be given to places as well as to men; and the elements of the language of Dante and Boccaccio began to displace that of Virgil and Cicero.

This brief interlude to the troubles of Italy terminated at the death of the great Gothic monarch. The kingdom then devolved upon Alaric, the son of Amalasciunta, the daughter of Theodoric, who did not long survive his illustrious grandfather. Shortly after his death, Amalasciunta was treacherously murdered by her chief minister, Teodotus, who was unable to resist the temptation afforded to him of supplanting a woman in her rights over the newly-erected kingdom. The ill-founded claims of Teodotus, and his unpopularity with his own subjects, presented to the emperor Justinian an opportunity, which he did not neglect, of recovering the provinces of the Western Empire. While he himself was devoted to theological studies, or occupied in framing the system of laws which has rendered his name famous among posterity, he sent the renowned Belisarius to Italy. The Goths, terrified at the approach of a general who had hitherto seemed the special favourite of Heaven, and disgusted at the incapacity of Teodotus, killed him, and elected one of their own countrymen, Vitiges, king in his room. The new king was conquered and captured by his great opponent, but managed, after his recall, to regain his ground. Belisarius was sent to Italy a second time, and the Goths, after having plundered Rome while he was at Ostia, fled at his approach; but the factious violence of parties at Constantinople compelled the emperor to recall him before he had time to do

more than endeavour to repair the damages done to the ancient city in her last capture. The command of the armies of Justinian then devolved upon Narses, whose successes were equal to those of his great predecessor. But, as before, the jealousies and intrigues of the Eastern court were too great to allow the successor of Justinian to reap any permanent advantage from the victories of his general. After Narses had defeated and slain Totila, and his successor Teia, and had brought the kingdom of Theodoric, which had lasted for seventy years, under the dominion of its ancient masters, he saw the reward so justly due to his services conferred upon another. The Emperor Justin, at the instigation of his wife Sophia, recalled Narses, and made Longinus governor, or, as it was thenceforward termed, exarch of Italy, in his room.

The policy of the new exarch, as it had no small influence over the subsequent fortunes of the peninsula, deserves to be noticed. Abrogating all vestiges of the system of centralization, he appointed in every town or territory of importance a governor under the title of Duke. In this arrangement no favourable distinction was shown to Rome. The former mistress of the world now beheld the total abrogation of those offices that had been an object of ambition to Tully and to Cesar, and by which the most powerful of the subsequent emperors had deemed their dignity increased.

The spirit of Narses, already roused by beholding the honours to which he thought himself entitled conferred upon another, was unable to brook the taunts with which the Empress Sophia answered his remonstrances. A fresh set of barbarians, known at that time by the name of Longobardi, or long-beards, and by that of Lombardi in more modern history, who had already established themselves in the cradle of the conquerors of Italy, the upper bank of the Danube, afforded ready ministers of vengeance to the injured and indignant general. The want of union in the country which Longinus had divided into duchies, caused it to be an easy conquest to this fresh horde of invaders. Under their king, Alboin, they made themselves masters of all the northern parts of the peninsula, including the provinces of Romagna or Flaminia, and Tuscany. After the murder of Alboin, and a series of intrigues, the events of which would furnish meet subject for the art of a tragic poet, and which seemed to foreshadow the unhappy celebrity of the Italians of the middle ages for the frequent use of the dagger and the bowl, the sovereignty of the Lombards devolved upon Clefi, who united to the talents of a conqueror the ferocity of a savage. On the death of Clefi, his subjects, disgusted with his severity, and mistrusting the form of government which had given scope for the exercise of such tyranny, changed their constitution and divided the conquered country into thirty duchies, thus continuing the disunion begun by Longinus in a land which seemed designed by nature to prove the truth of the saying of the wise man, "For the transgression of a country are its rulers multiplied". Either because this constitution was as ill adapted for conquest as it had been for defence, or because the physical nature of the south of Italy presented impediments to their further progress, the Lombards never extended their dominions south of Benevento. Thus were left unoccupied those provinces which in subsequent times formed the basis of the kingdom of Naples. Several of the towns in the country north of Benevento, among which were Naples, Rome, Ravenna, Mantua, Pasina, Cremona, Monselice, Facuya, Padua, and Forli, were only partially occupied by the new conquerors. So soon as they had ceased to fear being disturbed in their new possessions by the Greeks, the duchies of Italy showed the same disposition to quarrel among themselves that the republics of the middle ages did when they were freed from the power of the emperor. For about 230 years Italy continued in this state, divided between the Greeks and the Lombards, and a new power which had sprung up at Rome, of which it is necessary to give some account.

Towards the end of the second century various circumstances had contributed to give to the bishops of the Christian church a degree of power which does not appear to have been enjoyed by their predecessors. The great increase in their numbers, and the custom of holding councils or synods, rendered it necessary that those of each province should delegate some authority to one of themselves, who was denominated their Metropolitan; and the metropolitans in like manner showed the same deference to another chief to whom was given the title of Patriarch. It is easy to see that, with the spread of the Christian religion, a great deal of legitimate and proper influence must naturally have accrued to this new order of ecclesiastics, and a great deal more than was either legitimate or proper might be attained by anyone who was sufficiently ambitious or artful to turn his position to account. From the earliest ages a variety of circumstances concurred in causing much deference to be shown to the patriarch of Rome. The absence of any

metropolitans in the adjoining country, of course increased his local power. The very fact of his being resident at the imperial city, and being the spiritual head of an assembly of men, many of whom, as their religion began to gain ground, took no mean share in managing the affairs of the civilized world, rendered his position one of eminence throughout Christendom. After the removal of the seat of government to Constantinople, these latter causes were not without their effect on the patriarchs of that city, and they in consequence never deferred to the authority of those at Rome; but the long duration of the Eastern Empire caused the presence of the emperors to act as a salutary check upon the pretensions of the former, after the destruction of the Western Empire had given freer scope to those of the latter.

The barbarians who overran the West showed no wish to interfere in the affairs of the church, or with the authority of its officers. Most of them, indeed, thought it desirable to conciliate the clergy, who possessed so much influence among those whom they wished to become their subjects; and the most enlightened among them, as Theodoric, looked upon the ministers of the Christian religion as the means of diffusing civilization among their untaught followers. The establishment of the court at Ravenna left the local authority of the Roman patriarchs more unbridled than before; and this authority was further increased by the subsequent abrogation of all the offices of the old Roman republic. Besides which, the tradition that Rome had first been erected into a bishopric by St Peter, caused no small degree of deference to be shown to one who might claim to be considered his representative.

The long unsettled state of the West was, of course, favourable to the growth of the only power that had withstood the devastating tides of the barbaric invasions. At the end of the fifth, and the beginning of the sixth century, the pontifical authority was considerably strengthened by the talents of Gregory, bishop of Rome, surnamed the Great, in whose hands, as Mr Hallam justly observes, claims half disputed, or imperfectly asserted, assumed a more definite form. It is, however, difficult to ascertain over what extent of territory he claimed ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and in the opinion of some, though he inveighed against the title, he seemed desirous to exercise the functions, of universal bishop.

In the period that followed the invasion of the Lombards, the holy chair was frequently filled by men sufficiently artful to profit by the contentions between them and the Greeks. These pontiffs lost no opportunity of receiving an acknowledgment of their claims, from whichever of the contending powers they deemed it advisable for the time to befriend; and they frequently did not scruple to make use of the authority that had thus accrued to them against the very party who had hoped to profit by their alliance. In the beginning of the seventh century, the Greek emperor Phocas acknowledged the claims of the bishop of Rome to the title of Ecumenical or universal; though this act seems in no way to have affected the independence of the subsequent patriarchs of the East. To the insidious policy of the Roman pontiffs, which continued through succeeding ages, Machiavelli ascribes the perpetuating of the discords of Italy, which, commencing in the times of the Lombards, gave such continual opportunities to foreigners to interfere in its politics, and, after the fifteenth century, caused its final degradation in the scale of nations. And this it was that, in the eighth century, gave an opportunity to the Franks, whose monarchy was established in the province of ancient Gaul, and had just begun to acquire a considerable degree of stability and power, to interfere in the affairs of the peninsula.

In the year 751, Aistolfus, king of the Lombards, having taken possession of Ravenna, and openly declared war against Pope Stephen II, the latter, to whom the power of the Greeks seemed now like a broken reed, fled to France, and openly besought the aid of King Pepin II. As a proof of the sanctity with which even then the person of the pontiff was regarded, it may be mentioned that, when he was on his journey for that purpose, he was allowed to pass unmolested through the territories of his enemies. The assistance sought for on the occasion was readily given by one who probably might have already been desirous of an excuse to carry his arms south of the Alps, and might have been so far imbued by the superstitions of the age as to have hailed the alliance of the pontiff as the means of securing the cooperation of Him whose vicegerent he pretended to be. The result of the expedition was certainly such as might have justified the most sanguine expectations. Aistolfus was forced to submit, and owed his life entirely to the intercession of the pope, who did not wish that his enemy should perish, but had rather that he should be converted and

live. The king, though humbled for the time, forgot his vows of submission on the return of Pepin to France. The pope was therefore again obliged to invoke the assistance of Pepin; and on the second coming of that monarch, Aistolfus had the mortification of beholding Ravenna, where the Greek exarch had still continued to reside, and all the territory that was attached to that duchy, together with that of Urbino, and the March of Ancona in short, all those provinces which, together with the duchy of Rome, have continued to form the States of the Church assigned to his rival. And in order to invest the new dominions of the pope with whatever degree of dignity might still be attached to the name of the city of the Caesars, and to make this accession of territory appear like an ancient appendage, the appellation of Romagna was given to the newly acquired territories. The inclusion of the duchy of Ravenna in these territories must have been peculiarly gratifying to the bishops of Rome, as those of the former place, which for nearly four centuries had been the principal seat of government in Italy, had asserted their independence of the universal dominion claimed by the so-called successors of St Peter.

In the sovereignty over the Lombards, Aistolfus was succeeded by Desiderius, duke of Tuscany, who, little expecting to find the talents of Pepin in his son Charles, made a rash attempt to expel the Roman pontiff from his newly-acquired dominions. This deed of aggression, or sacrilege, caused the pope again to appeal to the monarch of the Franks, and subjected the unfortunate Desiderius to the vengeance of the most powerful king and the most fortunate conqueror of the age. In the year 774, the great Charles crossed the Alps with an army, overcame Desiderius at the same place where Aistolfus had been made a prisoner, and made himself king of the Lombards. Six years afterwards, his son Pepin was crowned king of Italy; and twenty years later, when Charles had conquered a considerable portion of the old Western Empire, together with the provinces beyond the Rhine and the Danube, as far as the Baltic, Pope Leo III, willing to show him a favour, and to mortify the Greek empress, conferred on him the dignity of the representative of the Caesars. In return for these favours, the newly-crowned emperor confirmed the Holy See in the possession of the territories that had been assigned to it by his predecessor, and added some others. Thus did the first and the most talented of the new emperors establish and augment that power which, in the eleventh and twelfth century, was so bitterly hostile to his successors, and which ended by depriving them of all authority over the fairest, most wealthy, and most flourishing part of their dominions.

This alliance between the spiritual and temporal heads of the western world continued as long as it suited the policy of each to maintain it. There were, however, many unsettled claims between them, which might at any time become fruitful sources of discord. As the empire extended as far as Benevento, the States of the Church were, of course, included therein; so that the degree of sovereignty which the popes were entitled to exercise in their own dominions was open to dispute. The emperors might also claim a right of interfering in the pontifical elections, to which it is probable that an ambitious hierarchy might be ill inclined to submit; for in the earlier ages of Christianity, as soon as the authority of the bishops of Rome began to be felt in the municipal regulations of the city, their elections were occasionally attended with such sedition and tumult as to call for the interference of the imperial troops. The emperors of Rome and of Constantinople occasionally tried to control the people and the clergy in their choice at these elections, according as they wished for the promotion of a favourite, or took part in the controversies of the day; but in the troubles of the empire they never opposed the united wishes of the great body of the church. Theodoric reserved for himself the right of passing a veto, but this was suffered to fall into disuse in the distracted state of Italy that followed his death. Charlemagne always insisted that his consent should be obtained before the consecration of any pontiff; and the clergy of his time were unwilling to dispute anything with the most powerful of monarchs and the most faithful of their friends. This right, however, was not insisted on by the feeble successors of the great emperor; and in course of time the selection of a pontiff devolved principally upon the cardinals, a new order of ecclesiastics, who were taken principally from the provincial bishops of the territory of Rome. On the other hand, as Charlemagne himself had been consecrated by Pope Leo III, and in some degree founded his own authority on the pontiff's right of selection, the successors of Leo might avail themselves of this precedent to assert their right of interfering in the election of the emperors.

It was, however, some time before these unsettled claims produced any disputes. Though the successors of Charlemagne were incapable of enforcing their rights in a distant province, and were trampled on by the French clergy, the bishops of Rome did not show them any disrespect. Thus, for the greater part of the ninth and tenth centuries, history makes little mention of Italian affairs, except when the debaucheries of the popes, or the intrigues connected with their elections, afforded matter of scandal against the church. The northern part of Italy, which had been subjugated by the Lombards, appears to have enjoyed a considerable degree of tranquillity and prosperity; while the south, which remained nominally subject to the Greeks, suffered considerably from the incursions of pirates.

Though the kingdom of Italy had been conquered by Charlemagne, the Lombards, who had completely amalgamated with its former inhabitants, were left in the undisturbed enjoyment of their properties and titles. The country, as has already been stated, had originally been divided into thirty duchies; but this number was considerably diminished by the consolidation of the smaller ones, and, after the expulsion of Charles the Fat, does not appear to have exceeded five or six. Besides these there had arisen, in the time of Charlemagne, a new order of nobles under the title of Counts, who were generally intrusted with the government of cities. Even under the monarchy of the Lombards, the authority of the kings over the great nobles and cities had never been very great, and under the enfeebled successors of Charlemagne it became little more than nominal. But at the end of the ninth century, Italy was invaded by the Hungarians, the last of the barbaric hordes from Pannonia by whom Europe was overrun; and its inhabitants, finding the necessity of a leader to defend them against these savages, chose Berengarius, duke of Friuli, as their king. Though his authority was at different times disputed by Alberic, duke of Tuscany, and Arnolph, king of the Burgundians, he managed to transmit the crown to his son, Berengarius II. The latter was so pressed by rivals that he was obliged to implore the assistance of Otho, king of Germany; and after he had thus secured himself, he became so unpopular among the chief nobles of his realm that they in their turn appealed to the German monarch. Otho, having again passed the Alps in the year 953, made Berengarius his vassal, and was himself crowned king of Italy at Milan. This last event is not a little remarkable, as being the first occasion on which a German monarch received the iron crown which afterwards became so famous in history. Ten years afterwards, the same Otho was consecrated emperor by Pope John XII; and though he was considerably beholden to the good offices of the pontiff, he did not hesitate to depose him, and, much against the will of the Roman populace, to erect a friend of his own in his place. On the deposition of the pontiff, there was read a catalogue of the crimes and vices laid to his charge; and though, for the sake of human nature, it may be hoped that most of them were untrue or exaggerated, yet, as they do not appear to have been thought incredible at the time, they afford melancholy proof of the public opinion concerning pontifical morality.

The right of interfering in the election of the pontiffs, which had been revived by Otho, was exercised by his successors. The people frequently named a pope of their own, in opposition to the emperor, but were always obliged to give way. At no period, says M. Sismondi, is the history of the popes more stained with crimes than during the reign of Otho and his two successors; but, happily for the memory of the former, the chronicles which relate these crimes are too concise and obscure for the scandalous history to strike the imagination, or to imprint its details on the memory.

The successors of Otho III (Henry II and Conrad) were too much engaged in other matters to take much part in the affairs of the popes. The former had a little difficulty in maintaining his power against Ardoin, marquis of Ivrea; and the latter, after some altercations with the great feudatory lords of Italy, who were evidently anxious to shake off the yoke of their German sovereigns, settled the laws of feudal succession at a diet held at Roncaglia in the year 1026. Passing thence to Rome, he was crowned emperor, and was afterwards too much occupied with Transalpine business to attend to the affairs of Italy. In 1039 he was succeeded by his son Henry III, who, however, was not able to visit Italy till seven years after his accession. Finding three rival popes on his arrival at Rome, he deposed them all, and chose in their place a German, under the title of Clement II. This right of nominating the pontiffs, which had been enforced by the Othos, but had been allowed to fall into disuse by their successors, was continued by Henry till the end of his reign, but seems never to have been abused.

Henry III, dying in the year 1056, was succeeded in his kingdom, and afterwards in the empire, by his son Henry IV. That prince, being still a child, was left at Rome under the tutelage of Victor II, a pope of the late emperor's choice. But the death of Victor, which soon followed that of the emperor, and the minority of Henry, gave the people and clergy an opportunity of reasserting their independence, of which they did not fail to avail themselves. Nor were they without an adequate leader for the occasion. Among the clergy a considerable degree of influence had lately been acquired by a monk of the name of Hildebrand, a man who, in the words of M. Sismondi, united in himself all the energy of will which usually belongs to immoderate ambition, and all the hardness of a man who, having passed his life in a cloister, was a stranger to the feelings of humanity. Determined at once to maintain what he deemed to be the rights of the church, and to put an end to the scandalous abuses which appeared to justify the interference of the emperors, he often confounded the projects of his ambition with his duties as a reformer; and he seems not unfrequently to have persuaded himself, as he certainly tried to make others believe, that the two were identical. During the reign of the three popes who, for the ten years following the death of Victor, filled the pontifical chair, he was the chief director of the ecclesiastical policy, after which his own elevation to that seat gave him more ample opportunities of carrying his projects into execution. But, in the meantime, a new power had arisen in the south of Italy, of which, as it took some part in the contests between the popes and the emperors, it is desirable to trace the origin.

As the Lombards had never extended their conquests beyond Benevento, the southern provinces of the kingdom, which had been conquered by Belisarius and by Narses, continued to remain under the dominion of the successors of Justinian. But the Greek empire, though it maintained its existence against the hordes who, issuing from the German forests and the Sarmatian and Scythian steppes, had occupied the provinces and completely subverted the government of Rome, was in its turn diminished and brought low by a fresh horde of invaders, who fell upon it with the rapacity of savages and the fury of fanatics. The Saracens, who date their rise from the reign of the founder of their religion, the celebrated Mohammed, had been constantly encroaching upon its southern and eastern frontiers, and had taken the provinces of Egypt, Syria, and Libya. Being thus completely masters of the Levant, and established along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, they betook themselves to piracy, and became as formidable on the sea as they had been redoubtable on land. The island of Sicily, so admirably adapted to be an entrepot of marine robbers, could not fail to attract the notice and whet the cupidity of these adventurers of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Accordingly, in the tenth century, we find them established in several places in that island, as also in the coasts of Apulia and Calabria, whence they became the scourge and the terror of those who lived near the shores of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. The Greeks, unable to do anything of themselves, were glad to avail themselves of the aid of a Christian adventurer against their Infidel enemies. A band of the Northern freebooters, who had established a kingdom called after themselves in the province of Neustria in Gaul, and, after the example of the Franks, had embraced the Christian religion, extended their incursions to the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, and occupied some of the fortresses of Romagna and Apulia. To William Guiscard, the chief of these Normans, the Greeks cried in their distress. A nation of pirates and robbers, who seldom hesitated to attack the possessions of their less warlike neighbours, were too glad to avail themselves of an excuse to wrest some of the most glittering preys from their fraternity of the sea. Accordingly, William, being tempted by the promises of the Greek legate Melorco, attacked the Saracens in Sicily, and, with the assistance of the prince of Capua and Salerno, expelled them from the island. Disappointed, by the treachery of Melorco, of the reward which he had expected in the scene of his victories, he made himself master of a considerable portion of the provinces of Apulia and Calabria, which still remained to the Greeks. To these provinces he was fortunate enough to obtain a title, in consequence of an ineffectual attempt made against him by Pope Leo IX, in the year 1053, who, after having been defeated and taken prisoner, was glad to purchase his liberty by sanctifying the usurpations of his captors. William was succeeded by his brother Robert, who conquered nearly all that still remained to the Greeks in the south of Italy. The popes confirmed the title of the Norman dukes to their conquests whenever they wanted the assistance of their new neighbours in their contests with the emperors. In the early part of the following century, Sicily was wrested from the Saracens by Roger, one of Robert's descendants, who afterwards succeeded to the provinces of the south of Italy. Having obtained the title of king from the occupier of the

Holy See, he completed his conquests by the subjugation of the independent republics of Amalfi and Naples.

During the minority of Henry IV, no attempt was made to check the rising power and independence of the church. But the arrival of that monarch at years of discretion, and the subsequent succession of Hildebrand himself to the see whose councils he had so long directed, brought matters to a crisis between the two potentates, each of whom might claim a prescriptive right to elect and to depose the other. The immediate cause of their collision was a dispute concerning the question of investitures, which arose in the following manner.

According to the feudal laws of Europe, none were considered the lawful possessors of the lands and tenements which they held from the emperors and the princes, until they had sworn allegiance to them as supreme proprietors, and received a solemn mark by which the property of their respective grants was transferred. No exception was made in favour of bishops or abbots, who were confirmed in their possessions with the same forms and ceremonies that were used in the investiture of others in their feudal tenements. This practically conferred the power of choosing the bishops and abbots upon the sovereigns, who, too often it is to be feared, bestowed the vacant benefice upon the highest bidder. The right of electing the chief dignitaries of the church had originally belonged to the people, but had subsequently lapsed to the clergy. The latter, solicitous to maintain the privileges of their order, tried to prevent the recurrence of these usurpations on the part of the princes, by consecrating the person whom they had selected to fill the post of any vacant bishopric or abbey. As the ceremony of consecration was deemed irrevocable, the sovereign was obliged to put the person whom the clergy had thus chosen in possession of the lands and dignities attached to his office. To defeat this stratagem on the part of the clergy, the emperors and princes ordered that, on the decease of any bishop or abbot, his ring and crozier, which were requisite for the consecration of his successor, should be sent to them. This decree was generally put into execution by the local magistracy and governors of provinces, to whom the illness and decease of the great ecclesiastics were generally known. Thus the temporary sovereigns of Christendom managed to retain the most valuable of the patronage of the church. This encroachment of the emperors, which was often turned to the worst purposes of simony, could not fail to excite the indignation and encounter the opposition of the most zealous of reformers and the most ambitious of pontiffs; and he accordingly sent ambassadors to remonstrate on the subject with Henry IV. The ambassadors were graciously received by that monarch, but were not allowed to hold any council in his dominions, or to proceed judicially against those who had been guilty of the practice of simony. The pontiff, undaunted by the opposition of the successor of Charlemagne and Otho, astonished the princes of Christendom by excommunicating sundry bishops and abbots, who, being in high favour with the emperor, were thought to have a considerable share in the distribution of his patronage, and by openly propounding an anathema both against those who received the investiture of a bishopric or abbey from a layman, and also against those by whom such investiture might be performed. After the promulgation of this anathema and the decrees of excommunication, Gregory summoned the emperor to Italy to give an account of himself. Henry was not deficient in either spirit or resolution, and in his turn deposed Gregory from the pontificate, and issued orders for the election of another pontiff; but being harassed by a powerful party in Germany, whose alliance was courted, and whose opposition to the emperor was fomented by the pope, he at length deemed it expedient to succumb to his spiritual adversary. On February, 1077, he crossed the Alps to obey the summons of the pontiff. His arrival at the fortress of Canisi in Tuscany, where the pontiff then resided, was the occasion of a memorable scene, recorded by all the annalists of the time, and remarkable as a proof of the degree of insolence which the pontiff had attained, and of the humiliation to which one of his most spirited adversaries, under the vain hope of purchasing his friendship, consented to submit. For three days and three nights of the month of February, in the year 1077, did the emperor of Germany and Italy remain barefooted and clad in sack-cloth at the entrance of the fortress, awaiting the pleasure of the bishop of Rome to admit him to his presence. On the fourth day, the temporal head of the society of believers in the religion which orders its disciples to turn their left cheek to those that smite them on the right, consented to receive his suppliant rival. After much difficulty he granted him the absolution he demanded, but forbade him, till his further consent, to wear the insignia, or to exercise the functions of his imperial office. On his return to Germany, Henry, finding that he had failed by his

concessions to heap coals of fire on the heads of his adversaries, again deposed Gregory, and defeated and slew Rodolph of Swabia, who had been elected emperor during his absence. He afterwards marched into Italy at the head of a powerful army, and after a protracted struggle, in which he was three times obliged to raise the siege of Rome, he made himself master of that city, chose a pope of his own, from whom he received the imperial crown, and besieged his mortal enemy, Gregory, in the castle of St Angelo. Before he could make himself master of the fortress, he was driven therefrom by Robert Guiscard, who, glad to purchase the pope's patronage by his protection, conducted him to Salerno, where he ended his days in the year 1085.

The war was continued by Henry, who might possibly have succeeded, if the clergy had not persuaded his sons to desert him. In the year 1091, his son Conrad revolted against him, and declared himself king of Italy. The emperor still maintained his ground, till the year 1106, when his son Henry, at the instigation of the same counsellors, seized his father, and obliged him to abdicate the empire an act which he could never have accomplished if it had not been for the influence of the clergy over the minds of the people, and the fear of the latter, lest haply, in siding with an excommunicated monarch, they should be found to fight against God. The grief occasioned by the defection of his son soon brought to the grave the broken-hearted emperor, who is said, during his last years, to have been occasionally in want of the necessaries of life.

The clergy soon found that in the change of emperors they had merely got a change of adversaries. Henry V, when secured by the death of his father in the imperial sceptre, vigorously maintained what he conceived to be the imperial rights. This war of investitures, as it is generally called, continued with various successes and some short cessation, till the election of Guy, archbishop of Vienna and count of Burgundy, to the pontifical chair, under the name of Callistus II. The great abilities, aided by the conciliatory qualities of this pontiff, enabled him to put an end to the contentions, of which all parties were now sufficiently weary. After much negotiation, a treaty was concluded at Worms in the year 1122, in which both disputants receded considerably from their original pretensions. But though this compromise was far from securing to the church all that had been demanded by the ambitious Hildebrand, yet the perseverance of the popes in the contest by which it was brought about made their position a very different one from what it had been in the reign of Henry III.

After the termination of this war, we find all Italy, with the exception of the new kingdom of Naples, divided into a number of independent republics, of which, however, it is no easy task to discover the origin, and to trace the growth. The division of the country by the Lombards into so many duchies prevented that centralization which prevailed to a certain extent in other parts of Europe. As under the successors of Charlemagne the great nobles had begun to be virtually independent of the emperors, so, in the course of time, the people began to shake off the domination of the lords. In addition to this, the local power of the clergy, who in Italy were more independent of the popes than elsewhere, and the part which the populace had occasionally taken in the elections of the bishops, tended to give them some notions of municipal government. The invasions of the Huns and Saracens, which occurred during the tenth century, harassing as they were to the inhabitants of the country, were peculiarly auspicious to the independence of the cities. The weakness of the emperors, and the inability of the kings to defend the people, taught them to trust to their own right hands for the protection of their persons and their properties. The consequence was that they flocked into cities; the cities were fortified; each citizen acquired some skill in the use of weapons; and in every community were to be found men who had some knowledge of the arts of war. In the course of time there came to be established in most of them a regular republican government, of which, though its minor details varied in different cities, the following is a general outline:

The chief management of the executive seems to have been entrusted to two magistrates, who, as in the ancient republic of Rome, were chosen every year, and denominated Consuls. In some places, the ministers of war, justice, and finance were appointed in the same manner. There was a council, consisting of one hundred citizens, chosen indiscriminately from all classes, who referred the matters debated on among themselves to the general assembly of the people. From this council were chosen a select few, whose

business it was to deliberate on those affairs that might require secrecy and despatch, and to perform some of the duties of the executive. These last were known by the name of *Concilii di Credenza*, and their functions seem in some degree to have resembled those of cabinet ministers in Great Britain.

This constitution is said by the historian of the Italian republics to have been granted to the cities by Otho the Great. The annalist of Italy, however, maintains that though, after the death of Otho II in 983, various attempts were made by the cities to form themselves into republics, there is no record of the establishment of any regular constitution till the year 1107, in which year he says that, all Lombardy being disordered by the wars of the Henrys, the inhabitants of Milan were fully determined to establish their liberty. Whatever may have been the date of their origin, it is certain that these last-named contests were peculiarly favourable to their growth. Those cities that sided with the clergy naturally declared themselves independent of the emperor, and the emperors conceded their liberty to the others as the reward of their allegiance.

It will readily be believed that the territorial nobles could not view with indifference the rising independence of the cities, and the flocking of the people within their walls; and accordingly, at the time of the first dawn of Italian liberty, we read of several wars between the citizens and the lords of the neighbouring country. But after a time both parties thought it better to come to terms. The people admitted the nobles to all the rights of citizenship, and occasionally appointed them to the first offices of the republic; and the nobles allowed the citizens free commerce with the cultivators of the soil, and abstained from offering any annoyance to the merchants when passing near their castles. So general had this custom become, that in the twelfth century it is said that the Marquis of Montferrat was the only noble-man who had not been admitted to the citizenship of some republic. It is not improbable that these citizen-noblemen and their descendants may have affected to look down upon the inhabitants of plebeian origin, and that their establishment within the city may have led to the formation of two distinct classes, and afforded materials for those party animosities which, for three centuries, continued in every state in Italy.

These new republics, though devoted to industrial arts, and increasing in wealth, were by no means free from mutual jealousies and contests among themselves. Though these contests did not produce any lasting result in Italy, they are nevertheless worth referring to, as showing the degree of spirit and independence of the free cities. The constant rivalry between Pavia, the ancient capital of Lombardy, and Milan, the most flourishing of the independent cities; the wars between Lodi and Milan; the contentions between Crema and Cremona, the former of which sought the protection, and remained the firm ally, of Milan, are among the most interesting episodes of their history. The struggle maintained for ten years by Como against Milan, the heroic resistance and final submission of the latter, form the subject of a most interesting chapter in the work of M. Sismondi.

When the Emperor Henry V died without children, in 1125, the electors were divided between the claims of two great German families, whose names soon became a byword of faction in their own country, whence it spread into Italy. The one of these were the Guelfs, the progenitors of the present royal family in Great Britain, and of the house of Este in Italy, several of whom had, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, been dukes of Bavaria and Saxony. The others were called Ghibellines, a name which they derived from a village in Franconia. The latter, after four of their descendants in succession had attained the imperial dignity, began to look upon the crown of the Caesars as hereditary in their family. But the absence of their chief in the Holy Land, at the time that the last emperor had died without direct heirs, gave their rivals an opportunity of reviving their claims, and they proclaimed Lothaire, duke of Saxony, who indeed was the legitimate heir of Henry V, emperor. It was not long, however, before Conrad, duke of Franconia, head of the opposite party, returned from the Holy Land, and was acknowledged by many of the German nobles. After various contentions, the two rivals passed into Italy. Lothaire, who was the first to arrive at Rome, was crowned by the pope; but as he died shortly afterwards, no opposition was made to the subsequent consecration of Conrad. Both these emperors seem to have been content with the nominal recognition of their authority by the cities, and merely received from them a certain gratuitous supply of provisions, entitled "Fodrum Regale". On the death of Conrad in 1152, the claims of his son were set aside in favour

of his nephew, Frederic Barbarossa. This measure is said to have been counselled by Conrad himself before his demise, as the father of Frederic had married a princess of the family of Guelf, and it was hoped that the issue of this marriage might find favour in the eyes of both families, and so terminate the factions that had so long rent the empire. But in Italy he was regarded as the representative of the Ghibellines; and he took so conspicuous a part in the affairs of that country, that, after his death, that name of Ghibelline was given to all those Italians who were supposed to be favourable to his policy or to the interests of his successors. The opponents of this party were called Guelfs, after the hereditary rivals of their paternal ancestors.

In the year 1154 the new emperor came to Italy for the purpose of being crowned, and, not being content with the phantom of authority that had been left to his immediate predecessors, he desired to exercise over the Italian cities all the rights of sovereignty that had been assumed by, or granted to, the founders of the empire. To give effect to his views, he endeavoured to control the consular elections, in which former emperors had never interfered, and he sent to each city a governor of his own, under the title of Podestà. It was not long before the Milanese formed a powerful league against him, which was joined by all the communities of Lombardy, with the exception of a few which stood aloof from ancient jealousy. The pope put himself at the head of the party opposed to the emperor, and his example was followed by most of the provincial clergy.

The war which thus broke out continued with various success for nearly thirty years. Though Frederic gained many advantages in the field, the cities, like the fabled giant of yore, seemed to gain strength by every successive defeat. Every act of vengeance intended to terrify them excited their spirit; every reverse showed them the necessity of union and organization. Twice was Milan taken : the latter time she was compelled to surrender at discretion, and utterly destroyed by the emperor. Crema shared the same fate : the pontifical city was taken and subdued, and the pope was compelled to escape by the Tiber from the castle of St Angelo. But when fortune seemed thus about to declare for the emperor, he was first taught, by a severe visitation of Providence, that his labour was but in vain. A sickness broke out in the camp, which carried off the flower of his army, and he was with difficulty able to escape with a remnant of his shattered forces across the Mont Cenis. On a subsequent occasion, his army suffered so much in the same manner before Alessandria, a new city which had been built by the Lombard league, and called after the reigning pontiff, that he seemed incapable of offering any resistance to the forces which were approaching to attack him. The confederate cities, in the hour of their triumph, showed a singular spirit of moderation : they declined to push matters to extremities by destroying his army, and merely insisted that he should disband his foreign forces and treat with them at Pavia. They were unable, however, to lay the foundations of a lasting peace; and in the following year hostilities were renewed, which terminated with the rout and total destruction of the imperial forces at Legnano, whence the emperor himself was obliged to escape in disguise. The decisive victory gained by the leaguers made the emperor consent to an armistice for six years; at the termination of which, whatever his restless spirit might have desired, the Germans refused to renew a contest which was frequently attended with disaster, and where even the most decisive victories failed to produce any adequate result. In 1184 the ambassadors of the emperor and the delegates of the cities assembled at Constance, for the purpose of permanently settling the rights of the contending parties. A treaty was agreed upon there, whereby the cities were guaranteed in the enjoyment of all the republican rights which they could claim by usage; among which, those of levying war, of erecting fortifications, and of administering civil and criminal justice, were specially mentioned. The nomination of the magistrates was also left absolutely to the citizens; but those that were chosen by them had to go through the form of receiving the investiture of their office from an imperial legate. The customary tributes of provision during the emperor's residence in Italy were preserved, and he was authorized to appoint, in every city, a judge of appeal in civil cases. The league of the cities for their mutual defence, which had been formed in their wars against Frederic, was confirmed; but they were every ten years to take an oath of allegiance to the emperor. From this, however, was to be excepted the city and the territories of Rome, in which the emperor was to resign those small vestiges of authority which had been conceded to him by the cities of Lombardy a circumstance deserving notice, as the Roman pontiff's, though they had taken upon themselves to appoint and to depose monarchs, had never previously been acknowledged as independent sovereigns.

The emperor, after the treaty of Constance, and his reconciliation with the pope, found, in the crusade against Saladin, employment for that ambition which he had been unable to satisfy in the plains of Lombardy. A fever, brought on by bathing in the Cnidus, released his restless spirit from its tenement of clay. He was succeeded in the empire by his son Henry VI. This prince was destined, by his marriage, to exercise as great an influence over the destinies of Italy as his father had done by his wars and negotiations. By his union with Constance, daughter and sole heiress of William Guiscard, the kingdom of Naples became attached to the dominions of the representatives of the all-powerful house of Swabia, and involved in the politics of Italy and Europe. Henry was succeeded in his hereditary dominions by his son Frederic, and in the empire by Otho, duke of Bavaria. The new emperor, though belonging to the party which had always maintained the cause of the church and the Italian republics against his predecessors, soon found himself involved in hostilities with Pope Innocent III, a man possessed of many of the virtues and faults of Pope Gregory VII; and the pontiff, in revenge, raised up a rival to him in the person of Frederic of Swabia, already king of the two Sicilies. The death of Otho occurring six years afterwards, left the young prince in undisputed possession of the imperial sceptre.

The succession of a member of the house of Swabia rekindled the flames of discord which had been partially extinguished during the reign of an emperor of the house of Bavaria. The republican party, in no ways satisfied by the concessions of the first Frederic, or mollified by a long period of repose, endeavoured to withhold from the present emperor the little more than nominal rights of sovereignty that had been accorded to his grand-father. In this fresh contest they were soon joined by the Pope Gelasius, who, as his predecessor had been the first to assist Frederic to his greatness, was sorely disappointed in not finding in him the most implicit obedience. It was at this time, too, that the party names of Ghibelline and Guef, which had hitherto been confined to Germany, passed into Italy. The former was, of course, given to the supporters of the emperor, the latter to the party of the church; and both continued in the peninsula long after the imperial crown had passed from the descendants of the house of Swabia.

The remaining history of this emperor presents little more than the recurrence of a series of contests of the same nature as those in which his grandfather was engaged. They only differ from them in that they were carried on by him rather for the maintenance of just rights than for the suppression of constitutional freedom, and in that his hostility was directed more against the party of the pope than against any association of cities. Thus, as every lover of constitutional freedom will incline to the part of the cities in their contest with the first Frederic, so every hater of anarchy, and every opponent of priestly usurpation, will wish that the victory had been on the side of the second. Successive pontiffs continued to pronounce excommunications one even attempted to get up a crusade against him; and in the year 1245, Innocent IV had him formally deposed by a council at Lyons. He, however, had some advantage in being able to employ as soldiers the Saracen inhabitants of his hereditary dominions of Naples and Sicily, who laughed at the papal weapons of excommunication, before which the Germans not unfrequently trembled. He maintained himself with ability and perseverance till the defeat and captivity of his natural son Hensius, in the year 1249. The battle in which this took place was principally between the forces of the Bolognese and Modenese, and had arisen out of a ridiculous quarrel about the abstraction of a pitcher, which has formed the subject of the celebrated mock-heroic poem of Tassoni; and it might not seem likely to have been attended with any important results upon the general issues of the war. But time and toil had produced their effects upon the emperor. His spirit was completely broken by the misfortune of his son. Both the temporal power and the spiritual influence of the Holy See was greater than it ever had been before, and excommunication was no longer devoid of terror for him who in his youth had attacked and defeated the pope with Saracen soldiers, and was strongly suspected of having been the author of the book entitled *De Tribus Impostoribus*, a term applied therein to the founders of the Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan religions. To be reconciled to the head of the church, he implored the assistance and mediation of St Louis of France, then absent in Cyprus, and expired before his wishes could be gratified.

The final penitence of Frederic did not wipe out the imputations of infidelity which, for the reasons above alluded to, were attached to his character; and his availing himself of the services of Infidels and foreigners must have in no small degree offended the reverential feelings of the Christians and the

patriotism of the Italians. Some opinion may be formed of the manner in which his reputation suffered in consequence, from the circumstance that Dante, who was accused of being a violent Ghibelline partisan, and was certainly no favourer of pontifical ambition, places him in hell. The termination of his reign may be looked upon as the commencement of a new era in the history of Italy.

CHAPTER II

STATE OF ITALY AFTER THE DEATH OF FREDERIC II.

ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF VENICE, PISA, GENOA, AND FLORENCE.

THE death of Frederic II was followed by an interregnum of sixty years in the empire. The former event completely established the predominance of the papal power in Italy. In consequence of the latter, the Lombard republics ceased to have that solicitude for their liberty which, in spite of the rigid adherence of Frederic Barbarossa and his successors to the treaty of Constance, they always appear to have entertained under the Ghibelline emperors.

The expression of Sallust with regard to the Roman republic, "It is incredible in how short a time the state increased after it had gained its liberty" may be applied with equal justice to the cities that had sprung from the ashes of the Roman empire, and extorted their freedom from those who claimed to be the successors of the Caesars. The causes of their rapid growth must be familiar to everyone who has paid any attention to the laws which regulate the wealth of nations. The conversion of the idle retainers of a barbarous king, or of a feudal lord, into productive labourers; the absence of tyranny, and of the fear of confiscation; the absolute certainty felt by every industrious man that he will be allowed to enjoy the fruits of his own labour; the interest taken by each citizen in the wellbeing of a state of which he was, or fancied himself, an independent member; the prevalent notion that merit, and not favour, led to promotion, were productive of their natural effects, both in the ancient mistress of the world and in the cities in whose fame Italy was destined to revive. But in both cases the intoxication of prosperity was followed by its usual results. The causes of the rapid degeneracy of republican states are as easy to explain as those of their rapid rise. For as it is with individual men, so it is with the collection of individuals that constitute a nation : the former require more than ordinary strength of character to stand a succession of good fortune; the latter need more than ordinary virtue to stand the great material prosperity which is the inevitable result of liberty. The career of many obscure individuals has been like that of the monarch who, in his youth, desired wisdom and virtue more than riches and power, but as soon as silver had become as plentiful as paving-stones in his capital, went a-whoring after other gods. The story of the plodding citizen, who in his youth was content with one dish on week-days, and a pudding on the Lord's day, but after he had grown wealthy took a bribe, cursed his God, and died, will find many analogies in real life. The records that we have of the times of Marius and Sylla show how fallen was the state of those concerning whose forefathers it was said, that it would be easier to turn the sun from its course than to seduce them from the path of virtue. The sons of the victors of Legnano degenerated more rapidly even than the descendants of those who had stained with Punic blood the waters of the Mediterranean. Their fate should be pregnant with instruction to all who maintain that a government has to attend only to the material prosperity of a nation, and that it may leave its morality to take care of itself. If the former be attained, it certainly cannot continue without the latter. The Italian republics fell, because they had not derived, either from philosophy or religion, sufficient virtue to stand their premature prosperity. Let their history be a warning to us; and in their fall let us "think of our own, despite our watery wall".

Hitherto the states of the peninsula had, for the most part, either acted together or been divided into two great parties, according as they favoured or opposed the claims of the emperors. No notice has, therefore, been taken of the fortunes of any one of them apart from the others. But since, as soon as they were freed from the fear of the common foe, they took to squabbling among themselves, it will be necessary to bestow separate attention on those that began from that time to assume a prominent position.

The adoption of the geographical arrangement of the cities, made by Mr Hallam, will considerably facilitate the understanding of their subsequent history. They may be considered as divided into four groups or clusters, the first comprehending the cities of Western Lombardy, bounded by the Adige, the Alps, and

the Ligurian mountains, of which Milan may be reckoned the chief; the second containing those of Lombardy east of the Adige, the principal of which are Verona, Vicenza, Mantua, Padua, and Trevigi; in the third may be placed the republics south of the Po, including some in that part of the Romagna that had been originally assigned to the church, of which Ravenna, Modena, Ferrara, Bologna, Forli, and Rimini, were the chief; and in the fourth the cities of Tuscany, whose fortunes are related in Florentine history. In addition to these republics, the history of each of the maritime states of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice is worthy of separate notice. The rest of Italy was comprised in the dominions of the Church and the kingdom of Naples.

The three above-named maritime republics had hitherto taken little part in the general affairs of Italy, but they were certainly more powerful and wealthy than the other cities of the age. Piracy and pilgrimage, which, according to Gibbon, brought all the nations of the Middle Ages into intercourse, were the chief causes of their rise. The origin of Venice, at the time that Italy was invaded by the Huns under Attila, has already been mentioned. After their retreat, each fresh invasion of barbarians augmented the number of refugees who sought shelter in the sand-banks north of the Adriatic, and infused fresh elements of strength into the new community. The people who had carried with them the remains of Roman civilization looked down, as might be expected, upon the barbarian governors of Italy; they refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of any, with the exception, perhaps, of the semi-civilised Theodoric. In the beginning of the sixth century they were considerably annoyed by the Slaves, a set of Eastern barbarians, who had overrun several provinces of the Greek Empire, and established themselves on the Illyrian coast of the Adriatic. The depredations of these troublesome neighbours was the first cause of the Venetians betaking themselves to sea, where their efforts made in self-defence imparted to them the skill, and their successes endowed them with the confidence, necessary for those who would be rulers of the ocean. Their victories over the Slaves had made them masters of a considerable portion of Dalmatia, so early as the year 527. In the year 697, they adopted the form of government which, in the preceding century, had been established by Longinus in the rest of Italy : the office of Duke, which was subsequently called Doge, was first conferred upon Paul Luc Anapert. In the time of Pepin and Charlemagne they maintained their independence of the Franks, as well as of the Lombards, both of whom they looked down upon as barbarians; but they were willing to be the allies, and sometimes even to claim the protection, or acknowledge the supremacy, of the more civilized Greeks. The destruction of several of their cities by the Franks first induced them to make the Rialto the seat of their government. The increasing feebleness of the Greeks was peculiarly favourable to their rising fortune : the former, unable to protect their remaining possessions against their multitudinous assailants, conceded to the cities of Dalmatia and Illyria the right of defending themselves; and these cities, having formed an association against a new set of pirates, the Narentines, put the Venetians at their head. The same success that, four centuries before, had attended their efforts against the Slaves crowned those made against the new disturbers of their tranquillity, whom they completely drove from the north of the Adriatic. The fate that invariably attends states that trust to the protection of a powerful neighbour against a distant foe befell the Greek cities of the Adriatic they became the subjects of her whose alliance they had sought as a boon. In the year 997, Pietro Ursulo, the chief of the Venetians, received the homage of many of these cities and islands, and acquired for himself and his successors the title of Doge of Venice and Dalmatia.

The armed pilgrimage of the nations of Europe, to expel the Saracens from the Holy City, completed for Venice what the piracy of the Slaves and Narentines had begun. The incursions of the latter had forced them to build, for purposes of defence, the ships which now yielded them considerable profits, by conveying the troops of the Crusaders to the coast of Syria; and the supplying these warriors with provisions soon opened to them a lucrative trade with the nations of the East. In the words of M. Sismondi, the citizens, uniting commerce with warfare, brought the richest cargoes to Venice in fleets, which made the Infidels tremble. Their naval strength in the year 1099 was computed at two hundred vessels. In the new Latin kingdom of Jerusalem they established several small colonies, whose inhabitants were ruled by their laws, and in every respect treated as subjects. In their return from the Crusades, the Venetians, forgetful of their ancient ties of friendship and allegiance, ravaged several of the Greek islands, and enlarged their dominions on the coasts of the Adriatic.

The rise of Pisa began at a period long posterior to that of Venice. The first notice that we have of its maritime importance is in the year 980, when Otho II asked its inhabitants to supply him with vessels to conquer the two Sicilies. The Saracen pirates excited the maritime energy of her inhabitants, as the Slaves and Narentines had roused that of the Venetians; the neighbouring cities of the Maremma put themselves under her protection as those of Dalmatia had done with Venice, and in time underwent the same fate. The possession of the island of Corsica was a subject of contention between them and Muset, king of the Moors, whom they expelled from it in the year 1017, and again in the year 1050. In the year 1100 they furnished a fleet of a hundred and twenty vessels to the Crusaders, though they did not make the same advantageous terms for themselves as the Venetians had done. The spirit of jealousy that could not fail to arise between these two maritime states showed itself in their fights at the island of Rhodes. In 1108 Tancred, the hero of Tasso, conceded to the Pisans the same privileges of establishing colonies in the East that were enjoyed by their rivals.

Genoa, divided from the plains of Lombardy by an amphitheatre of hills which rise in successive ridges above the sea, was never much occupied by the Lombards, and remained subject to the Greeks long after the former had been firmly established in their other possessions. Thus the elements of civilization which had to be reformed in the rest of Italy were never entirely extinguished in it, and this circumstance was probably one of the causes of its early pre-eminence. The necessity of holding communication by sea with the eastern metropolis, and its dependencies in Italy, to which access by land in the turbulent reign of the Lombards was difficult, caused its sons to turn their attention to navigation. In the year 936 their city was taken and pillaged by the Saracens, and the losses they sustained on this occasion for a time made them inferior to the Pisans. But the successes of the latter against Muset strongly excited their jealousy, and aroused their energy. In a short time the protection of Genoa was sought, and her supremacy was acknowledged by the cities of the Riviera, as that of Pisa and Venice had been by their maritime neighbours. She was, however, able to furnish only twenty-seven vessels to the Crusaders. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the twelfth century, she sustained a war of fourteen years with Pisa. The taking of Constantinople by the Latins, which enabled her to establish the colony of Pera on the Golden Horn, besides several others in the Black Sea, considerably augmented her resources.

Among the inland republics, that of Florence became so conspicuous in the subsequent annals of Italy that its state at the time of Frederic II's death is deserving of notice. The city itself had been originally founded by the inhabitants of Fiesole, an old Roman colony, the ruins of which may still be seen on a hill overlooking the valley of the Arno, the steepness and ruggedness of which were said, even in the fourteenth century, to have left their impress on the character and temper of those that dwelt beneath. At the time that Pisa was clearing the Mediterranean of pirates, or transporting the wealth of the East to the shores of Italy and France, the history of Florence is involved in partial obscurity, and her happy state at that period, if there is not much exaggeration in the encomiums of Dante, it must have verified a celebrated adage of the Greek tragedian. She appears never to have shown any opposition to the claims of the emperors, and when they were not in a position to enforce their authority she yielded a ready obedience to the dukes and marquises of Tuscany. About the middle of the twelfth century, in consequence of the will of the Countess Matilda, she became part of the property of the church; but she soon afterwards returned to the dominion of her old feudal lords. Thus, while the other cities of Italy were suffering from the violence of civil wars and internal dissensions, the Florentines remained a united people, obedient always to the will of the conquerors, and seeking no boon but to be allowed to live in peace. In the words of Dante:

Saw her so glorious and so just, that ne'er
The lily from the lance had hung reverse,
Or through division been with vermeil dyed.

But as bodily infirmities, the later they come, are the more pregnant with danger, and are more likely to be fatal, so Florence, too, as she had been the last to engage in the party politics of Italy, was afterwards more afflicted and lacerated thereby than any other city in the peninsula. She was first led to take a part therein in consequence of internal divisions arising from a private quarrel about an alleged breach of marriage. The name of the recusant bridegroom's family was Buondelmonte, that of the family who considered themselves aggrieved Uberto. Dante laments the evils that this quarrel caused to flow upon his country and his people in the following passage:

The house, from whence your tears have had their spring,
Through the just anger, that hath murder'd ye
And put a period to your gladsome days,
Was honour'd; it, and those consorted with it.
Buondelmonti! what ill counselling
Prevail'd on thee to break the plighted bond?
Many, who now are weeping, would rejoice,
Had God to Ema given thee, the first time
Thou near our city earnest.

Par. XVI. 135.

Buondelmonte was finally killed in a tumult at the foot of the statue of Mars a circumstance which, seventy years afterwards, was looked upon as ominous of the dissensions which he first introduced into the hitherto tranquil city. It is alluded to by the poet in the following verses :

Florence! on that maim'd stone which guards the bridge,
The victim, whence thy peace departed, fell.

This act of violence extinguished all hopes of an amicable adjustment of the difference between the two powerful families; the whole city was forthwith divided into factions, one determined to avenge the death of the murdered man, the other equally resolved to resist any deed of aggression on the part of those who fancied themselves injured. Both parties, says Machiavelli, were strong in fortified castles, in connections, and in the numbers of their adherents, and thus they continued at enmity for the space of thirty years, till Frederic II entered the city and espoused the cause of the Uberti. By his powerful assistance the

Buondelmonti were banished. The exiled party naturally became Guelfs, as their opponents, being supported by the emperor, of course became Ghibellines. So universal was the spirit of party at this time, and so great was its supposed influence over the subsequent fortunes of the city, that the names of the principal families attached to each side have been preserved. Such was the origin of the contentions that, for more than two centuries, continued to prevail in the city which was the abode of Dante and Boccaccio, of Michael Angelo and Lorenzo di Medici.

CHAPTER III

KINGDOM OF NAPLES. REPUBLICS OF ROMAGNA

THE hostility of the pontiffs to the house of Swabia did not cease after the death of Frederic. The heads of the Christian church continued to visit the sins of that emperor upon successive generations of his descendants. Innocent IV lost no time in making himself master of the city of Naples. Here, however, he had soon to encounter the opposition of Conrad, the lawful heir of Frederic, who died in the year 1354, while his son Conradin was yet under age. The management of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies was undertaken by Manfred, natural son of Frederic, a prince of no ordinary abilities, who, either for the sake of strengthening his temporary authority, or, as is more likely, with the view of retaining the regal power in his own hands, gave out that Conradin was dead, and proclaimed himself king of Naples. The vigour and abilities of Manfred, displayed in, the rapid reorganization of the Ghibelline party, which had become formidable under so able a chief, struck terror into the breast of the successor of Innocent, Pope Urban IV, who, like some of his predecessors, endeavoured to persuade men that his own interests were identical with those of the kingdom of Christ, and preached a crusade against the king of Naples. Lest the spiritual zeal of the princes of Christendom should fail to supply him with succours sufficient to rid him of such a powerful adversary, he whetted the ambition of a son of the king of France, Charles, prince of Anjou, by assigning to him the kingdom of the Sicilies, which the bishops of Rome had never ceased to claim as a fief of the Holy See. Manfred lost no time in organising an army sufficiently powerful to oppose the invading forces of the Frenchman: fortune, however, was against him. After a most heroic resistance, he was defeated and slain in the year 1166, near Benevento. In spite of his suspicious conduct as regards the kingdom of his nephew, his origin, his talents, and his heroic defence of his country against a foreigner, have always caused him to be ranked among the heroes of Italian history. Even if he had possessed no merits of his own, Dante's beautiful description of him in the lines

Comely and fair, and gentle of aspect

He seem'd, but on one brow a gash was marked.

could hardly fail to impart a degree of interest to his character and adventures. Perhaps it might be difficult to find a more impartial estimate of his actual deserts than that given in the words which the poet puts into his mouth

My sins were horrible : but so wide arms

Hath goodness infinite, that it receives

All who turn to it.

The enmity displayed to his very memory by the successor of Urban, Clement IV, by whose order the bishop of Cosenza refused to allow his body to be buried in consecrated ground, has received notoriety from the following lines

Been of Cosenza's shepherd better scann'd,
Who then by Clement on my hunt was set,
Yet at the bridge's head my bones had lain,
Near Benevento, by the heavy mole
Protected; but the rain now drenches them,
And the wind drives.

Purg. III. 120.

Three years afterwards, Charles defeated Conradin, the lawful heir of Conrad, at Tagliacozzo, and sullied his victory by the execution of his rival. This act of barbarism was merely the prelude to a series of cruelties by which he endeavoured to avenge himself on his enemies, and to extirpate his opponents. In prosecution of the latter purpose, he succeeded in completely annihilating or banishing from his dominions the race of Infidels, of whose assistance Frederic and Manfred had continually availed themselves in their wars against the reputed head of the church. His unrelenting persecution of the Sicilians, among whom the Saracens were principally located, drove the former to the frenzy of despair; and after a slight provocation given by one of his soldiers in the year 1282, they rose up with one accord, and butchered, or banished from the island, all the French. Having thus shaken off the yoke of the conquerors, they transferred their allegiance to Peter of Aragon, husband of Manfred's daughter Constance, called by Dante

My fair daughter go, the parent glad
Of Aragonia, and Sicilia's pride.

Purg. III. 115.

with whom they had for some time past been carrying on negotiations. The husband of Constance is alluded to by the same poet in the well-known lines

He so robust of limb, who measure keeps
In song with him of feature prominent,
With every virtue bore his girdle braced.

Purg. VII. 112.

An attempt to reconquer the island was made by the son of the king of Naples, afterwards known as Charles II. He was, however, taken prisoner in an engagement with the fleet of Peter; but on the death of his father, two years afterwards, he was liberated, on the condition of his consenting to the independence of Sicily. But after the death of Peter of Aragon, the head of the Christian church released him from his engagements. Peter was succeeded in his Sicilian dominions by his sons James and Frederic successively, whose inferiority to their sire and to their elder brother, who inherited the throne of Aragon, is thus lamented by Dante

And if that stripling, who behind him sits,
King after him had lived, his virtue then
From vessel to like vessel had been pour'd;
Which may not of the other heirs be said.
By James and Frederick his realms are held;
Neither the better heritage obtains.
Rarely into the branches of the tree
Doth human worth mount up.

But Charles II was also inferior to his father, and the hatred of the Sicilians to the house of Anjou was so great that, in spite of the incapacity of their rulers, they succeeded in maintaining their independence. In the year 1303, Frederic was formally acknowledged king of Sicily. Charles died six years afterwards. His eldest son, Charles Martel, had succeeded to the kingdom of Hungary in right of his mother, and died in the year 1297. Dante makes him tell his own story, and the expectations that awaited him had he survived his father, in the following words

A short date below

The world possessed me: had the time been more,
Much evil that will come, had never chanced.

The left bank

That Rhone, when he hath mixed with Sorga, laves,
In me its lord expected; and that horn
Of fair Ausonia with its boroughs old,

Bari and Croton, and Gaeta piled,
From where the Trento disembogues his waves,
With Verde mingled, to the salt sea flood.
Already on my temples beamed the crown
Which gave me sovereignty over the land
By Danube washed, whereas he strays beyond
The limits of his German shores.

Par. VIII. 49.

Nor was his son Carlo Hubert allowed to realize these expectations, as the kingdoms of Naples and Provence were assigned to Charles II's second son, Robert, who appears to have inherited much of his grandfather's talents.

The period that elapsed from the death of Frederic II till the defeat of Conradin at Tagliacozzo may be said to be the culminating point of the power of the popes. The Ghibellines were completely subdued in every city of Italy, with the exception of Florence; and whatever hopes they may have entertained from the talents of Manfred seemed to have been completely crushed by the result of the battle of Benevento. But the immoderate ambition of Charles of Anjou soon benefited them in the same manner that that of Frederic Barbarossa had formerly imparted strength to the party of the church. As there was, at this time, no emperor in Germany, Charles persuaded the pope to nominate him imperial vicar; and the papal interregnum of thirty-three months, which followed the death of Clement, appeared to him a favourable opportunity of making himself master of Italy. For this purpose he convoked a diet of the Lombard cities at Cremona, where some of them agreed to defer to his authority; and others, though they would not take him as their lord, said that they would feel honoured by his alliance and friendship. But in these ambitious projects he was violently opposed, both by the heads of the old Ghibelline party, and by many patriotic Italians, who became attached thereto for the same reasons that their ancestors had joined the Guelfs. The result was, that every city in the peninsula was torn by the most violent internal dissensions. In the words of Muratori, for a considerable time the greater part of Italy was in a state of ruin; and factions and civil discords began to acquire fresh vigour in the cities. Thirty years afterwards the Tuscan poet laments the state to which his country was then reduced, in the following verses

Ah, slavish Italy! thou inn of grief!
Vessel without a pilot in loud storm!
Lady no longer of fair provinces,
But brothel-house impure!

While now thy living ones
In thee abide not without war; and one
Malicious gnaws another; ay, of those
Whom the same wall and the same moat contains.

Purg. VI. 76.

The papal interregnum ceased in the year 1271, on the election of Gregory X. The sole aim of the new pontiff was said to be public good and universal peace. While he steadily opposed the ambition of Charles, he endeavoured to allay the factions which raged in every state in the peninsula; and, under the vain hope of finding someone to whom they might look up in their troubles, he persuaded the electors of Germany to choose an emperor from their countrymen. But the death of this pontiff, which took place five years after his accession, extinguished all hopes of allaying the troubles of Italy. The characters of his successors were not such as were likely to have any influence with the contending parties, or indeed to obtain any respect for the heads of the church. Most of them were chiefly intent upon enriching themselves or aggrandizing their relations, and they have received a most unenviable notoriety from having been described as undergoing the most grotesque punishments in the Inferno of Dante. After three ephemeral popes, the holy chair was occupied by one of the noble Roman family of Orsini, under the title of Nicholas III. This pontiff was a most unflinching opponent of Charles of Anjou, and showed little scruple in the measures he took for the advancement either of his own family or of the church. He compelled the king of Naples to resign the title of imperial vicar, which had been conceded to him by Clement IV, and supported Peter of Aragon in his claims to the kingdom of Sicily. From the Emperor Rodolph he procured an acknowledgment of all the documents, whether real or spurious, which guaranteed the independence of the Territories of the Church. But he made every object subservient to that of gaining riches for himself, and power for his relations. For the part he took against Charles he is said to have taken money from Peter of Aragon, as is implied in the following expression of Dante

And look thou well to that ill-gotten coin,
Which against Charles thy hardihood inspired.

Inf. XIX. 103.

Machiavelli says of him that, with the view of protecting the church both against the French, who were then in Italy, and against the Germans, who might at any future time be there, he entertained the design of making two kings of his own family, the one to reign in Tuscany, the other in Lombardy. His partiality to those of his own name is briefly alluded to by Dante in the following pithy expressions:

And of a she-bear was indeed the son,
So eager to advance my whelps, that, &c.

The grotesque nature of the punishment awarded to him by Dante is as follows:

From out the mouth
Of every one emerged a sinner's feet,
And of the legs high upward as the calf.
The rest beneath was hid. On either foot
The soles were burning; whence the flexile joints
Glanced with such violent motion, as had snapped
Asunder cords or twisted withes. As flame,
Feeding on unctuous matter, glides along
The surface, scarcely touching where it moves;
So here, from heel to point, glided the flames.
 'Master! say who is he, than all the rest
Glancing in fiercer agony, on whom
A ruddier flame doth prey?'

Inf. XIX. 24.

After his death, Charles managed to get a creature of his own elected in his place. One Martin of Tours, a Frenchman by birth, was chosen under the title of Martin IV. So well did he do the bidding of his patron that, in the words of the annalist of Italy, he emptied the treasury of excommunications against all Ghibellines, and against anyone who was supposed to be lukewarm in his attachment to Charles. He seems, however, to have been free from many of the vices which caused such scandal against the church; for Dante, the great censor of the public characters of that period, merely finds fault with him for his addiction to the pleasures of the table, to which he alludes in the following words:

Purges, by long abstinence, away
Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel.

and assigns him no worse punishment than exclusion from Paradise, till he had grown thin by fasting in Purgatory.

The two immediate successors of this pontiff continued the practices of simony and nepotism, which had been begun by Nicholas III. But they had not either the mental or physical capacity to take much part in the politics of Italy; and from the declaration that Dante puts in the mouth of Nicholas III, that he did not expect to be removed from his position of torture till the death of a pontiff that came after them, it may be inferred that their practices were not so bad as to condemn them to the punishment assigned to the less scrupulous followers of Simon Magus. They were succeeded by Celestine V, a man whose extraordinary mildness of disposition recommended him to Charles II, king of Naples, as likely to be a passive instrument in his hands. Singularly enough, this quality, which prevents most men from rising to fame, has immortalized him, by making him the hero of the oft-quoted line in Dante:

Who to base fear

Yielding, abjured his high estate.

Finding his post little suited to his disposition, he was persuaded to resign in favour of a cardinal of considerable talent and violent temper, who succeeded him under the title of Boniface VIII. It seems strange that the humbleness of mind, contempt of the world, and delicacy of conscience, the qualities which, in the words of Muratori, induced him to take a step which all must admire, but few or none can imitate, have obtained for him no higher award from the great poet and censor of the age than to be placed among:

The wretched souls of those, who lived

Without or praise or blame

. . . . From his bounds Heaven drove them forth,

Not to impair his lustre; nor the depth

Of Hell receives them, lest the accursed tribe

Should glory thence with exultation vain.

Inferno. III. 35.

The abilities of the new pontiff, Boniface VIII, were such as might have restored the influence of, though his general character was not likely to insure respect for, the church. But his talents proved abortive through his ungovernable temper. He soon became involved in the most violent disputes with the Colonna, one of the leading noble families at Rome, against whom he endeavoured to get up a war of extermination under the name of a crusade. To this abuse of the power intrusted to him, Dante alludes in the following verses:

The chief of the new Pharisees meantime,
Waging his warfare near the Lateran,
Not with the Saracens or Jews, (his foes
All Christians were, nor against Acre one
Had fought, nor traffick'd in the Soldan's land.)

Inf. XXVII. 85

He began by supporting Albert of Austria against Adolphus of Nassau, in his contest for the imperial crown; but when the former had succeeded, and his ambassadors had come to Rome to request the head of the Christian church to acknowledge him in his new dignity, he said that Albert was a rebel and a traitor; and putting the crown on his own head, and seizing a sword, he added, "It is I that am Caesar it is I that am emperor it is I that will defend the rights of the empire". He was at first a violent supporter of the French party in Italy; and to strengthen their influence he invited Charles of Valois, brother of Philip of France, to adjust the differences of Florence, and to assist Charles II of Naples to reconquer Sicily. But, not long afterwards, the arrogance of his demands and the impetuosity of his temper involved him in a serious quarrel with the French king. The sequel of this contest is so remarkable, as having been attended with fatal consequences to the pontiff himself, and having given to the papal dignity, which Gregory and Innocent had done so much to exalt, a blow from which it never recovered, that it is deserving of special notice.

Boniface, presuming it may be either on his own power, or on the gratitude to which he thought himself entitled from the king of France, began to interfere both in the internal affairs and in the foreign policy of that kingdom more than was pleasing to Philip. At length the insolence of the pontiff reached its height, in appointing a new bishop of Pamiers, and constituting him his ambassador to Philip, under the title of apostolic legate. The king, however, showed so little respect to the representative of Boniface, that, after some differences with him, he accused him of high treason and cast him into prison. But though he thus set at defiance the person who claimed to be the head of the Christian church, he managed to secure the support of the majority of the French clergy, while the French nation in general espoused his quarrel as their own. At last one of the members of the house of Colonna, who was then residing at Paris, set out to Italy with three hundred horse; and having been joined shortly after his arrival there by a considerable body of the partisans of his family, he seized Boniface and cast him into prison. On the 11th of October 1303, in little more than one month after his incarceration, the pontiff expired, as was supposed, of grief and passion at the indignities to which he had been subjected. This result of the pope's quarrel with Philip showed how much the pontificate had fallen in power and dignity since Frederic II had been obliged to succumb to its opposition. And though few were inclined to respect Boniface personally, yet many regarded his treatment as an insult directed against the religion of which he was then generally allowed to be the head. The allusion made thereto by Dante:

Lo! the flower-de-luce

Enters Alagna; in his Vicar Christ

Himself a captive, and his mockery
Acted again. Lo! to his holy lip
The vinegar and gall once more applied;
And he 'twixt living robbers doom'd to bleed.

Purg. xx. 85.

doubtless expresses the sentiments of many excellent Christians, who disapproved as much as the poet of priestly ambition and simony. However, his punishment on earth did not prevent the poet condemning him in the next world to the tortures suffered by the other popes who had been guilty of similar abuses of their power. In the passage descriptive thereof, already quoted, the last simoniacal pope, who is supposed to have the gift of seeing future events, expresses his expectation that Boniface would come to the same place of torment as himself, in the following words:

Already standest there, Boniface!
So early dost thou surfeit with the wealth,
For which thou fearest not in guile to take
The lovely lady, and then mangle her?

Inf. XIX. 53.

The various allusions made by Dante, who may be allowed to be the best historian of the times, to the evil practices of Boniface and his predecessors, are worthy of notice, as illustrating the manner in which the heads of the Christian church had abused their power and were fallen in estimation. In referring to the golden florin, which not long before had been coined at Florence, he uses the following expression:

The cursed flower,
That hath made wander both the sheep and lambs,
Turning the shepherd to a wolf.

Par. IX. 130.

In the succeeding stanzas he gives us to understand that the besetting sin of avarice, for which he so severely censures the heads of the Christian church, had extended also to the cardinals and the clergy:

For this,
The gospel and great teachers laid aside,
The decretals, as their stuff margins show,
Are the sole study. Pope and Cardinals,
Intent on these, ne'er journey but in thought
To Nazareth, where Gabriel oped his wings.

Par.IX. 133.

Towards the conclusion of his Divine Comedy he makes St Peter describe the vices of his then representative Boniface, in the following terms:

My place
He who usurps on earth, (my place, ay, mine,
Which in the presence of the Son of God
Is void,) the same hath made my cemetery
A common sewer of puddle and of blood :
The more below his triumph, who from hence
Malignant fell.

Par. XXVII. 22.

After supposing that this allusion to the avarice of the clergy causes the heavens to become dark, as at the time of the crucifixion, the poet makes the apostle proceed to say:

Not to this end was Christ's spouse with my blood,
With that of Linus, and of Cletus, fed;
That she might serve for purchase of base gold.

Par., XXVII 40.

And then, alluding to the papal interference in Italian politics, he proceeds:

No purpose was of ours,
That on the right hand of our successors,
Part of the Christian people should be set,
And part upon their left; nor that the keys,
Which were vouchsafed me, should for ensign serve
Unto the banners, that do levy war
On the baptized : nor I, for sigil-mark,
Set upon sold and lying privileges:
Which makes me oft to bicker and turn red.

Par. XXVII. 46.

Perhaps there is no more remarkable passage relative to the corruption of the church in the thirteenth century than that in which he makes a comparison, which has frequently been renewed by the Protestant controversialists of later times:

Of shepherds like to you, the Evangelist
Was ware, when her, who sits upon the waves,
With kings in filthy whoredom he beheld ;
She, who with seven heads tower'd at her birth,
And from ten horns her proof of glory drew,
Long as her spouse in virtue took delight.

Inf. XIX. 109.

And in the following stanza he expresses his opinion on the much-debated question of church endowments, which shows that, in his judgment at least, they had not worked well in his country:

Ah, Constantine! to how much ill gave birth,
Not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower,
Which the first wealthy Father gain'd from thee.

Inf. XIX. 118.

The result of Boniface's contest with the king of France showed both the nobles of Rome and the monarchs of Europe how little they need now dread the authority of the successors of the Gregorys and Innocents. He was succeeded by Benedict XI, who has received the commendation of all historians for the amiability of his disposition and the uprightness of his intentions. But it was not long before his declared wishes to avenge the death of his predecessor made him obnoxious both to the king of France and to the powerful family of the Colonna. A few months after his election he retired to Perugia, under the pretext of seeking a cool retreat from the heats of the dog-days, but in reality, as was thought, because the hostility of the nobles had made Rome an unpleasant residence. Shortly after his arrival at his summer quarters, he expired, either from fever brought on by the season, or from poison administered by his enemies. After a short lapse of time, the pontifical dignity was conferred on Raimond, archbishop of Bordeaux, who, though chosen by one party of Roman cardinals on account of his supposed hostility to the king of France, had also secured the support of that monarch, by promising to give him full pardon for his treatment of Boniface, and conceding to him many of the points which had been the cause of their disputes. The new pope took the name of Clement V. Either from love of his native country, or from fear of the turbulence of the Romans, he fixed his residence at Avignon, whither he summoned all the cardinals to attend him. Thus, says the annalist of Italy, did the apostolic see pass into France, where it remained for seventy years in a captivity similar to that of the Jews at Babylon, inasmuch as it was obliged to obey the will of the French monarchs, and caused thereby innumerable disorders, both in the church and in Italy. From the allusion to him that Dante puts in the mouth of Nicholas III while suffering punishment in hell:

For after him,
One yet of deeds more ugly shall arrive,
From forth the west, a shepherd without law.

Inf. XIX. 84.

and from the following reference to him in the Paradise:

Whom God will not endure

the holy office long; but thrust him down

To Simon Magus.

Par. xxx. 145.

it may be inferred that, though he had given up the habitation, he had not forsaken the evil practices, of Nicholas and Boniface.

For upwards of half a century after the death of Frederic, the emperors had little to do with Italy. None of his descendants ever attained the imperial dignity. After an interregnum of some years, the title of Caesar was given to men who had never set foot in Germany, and took but little interest in the politics of central Europe. It finally passed to Rodolph of Hapsburg. The circumstance of this prince having been the first emperor, since the death of Frederic, who possessed more than the name of authority, raised the expectations of the Ghibelline chiefs, and of many excellent Italian patriots, including Pope Gregory X, who thought that order would be restored to the republics by the control of a powerful monarch. But the politics of Italy did not possess the same attractions for a native of Austria as they had done for the son of Constance of Naples. He devoted his time and his energies to the conquest of the bleak and unattractive provinces which were contiguous to the dominions of his father, and looked upon the country that was termed the garden of Europe as a remote and unmanageable dependency. For this conduct he is eulogized by M. Sismondi, and decried by Dante in the following words :

He, who sits high above the rest, and seems

To have neglected that he should have done,

who might have heal'd

The wounds whereof fair Italy hath died,

So that by others she revives but slowly.

Purg. VII. 94.

In the year 1278 he sent a legate into Italy, who acknowledged the supreme authority of the pope over the cities and republics in the Territories of the Church, and sold unconditional liberty to many of the states of the Peninsula that for a long time had been virtually free. He was succeeded by Adolphus of Nassau, who was deposed by Albert of Austria, both of whom remained strangers to Italy. The answer made by Pope Boniface to the ambassadors of the latter, when he requested the holy pontiff to acknowledge him as emperor, has already been related. Albert was reigning in the year 1300, in which Dante supposed his vision to take place, and is thus apostrophized by the poet for treading in the footsteps of his sire:

Oh German Albert! who abandon'st her

That is grown savage and unmanageable,
When thou shouldst clasp her flanks with forked heels.
Just judgment from the stars fall on thy blood;
And be it strange and manifest to all;
Such as may strike thy successor with dread;
For that thy sire and thou have suffered thus,
Through greediness of yonder realms detain'd,
The garden of the empire to run waste.

Purg. VI. 98.

In the year 1308, just eight years after the imprecation contained in the fourth line of the above passage was supposed to have been spoken, the monarch fell by the hands of an assassin. The actions of his successor, Henry VII of Luxembourg, in some degree accorded with the views and the expectations of the Tuscan poet. In the year 1310 he made an expedition into Italy, and endeavoured to heal the wounds of the land, by curbing the violent chiefs of both factions, Ghibelline as well as Guelf. In the year 1311 he had the iron crown at Monza placed on his head; and in the following year he was crowned emperor at Rome, not without some opposition from Robert, king of Naples. His conduct was so much approved of by the poet, that he is placed by him in one of the highest seats in heaven, and eulogised in the following terms:

In that proud stall,
On which, the crown, already o'er its state
Suspended, holds thine eye ...
... shall rest the soul
Of the great Harry, he who, by the world
Augustus hail'd, to Italy must come,
Before her day be ripe.

Par. xxx. 135.

He might possibly have realized the expectations of his friends, if, in the year after his coronation at Rome, he had not been carried off by a fever or poison at Buonconvento. The words of the annalist of Italy, "That even his Guelf opponents allow him to have been endowed with so many virtues, and such

illustrious talents, that he may be compared to the most glorious who ruled the Roman empire, and that it need not be said that, if the extraordinary ills of Italy were at that time capable of being healed, one could not have chosen a better physician”, show that the eulogy of Dante was neither partial nor exaggerated. But, in the words of the same writer, death spoiled all his measures, and the malady of the Italians continued to be aggravated from that day.

In most of the republics of Italy, the spirit of discord, the commencement of which has already been noticed, led either to a state of chronic anarchy, or to despotism. Of the former, Florence affords a memorable example. The origin of the factions caused by the quarrels of the Buondelmonti and Uberti and the banishment of the adherents of the former by Frederic II, have already been detailed. After the death of that emperor, in the year 1250, those that had been driven into exile by him were allowed to return, and efforts were made by the most patriotic of the citizens to appease all past differences. They also formed a new constitution somewhat resembling that of the other republics, in which the chief management of affairs was intrusted to a council of twelve citizens, called Anziani. When order had thus been restored among the people, and the benefit of self-government had been given to them, she increased as fast as the other free states of the peninsula. She soon rose to pre-eminence among the cities of Tuscany. The inhabitants of Pistoia, Arezzo, Sienna, and Volterra, became her allies or her subjects. In this brief interlude of prosperity and repose, many causes conspired to give a preponderance of power to the Guelfs : the citizens of the republic were naturally inclined to look upon the church as the guardian of their liberties; most of the Ghibellines had made themselves personally disliked during the time of Frederic II; and their aristocratic tendencies were viewed with suspicion by a people who wished above all things for self-government. The Ghibellines, with the view of regaining the ascendancy they had lost, opened secret negotiations with Manfred; but, on the discovery of their intrigues by the Anziani, they were banished from the city. In their exile and their distress they renewed their application to the son of Frederic, and, by the aid of a timely reinforcement from him, they were enabled to defeat their enemies at Monte Aperto, near the river Arbia. The loss of this battle by the Guelfs has generally been ascribed to the treachery of one of their own party, Bocca degli Abati, known to every reader of Dante for his unenviable position:

Blue pinch'd and shrined in ice the spirits stood,

Moving their teeth in shrill note like the stork.

Inf. XXXII. 34.

The same person is supposed to be struck accidentally by the poet, and thus to address him:

‘Wherefore dost bruise me?’ weeping, he exclaimed.

‘Unless thy errand be some fresh revenge

For Montaperto, wherefore troublest me?’

Inf. XXXII. 79.

The Ghibellines returned to their native city, whence the whole of the opposite faction fled in dismay. All accounts concur in stating that their behaviour, in their hour of prosperity, was sufficient to justify subsequent unpopularity. Alluding thereto, Dante says :

‘The slaughter and great havoc’, I replied,
‘That colour’d Arbia’s flood with crimson stain
To these impute, that in our hallowed dome
Such orisons ascend’.

Inf. x. 83.

Machiavelli says that they put their native country entirely under the dominion of Manfred, abrogating all the ancient offices, and all traces of the former constitution; whence the people, who had always been ill inclined towards the Ghibellines, became their bitterest enemies, which was the cause of the subsequent ruin of the party. The victors even carried their animosity so far as to propose demolishing the walls of Florence, lest they should protect the free citizens of the republic; and they might probably have carried their iniquitous project into execution, if they had not been prevented by the patriotism of one of their own leaders, Farinata degli Uberti. The hero who thus saved his native city is placed by Dante in the regions of the damned, and made to tell his own story in the following words :

‘But singly there I stood, when, by consent
Of all, Florence had to the ground been razed,
The one who openly forbade the deed’.

Inf. x. 89.

The Ghibellines continued to reign supreme at Florence under direction of Guido di Novello, till the defeat of Manfred raised the hopes of the opposite party. They then thought it politic to endeavour to curry favour with the people, and declared their willingness to establish a popular government. For the purpose of effecting this, Guido brought from Bologna two cavaliers of a new order, called Fratri Godenti the one a Gueff, the other a Ghibelline whom he made chief magistrates of the city, under the title of Podestà, and established a semblance of a constitution. The chief council of the state was formed by thirty-six citizens, chosen, without any regard to party, for their reputation for talents and virtue. The inhabitants of the city were divided into twelve companies, called Arts, distinguished by their trades or professions, of which seven were denominated the greater Arts, and five the lesser Arts. Each art had its own magistrate; and to each was assigned a separate standard, which its members were bound to follow, wherever their services might be required for their country’s good. The privilege of electing their own magistrates appears at first to have been restricted to the greater Arts, but was in the course of time extended to the lesser, whose number was also increased from seven to fifteen.

The new government, however, did not give the satisfaction expected. The Podestae, in spite of their professions of impartiality, were strongly suspected to be secret favourers and abettors of the Guelfs. For this reason Dante has assigned them a place among the hypocrites in Hell. He makes them tell their story in the following words :

Joyous friars we were,
Bologna's natives; Catalano I,
He Loderingo named; and by thy land
Together taken, as men use to take
A single and indifferent arbiter,
To reconcile their strifes. How there we sped,
Gardingo's vicinage can best declare.

Inf. XXIII. 103.

Guido himself was ere long driven out of Florence. The prospects of the Ghibellines were further depressed by the defeat of Conradin, and the confirmation of the power of Charles of Anjou. For some time both parties were allowed to remain in the city, though that of the Guelfs was infinitely the stronger in the number of its adherents, and in popularity with the lower orders. They seem, indeed, to have possessed one great advantage over their opponents, in that they readily rallied, if they did not actually acquire fresh strength, after each successive defeat. It would be difficult for any writer of prose to sum up the history of their party in language as concise or as forcible as that employed for the purpose by Dante. Farinata, the patriot Ghibelline, by whose sole counsel the buildings of the Athens of Italy were saved from destruction, is supposed thus to address the poet when alluding to his forefathers, who are well known to have been Guelfs:

Fiercely were they
Adverse to me, my party, and the blood
From whence I sprang : twice, therefore, I abroad
Scattered them.

Inf. x. 45.

To which the poet supposes himself to reply

Though driven out, yet they each time
From all parts, answered I, returned; an art
Which yours have shown they are not skilled to learn.

Inf. x. 48.

The power and the relative number of the Guelfs was further increased by the entry into the city of Charles of Anjou, which was the cause of the departure of many of the principal Ghibellines. About the same time, also, a new constitution was established, the distinguishing feature in which was the great number of legislative councils.

It would be alike tedious and unprofitable to go through the details of party warfare, and the changes in the form of government, that took place in this city from this time till the commencement of the fresh quarrels at the end of the century. The instability of the national institutions is pithily described by Dante in the following apostrophe to his native city:

Athens and Lacedaemon, who of old
Enacted laws, for civil arts renown'd,
Made little progress in improving life
Towards thee, who usest such nice subtlety,
That to the middle of November scarce
Reaches the thread thou in October weavest.
How many times within thy memory,
Customs, and laws, and coins, and offices
Have been by thee renew'd, and people changed.

If thou remember'st well, and canst see clear,
Thou wilt perceive thyself like a sick wretch,
Who finds no rest upon her down, but oft
Shifting her side, short respite seeks from pain.

Purg. VI. 139.

The uprisings and downfallings of each party varied chiefly with the politics of the popes, of whom some were the zealous friends, and others were the opponents, of the house of Anjou, and one at least was honestly anxious to put an end to the dissensions which had been the bane of the republic. The tendency of the variations of the constitution was chiefly in the direction of democracy. The highest authority in the state came at last to be committed to three magistrates, called Priori degli Arti, who might be of any rank, provided they were engaged in some trade. Their number was finally increased to eight; and sometimes as many as twelve were chosen. In the course of time they came to be honoured with the appellation of Signori. In the year 1298 a palace was built, in which they were to hold their deliberations, and to live at the public expense. Having found, at the beginning of their career, that they were unable to enforce obedience to the laws from the most powerful among the nobles, they chose a supreme magistrate every year, called Gonfaloniere della Giustizia, who was to be ready with one thousand armed men, to make their authority respected, whenever it should be necessary. To the great influence of these magistrates, chosen as they were from the populace, Machiavelli ascribes the final fall of the Florentine aristocracy.

About this period, also, appeared the first symptom of the jealousy between Florence and the neighbouring republic of Pisa, whence sprang the wars which, in the subsequent century, form such frequent episodes in the history of Italy. Up to the middle of the thirteenth century, Pisa had far surpassed all the other cities of Tuscany in power and wealth, and, unlike most of them, she was now attached to the cause of the Ghibellines. These two circumstances were sufficient to excite their envy and dislike. The complete defeat of her armaments near Meloria, by the Genoese, in the year 1284, emboldened them to attack her. In the following year the Florentines formed a league against her, with the avowed purpose of demolishing her walls, and compelling her inhabitants to disperse through the country. The Pisans put themselves under the protection of Ugolino della Ghiradesca, who has been immortalized by being the subject of one of the finest cantos in the poem of Dante. Instead of his bringing his great talents and his courage to bear against the enemies of his countrymen, he purchased an ignominious peace by surrendering their fortified castles to the Lucchese, who had joined the league of the Florentines. A subsequent act of treachery so exasperated those who had voluntarily submitted themselves to him, that they shut him up in a tower, since known by the name of 'Torre della fame', where he died of starvation. For this act of cruelty the Pisans are thus apostrophized by Dante:

Oh, thou Pisa! shame
Of all the people, who their dwelling make
In that fair region, where the Italian voice
Is heard ; since that thy neighbours are so slack
To punish, from their deep foundations rise
Capraia and Gorgona, and dam up
The mouth of Arno; that each soul in thee
May perish in the waters.

Inf. XXXIII. 79.

About ten years later, the Pisans, under Guido di Montefeltro, completely defeated the Guelfs of Florence and Lucca.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the condition of Florence is described by all historians as being sufficiently prosperous. Even the contentions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines seemed likely to die a natural death. But it was not long before the rapid increase of prosperity destroyed all virtue. As in the Roman republic, “wealth begat luxury and avarice, together with pride”; so at Florence the poet declared:

An upstart multitude and sudden gains,

Pride and excess, oh Florence! have in thee

Engender'd.

Inf. XVI. 73.

The same bard also thus pithily describes the grandeur of his country, and the demoralization of his countrymen:

Florence, exult! for thou so mightily

Hast thriven, that o'er land and sea thy wings

Thou beatest, and thy name spreads over hell.

Inf. XXVI. 1.

Events, however, soon showed that the spirit of discord, though scotched, was not extinct. An altercation having arisen at Pistoia, in the year 1296, between two members of the family of Cancellieri, the most powerful in the city, one of the contending parties lost his temper and inflicted a blow on his adversary. The offender went on the following day to tender an apology, but the other was so incensed that he ordered his attendants to seize him and to amputate his hand. This was the cause of a feud, in which all the members of the family of Cancellieri ranged themselves on either one side or the other. One of the ancestors of that family had had two wives, one of whom was named Bianca, which circumstance gave the names of Bianchi and Neri to the parties into which his descendants were split. This feud rapidly extended itself to Florence, where a considerable rivalry already existed between two great families, the Cerchi and Donati. An accidental rencontre brought it to an issue at Florence, just as it had been originally caused at Pistoia. In their hurry to see some dancing girls on a festival day, some of the Cerchi rode up against some of the Donati, which was the cause of so much irritation that swords were drawn, and blood was shed. The principal families of Florence divided themselves into factious as readily as they had done on the occasion of the quarrels of the Buondelmonti and the Uberti. In the year 1301 a serious affray took place between the two parties; the whole city was in arms; the law, and the authority of the Signoria, among whom was

the poet Dante Alighieri, was set at naught by the great men of each side, while the best citizens looked on with fear and trembling. The Donati, fearing that unaided they would not be a match for their adversaries, proposed that they should put themselves under a ruler of the family of the king of France. Such a direct attack on the independence of the state was not to be borne by the Signoria, among whom the poet had great influence. At his instigation they armed the populace, and with their assistance compelled the heads of the contending parties to lay down their arms, and sent into exile Messer Donati and others who had proposed the calling in of foreigners. A sentence of banishment was also pronounced against the most violent men of the party of the Bianchi, most of whom, however, were allowed, under various pretences, to return to their country.

The party of the Donati in their exile carried on those intrigues which they had commenced while at home. They derived considerable assistance from the king of France's brother, Charles of Valois, whom Pope Boniface had brought into Italy. That prince managed, by means of promises, which he subsequently violated, to get admission for himself, together with several of the Neri, and the legate of the pope, into Florence. He then produced letters, generally suspected to be forgeries, charging the leaders of the Bianchi with conspiracy. The popularity of the accused party had already been on the wane, and after a violent tumult, the chief men among them, including Dante, were obliged to leave the city; their goods were confiscated, and their houses destroyed. The sufferings entailed on Florence by the treacherous conduct of the French prince are thus alluded to by the exiled poet:

From France invites another Charles :

Unarm'd he issues, saving with that lance,

Which the arch-traitor tilted with; and that

He carries with so home a thrust, as rives

The bowels of poor Florence.

Purg. xx. 69.

From this time Corso Donati, the head of the faction of the Neri, became the chief man at Florence. The accounts of its state at this period, taken from the most credible historians, warrant us in thinking that the severe invectives of Dante are not to be ascribed merely to indignation or resentment at the harsh treatment he had received. The conduct of the ruling party throughout seems to justify fully the use of the expressions *volpi*, and *lazzi sorbi*; and the subsequent fortune of the republic answers to the prophecy:

Their course shall so evince their brutishness,

To have ta'en thy stand apart shall well become thee.

Par. XVII. 66.

The city was rent by more violent dissensions than ever. There were now three distinct sources of contention the jealousy between the people and the nobles, the disputes between the Bianchi and the Neri, and those between the Ghibellines and the Guelfs. It was in vain that the legate of Pope Benedict, a man of great piety, went thither for the sake of trying to restore order. The inhabitants showed how little they respected him by exhibiting a scandalous representation of hell on the river Arno; and, after renewing his efforts without success, he cursed the city and departed.

The reign of Corso Donati ended like that of most of those who have succeeded to power by popular violence. Six years after the banishment of his adversaries he was suspected, not without reason, of endeavouring to make himself independent of constitutional restraints. The Signori declared him guilty of rebellion. After a protracted resistance he made his escape from the city, but was pursued and taken at Rovesca. When he was led captive by those among whom his authority had lately been paramount, he threw himself under his horse, and after having been dragged some distance, he was despatched by one of the captors. His end is thus alluded to by the poet, whom he had driven into exile:

Lo! he, whose guilt is most,
Passes before my vision, dragg'd at heels
Of an infuriate beast. Toward the vale,
Where guilt hath no redemption, on it speeds,
Each step increasing swiftness on the last;
Until a blow it strikes that leaveth him
A corpse most vilely shatter'd.

Purg. XXIV. 82.

The party that had been raised by Corso Donati continued to hold the chief power at Florence even after the death of their chief. The exiled faction, in the words of one of their leaders, already quoted, had not learned the art of returning to their country as well as their adversaries. Four years after the events alluded to, the emperor, Henry VII, made some negotiations in their favour, which but imperfectly succeeded. The Florentines, however, were awed when he approached their city at the head of his army; and in the extremity of their danger they implored the assistance of king Robert of Naples, and made him Lord of their city for the space of five years. The emperor's mysterious death at Buonconvento freed them from their alarm.

While the kingdom of the Sicilies was rent asunder by the conflicting claims of the houses of Aragon and Anjou, while Rome was distracted by the turbulence of her nobles and disgraced by the simony of her pontiffs, while Florence was rent by civil dissensions as violent as any which history has recorded, the republics in the north and north-east of Italy fell under the dominion of feudal lords or agitating demagogues, both of whom rose to the importance of hereditary sovereigns. The Italian scholar need hardly be reminded of the description given by Dante of the state of the peninsula at this period:

So are the Italian cities all o'erthrong'd
With tyrants, and a great Marcellus made
Of every petty factious villager.

Purg. VI. 124.

In Milan, which had taken the lead in the opposition to the house of Swabia, the ascendancy of the Guelfs was for a time completely established. Among the leading families of the dominant party were the Torri, who soon became all-powerful in their native city. In the course of time the altered circumstances of Italy, and the fickleness of the populace, wrought their effects the scattered forces of the Ghibellines were recruited, and the authority of the Torri began rapidly to diminish. As the power of the former increased, they succeeded in driving the latter into exile, and establishing their own supremacy in the city, which had once been the headquarters of the party of the church. The leading family on their side were the Visconti, whose descendants in the subsequent century acted such an important part on the stage of Italian politics. Towards the end of the thirteenth century Otho Visconti managed to transmit to his nephew, Matteo, the supremacy which he had originally established in Milan, and extended over some of the neighbouring cities. This prince increased the dominions left to him by his uncle, and strengthened his position by marrying his daughter to Alboino della Scala, the Signor of Verona, whose power was then paramount in Eastern Lombardy, and his son to the widow of Nino di Gallura, a daughter of the Marquis of Este, who had established a principality at Ferrara. This latter marriage is alluded to in the following beautiful verses by the deceased husband, whom Dante represents as meeting him in purgatory:

Tell my Giovanna, that for me she call
There, where reply to innocence is made.
Her mother, I believe, loves me no more;
Since she has changed the white and wimpled folds,
Which she is doomed once more with grief to wish.
For her so fair a burial will not make
The viper, which calls Milan to the field,
As had been made by shrill Gallura's bird.

Purg. VIII. 71.

In spite of his talents, Matteo Visconti was vanquished by a league of the neighbouring lords, whom his ambition had made his enemies, and was obliged to leave Milan, to which the family of the Torri were recalled. After a short period he was permitted to return. For some time the heads of the opposite parties remained in the city, and seemed to bid against one another for the favour of the people. In this state they

continued till the visit of Henry VII to Italy, when Visconti managed to rid himself of his rivals by an ingenious artifice. On the arrival of that monarch in Milan, he endeavoured to rekindle the ancient animosity between the Germans and the Italians instigating his countrymen to turn to ridicule the less refined manners of their visitors, and frequently suggesting to them the feasibility of taking up arms for the purpose of expelling the so-called barbarians from their city. As soon as the passions of the soldiers and the populace seemed to him sufficiently inflamed, a tumult was excited by the agency of some of his creatures. When the alarm of this was sufficiently spread, he betook himself, accompanied by his sons and several of his adherents, to the emperor, and brought him the intelligence that the Torri were anxious to seize his person, for the purpose of ingratiating themselves with the pope, and thereby bringing the city under their exclusive dominion. At the same time he made him the most magnanimous offers of rendering him all the assistance in his power. Henry was thoroughly deceived by this artifice; and though he had always been desirous of acting with strict impartiality towards the rival factions in Italy, on this occasion he had no hesitation in joining his forces with those of the Visconti, for the purpose of attacking their personal rivals, who were at this time busily engaged in a vain attempt to restore order in the city. The members of the family of Torri were completely taken by surprise; some of them were killed on the spot, and the remainder were driven into exile with the loss of their property. Thus was the dynasty of the Visconti established in Milan.

In the west of Lombardy, the marquises of Montferrat and the counts of Savoy continued to maintain their ancient pre-eminence in their respective districts. Susa, Turin, and Aosta became subject to the former; the latter extended their dominions over Novara, Vercelli, and Alessandria. Their power, however, soon came to be overshadowed by the rising fortunes of the Visconti.

In the north-eastern corner of Italy the influence of the old Lombard lords, which had been extinguished there as in most other parts of the peninsula, was succeeded by that of a family that had accompanied one of the emperors from Germany. The contiguity of that part of the peninsula to the last-named country, and its physical nature, rendered the exercise of feudal tyranny comparatively easy. The eye of a traveller passing from Verona to Padua may still be struck by one or two isolated hills, which seem as if they were designed by nature to be meet residences for the tyrants of the surrounding plains. One of these gave birth to a person destined to become the scourge of the neighbouring country. In the words of the poet of the Middle Ages:

In that part
Of the depraved Italian land, which lies
Between Rialto and the fountain-springs
Of Brenta and of Piava, there doth rise,
But to no lofty eminence, a hill,
From whence erewhile a firebrand did descend,
That sorely shent the region.

Par. IX. 21.

Eccelino di Romano, the person referred to by the poet, was descended from a German noble brought into Italy by Otho III. The office of Podestà of Verona had become hereditary in his family. In the wars of the second Frederic, he put himself at the head of the Ghibellines in the surrounding principalities, and became a strenuous supporter of the emperor. Under the protection of so powerful an ally, he soon made himself master of Padua, where he established his headquarters, and built the dungeons, where the most revolting cruelties were inflicted on his victims. His subsequent history, the heroic resistance of the oppressed, the crusade that was formed against him at the instigation of the pope, his talents and vigorous opposition to the overwhelming number of those whom his cruelties had made his enemies, and the characteristic circumstances of his death, are detailed in the most interesting manner by the great historian of the Italian republics. In the year 1259, he was taken prisoner, and killed himself by lacerating his wounds; and in the subsequent year his brother Alberic, with all his family, was put to death.

After the fall of this house, that of Scala rose to importance at Verona, and in the course of time extended their dominions over Vicenza and Padua. Their fame has been perpetuated by the most remarkable of monuments, and the greatest of poets. Alboino della Scala, the nephew of the first prince of this family, was the great Lombard who afforded a refuge to Dante when condemned to leave everything beloved, and to experience how bitter was bread eaten in exile. Can della Scala, the younger brother of Alboino, considerably enhanced the reputation of the family. In the first canto of the *Inferno*, the future greatness of this young scion of the house is prophesied in the following verses:

Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
Her with sharp pain. He will not life support
By earth nor its base metals, but by love,
Wisdom, and virtue; and his land shall be
The land 'twixt either Feltro.

Inf. I. 98.

And in the *Paradise*, the poet, after alluding to his first patron, Alboino, puts the following prophecy in the mouth of one of his friends, whom he meets in the regions of the blest:

With him shalt thou see
That mortal, who was at his birth imprest
So strongly from this star, that of his deeds
The nations shall take note.
His bounty shall be spread abroad so widely,
As not to let the tongues, e'en of his foes,

Be idle in its praise.

Par. XVII. 75.

The arrival of the great Harry of Luxembourg in Italy infused a spirit of activity into the Ghibellines, and excited the ambition of the young lord of Verona. Full scope was given to his talents, at the same time, by the death of his elder brother, Alboino, which left him in the undivided enjoyment of the sovereignty. In the year 1312, he made himself master of Vicenza, which had revolted from the Paduans. Two years afterwards he gained a complete victory over the latter, who then made a treacherous attempt to regain some of their former possessions. Dante alludes to this achievement of his patron in the following stanza:

The hour is near

When, for their stubbornness, at Padua's marsh

The water shall be changed, that laves Vicenza.

Par. IX. 46.

This battle led finally to the subjugation of the Paduans. Can Grande shortly afterwards added to his dominions the town of Treviso, situated at the junction of the Sila and the Cagna, and then conquered Feltro, under pretence of avenging the murder of some Ferrarese who, trusting to the false promises of its bishop, had taken refuge in the city. The two events are thus alluded to by Dante:

And where Cagnano meets with Sile, one

Lords it, and bears his head aloft, for whom

The web is now a-warping. Feltro too

Shall sorrow for its godless shepherd's fault,

Of so deep stain, that never, for the like,

Was Malta's bar unclosed. Too large should be

The skillet that would hold Ferrara's blood.

Par. IX. 48.

This renowned prince died just nine years after the bard, who has secured to him a fame which will last as long as the syren Tuscan tongue continues to be read. The eulogies of the poet are amply justified by the concurrent testimonies of the best historians of Italy.

Among the petty sovereigns in the third group of cities south of the Po, the family of Este began to acquire considerable power in Ferrara and its vicinity. The above-mentioned city had been assigned to them by one of the popes, who was anxious to preserve it from Eccelino di Romano. At the beginning of the fourteenth century they were deprived of their dominions by the pope and the Venetians; but in the year 1317 they were recalled by the united wishes of their subjects. Ravenna fell under the dominion of Guido Novello di Polenta, who has acquired some fame as having been the friend and patron of Dante, and the father of Francesca di Polenta, whose misfortunes are the subject of the beautiful episode in the fifth canto of the *Inferno*. Fortunately for his memory, his medallion, along with that of Can Grande of Verona, has been engraved on the cupola, "more neat than solemn", which protects the dust of the poet. Forli, after having been subject to Guido di Montefeltro, another friend of the Tuscan bard, who acquired considerable renown by a victory gained over the French, fell under the dominion of a noble Venetian family of the name of Ordelauffi, distinguished by their crest of a green lion. Rimini was tyrannized over by Malatesta of Verruchio; and Faenza and Imola, situated on the rivers Lamone and Santerno, were ruled over by one Machinardo, who had for his crest a lion on white ground, and was noted for his tergiversations. The state of this group of republics, at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, has acquired a greater degree of fame than that to which it might otherwise have been entitled, from having been thus pithily described in the twenty-seventh canto of the *Inferno*:

Never was thy Romagna without war
In her proud tyrant's bosom, nor is now :
But open war there left I none. The state,
Ravenna hath maintain'd this many a year,
Is steadfast. There Polenta's eagle broods;
And in his broad circumference of plume
O'ershadows Cervia. The green talons grasp
The land, that stood erewhile the proof so long,
And piled in bloody heap the host of France.
The old mastiff of Verruchio and the young,
That tore Montagna in their wrath, still make,
Where they are wont, an augre of their fangs.
Lamone's city, and Santerno's, range
Under the lion of the snowy lair,

Inconstant partisan, that changeth sides,
Or ever summer yields to winter's frost.

Inf. XXVII. 37.

The remaining stanza of this passage is remarkable, as containing a pithy description of the state of many Italian cities of that age besides that of Casena, on the river Savio, to which the poet therein alludes:

And she, whose flank is washed of Savio's wave,
As 'twixt the level and the steep she lies,
Lives so 'twist tyrant power and liberty.

Inf. XXVII. 50

The coincidence between this passage, written by a contemporary poet, and an observation made five centuries later by the great historian of the Italian republics, is remarkable. M. Sismondi, when speaking of the cities of central Lombardy, says "Governed with an iron hand by their ephemeral lords, who could only inspire them with horror or contempt, they beheld their territories an incessant prey to civil war. There are few instances of a ruler of a town whose government was not overthrown before it had been ten years in existence, and each revolution was preceded by a combat which cost a great number of citizens their lives, and accompanied by the exile and ruin of the whole of one party, whose goods were confiscated, and whose houses were leveled". And the same historian, in referring to the dynasties that were established at this time, says "Thirty years later we shall see appear in most of them a set of voluptuous and pusillanimous tyrants, in the place of the warriors who had established their foundations."

While the other cities of Lombardy and Romagna were gradually falling under the dominion of tyrants, Venice formed a constitution which still attracts the attention of mankind. To the circumstance of her inhabitants being so occupied in mercantile pursuits that there were no idle gentlemen among them, and to her peculiar maritime situation, which rendered them independent of the annoyances that might be inflicted on them by the lords of the contiguous castles and land, Machiavelli ascribes her preservation of her liberty. For some time her doges appear to have exercised a power at least as unlimited as that which was said to have been enjoyed by the early Roman kings. Their election was originally entrusted to a council of four hundred and fifty or four hundred and sixty, nominated by twelve citizens, who were chosen two from each of the six regions into which the republic was divided. In the course of time, this council became so aristocratic as to give offence to the populace, who, in the year 1289, made an attempt to elect a doge of their own. But the person whom they chose as their representative was so offended with their violence that he decamped; and the consequent failure of this attempt only strengthened the influence of the nobility. In the year 1297, the power of the latter had become so great that they actually declared the grand council hereditary in the families of those of whom it was then composed. All the vacancies that occurred by the occasional extinction of families, they filled up by the admission of others which had become too powerful to be excluded. After a time, however, the number of this council was declared unlimited, so that the heads of great houses might at any time be placed therein. The doge was assisted in the discharge of his duties by what was called "the grand council", composed of sixty members, chosen each year, and six other

councillors, renewed every eight months, who, along with himself, composed what was called the Signoria. In 1311 was created another council, which, though denominated the Council of Ten, consisted of sixteen members, who acted as a species of state inquisitors, and acquired a fearful notoriety in subsequent years.

The end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century may be reckoned the most glorious in the annals of Genoa. A naval war which she was waging with Pisa terminated in the total defeat of the latter, near Meloria, in 1282. She then disputed with the Venetians the supremacy of the Aegean and Ionian seas, and gained a complete victory over them, near Corcyra, in the year 1297. She preserved her republican constitution intact in spite of the many attempts made against her by the Ligurian nobles, whom the nature of the country allowed to do her much harm, till the year 1312, when she made a partial surrender of her liberties to purchase the protection of the Emperor Henry VII against these turbulent neighbours. This is the first instance of her adopting a policy which she so frequently followed on subsequent occasions. Nevertheless she submitted with very bad grace to all the exactions demanded by the emperor.

CHAPTER IV

RISE OF THE POWER OF THE VISCONTI IN LOMBARDY.

THE history of the generation who were the contemporaries of Dante has been detailed at greater length than might seem requisite in an introductory sketch, because it seemed difficult to describe the state into which Italy then fell in language more appropriate than that of the poet. This state continued with slight modification during the whole of the fourteenth century. The petty tyrants of the cities, whose rise has been related, hesitated not to commit crimes of the most flagrant nature; “a gross debauchery prevailed in the interior of their palaces, and poison and assassination were every day employed in defence of their

government". The old party appellations of Guelfs and Ghibellines still continued; men fought, because their fathers had fought before or because they had offences or blood to wipe out. These names were often given to those who opposed or supported the ambitious designs of individuals. In the beginning of the century the king of Naples tried to reorganize the party that called itself Guelf, for the purpose of attaining supreme power in the peninsula; subsequently the house of Scala, and after them the Visconti, endeavoured, in the same manner, to aggrandize themselves by means of those who still called themselves Ghibellines. In Tuscany, the Guelfs were represented by the Florentines, the Ghibellines by the Lucchese and the Pisans. During the whole of this century, the two latter maintained their independence against the former as perseveringly as ever Aegina or Megara sustained theirs against the Athenian republic. In the city of Florence itself, the spirit of discord which had been kindled by the dissensions of the Buondelmonti and Uberti, and reappeared on various occasions, now manifested itself in the contentions of the lowest of the populace and the citizen aristocracy. The corruption that was the fruit of early liberty and precocious prosperity continued throughout the length and breadth of the land. The nation had arrived at a state from which recovery was impossible. The *vis medicatrix* of morality was extinguished. Public virtue was gone, not to return till some national convulsion or revolution might give birth to a new people. The contemporaries of Dante, worse than their fathers, produced degenerated sons, who, in their turn, brought into the world a progeny more vicious than themselves.

The premature death of Henry VII frustrated the expectations of those who had hoped that the wounds of Italy might be healed by the intervention of the emperors. His successors were deficient in the virtues and the talents necessary to secure the respect or enforce the obedience of a remote dependency. Thirteen years after his decease, his would-be successor, Louis of Bavaria, made an expedition into Italy. As the Ghibellines had at this time acquired considerable power through the talents of Castruccio Castracani, the Signor of Lucca, and as the memory of the last emperor's virtues still lived, he found a considerable party favourably disposed towards him. But neither the prestige in favour of the successor of Henry, nor all the talents of the Signor of Lucca, were adequate to counteract the injury which the display of his character inflicted on the cause of imperial authority. Though the Ghibelline Signors of Lombardy had invited him into Italy, and assisted him with money and troops, the first use he made of the power acquired in this manner was to arrest and pillage Galeazzo Visconti, who had received him with the greatest hospitality at Milan. He then offered to resell him his sovereignty, though he had deprived him of the means of purchasing it. As soon as he entered into Tuscany, the Pisans sent to tender him 60,000 florins as a commutation for their services. The ambassador who had arrived with this offer was seized and threatened with torture, if his countrymen did not implicitly obey the commands of the emperor. After he had been crowned at Rome, the Signor of Viterbo, who had been the first to admit him into a fortress in the States of the Church, was arrested and tortured, that he might be forced to give up his treasure. Castruccio Castracani died in the year 1327, whereon Louis deposed his children from their inheritance, which he then offered for sale. In the following year he departed from Italy, having by his tyranny more than undone all that had been effected by the virtue of his predecessor for the revival of the authority of the Caesars.

Nor was the son of Henry VII, John king of Bohemia, more successful in establishing his power in Italy. Though he possessed all the personal advantages, he was deficient in the talents and virtues which had distinguished his father. He had acquired the accomplishments of the age, by frequently residing at Luxembourg and Paris; and the Italians were so charmed by his manner and address that they hoped to see him accomplish the good work that had been begun by his sire. Though he never attained the dignity of emperor, they invited him to settle the affairs of their country. Such an opportunity of connecting himself with the land that has been called the garden of Europe, was eagerly seized by one to whom a residence in his own kingdom of Bohemia seemed an intolerable barbarism. Many of the cities of the peninsula put themselves under his protection, and in some places even the signors resigned in his favour. As long as all went well with him, his popularity was unbounded. But the inconstancy of his character was made manifest on the first symptom of difficulty. The Florentines were alarmed at his progress, and formed a league to oppose him. After some manoeuvres and menaces, he sold the sovereignty of several of the cities that had put themselves under his protection, and departed for France, sufficiently disabused of his magnificent expectations of erecting for himself another kingdom in the south.

In the year 1346, the son of John of Bohemia succeeded Louis of Bavaria in the empire, under the title of Charles IV. But, to make use of the words of M. Sismondi, the descendants of Henry of Luxemburg seemed in each generation to lose something of his talents and virtues, so as at last to become perfect nonentities. Charles possessed neither the great qualities of Henry nor the chivalry of John. He made two expeditions into Italy, in both of which he showed himself more covetous of gold than ambitious of honour. In the first of these, which was undertaken in the year 1355, he negotiated a peace between the Milanese and the Florentines, and accepted from the latter one hundred thousand florins, on the condition that he should not enter their territory. He endeavoured to excite the inhabitants of Pisa and Sienna to revolt, that he might overthrow their established governments, and put them under the rule of his brother; but, after a course of intrigue and a series of cruelties, he was obliged to evacuate the cities he had designed to enslave. Thirteen years afterwards he entered Italy at the head of a formidable army, for the avowed purpose of humbling the power of the Visconti. But Bernabò Visconti, the reigning member of the family, well knowing the character of the man with whom he had to deal, induced him, by means of a considerable bribe, to relinquish his purpose. On this occasion he again repaired to Tuscany, and established his headquarters at Lucca, where he had frequently resided during the life of his father. In this city he remained till his perfidy so alienated his friends, and exasperated his enemies, that he was obliged to depart in disgrace. His successor, Wenceslaus, was remarkable only for his debauchery. In the year 1395 he provoked the indignation of his countrymen by granting to Gian Galeazzo Visconti a diploma, conferring on him the titles of Count of Pavia and Duke of Milan, and was deposed in consequence. His successor, Robert of Bavaria, came to the assistance of the free republics of Italy, who had formed a league to resist the encroachments of Gian Galeazzo, and was obliged to retire with loss.

The decline of the power of the emperors in no small degree increased that of the lords of Lombardy. The signers of Milan and Verona, being no longer supported or restrained by imperial authority, did not hesitate to exercise a complete despotism in their own dominions. Matteo Visconti had five sons Galeazzo, Mark, Luchino, Stephen, and Gian. The eldest of these, who succeeded him, though not deficient in ability, was unfortunate in his reign; but his son Azzo, who became signor of Milan in 1328, was possessed of the talents and ambition, and crowned by the success, of his grandfather. In Verona, Mastino della Scala succeeded Dante's patron, Can Grande, in 1429; and though not endowed with all his noble qualities, he was more ambitious and less scrupulous. He boasted openly that he would ere long be king of Lombardy, and is said even to have aspired to the imperial crown. His neighbours soon began to tremble for their independence; and the signors of Mantua, Ferrara, and Padua, which, shortly after the death of Can Grande, had relapsed to its former possessors, the family of Carrara, formed a coalition with the Florentines and Venetians against him. This war is remarkable as being the first occasion on which the Venetians quitted their native element, and began to interfere in the affairs of the land, which they had hitherto only beheld from the towers of St Mark. Azzo Visconti remained a passive spectator of the contest, well knowing that nothing would strengthen him so much as the allowing his neighbours to weaken themselves by their mutual dissensions. The resources of Mastino were so exhausted in this struggle that the signers of Milan were from henceforward left without a rival in Lombardy. Their power was further increased by an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Lodrisio Visconti, a relative of Azzo's, to make himself master of Milan, which afforded to the latter a pretext to take his kinsman's possessions of Bergamo and Brescia.

Azzo, dying without issue in the year 1339, was succeeded by his uncles, Luchino and Gian, during whose reign the good fortune of the family continued. Their influence soon became completely paramount in Lombardy and Piedmont: the counts of Savoy and Saluzzo, and the marquises of Montferrat and Ferrara, though their rights were more ancient, and apparently better founded, could do nothing without them; the important towns of Lodi, Piacenza, and Bologna, were conquered or purchased by them, and they were supposed even to entertain designs against Florence. Their rapidly-increasing power so alarmed the other potentates of the peninsula that they formed a coalition against Gian, the last surviving one of the brothers, just before his death; but his nephews and successors, Galeazzo and Bernabò, managed to maintain their position.

Though these two brothers were remarkable for astuteness and cunning, they were deficient in many of the good qualities which had distinguished their predecessors. From this time, indeed, a change seems to have come over the character of the family. In the words of an Italian historian, “whoever would compare Galeazzo and Bernabò with their predecessors, might fancy he was comparing Tiberius or Caligula with Julius Caesar or Augustus, or Domitian with Vespasian”. In their reign began the system of tyranny which was carried to such extremities by their successors, and they are not without suspicion of having resorted to foul means to free themselves of their, brother Matteo. On the death of Galeazzo in 1377, it was generally suspected that Bernabò was anxious to get rid of his brother’s son and successor, Gian Galeazzo, to secure the whole heritage of the Visconti for his own children; but Gian Galeazzo managed, by an affectation of piety and indifference to the affairs of the world, to disarm the jealousy of his uncle. After he had continued for some time to play the hypocrite’s part, he started on May 4, 1385, attended by a numerous escort, for the avowed purpose of going on a pilgrimage to the church of the Holy Virgin at Varese. As he declined passing through Milan, Bernabò and his sons went forth from the city without any attendants to do honour to their kinsman, and as soon as they had come among his retinue, they were seized and cast into prison. As their tyranny had made them exceedingly unpopular at Milan, Gian Galeazzo, who up to the present time was supposed to be endowed with all the virtues of a saint, found no difficulty in securing the allegiance of their subjects; and thus he managed to unite in his own person the extensive dominions that had been augmented by the successive generations of the Visconti. And it was not long before he himself began to follow up their career of aggrandizement and ambition.

His first attempt was against the cities of Verona and Vicenza, which were then ruled by Antonio, the grandson of Mastino della Scala. It has already been related that the resources of the latter had been considerably crippled by the coalition which his ambition had raised against him; and they were in no way recruited by his three sons, who succeeded him as co-heirs. Thus the power of this family had continued to decline, while that of the Visconti had progressively increased. Gian Galeazzo soon found an excuse for interfering in a war which Antonio della Scala was carrying on with Francesco Carrara, the signor of Padua. Under pretext of assisting the latter, he overran and appropriated to himself the dominions of the former; and though an abortive attempt was some time afterwards made to place the son of Antonio on the throne of his ancestors, the Scaligeri may be said from this time to have ceased to rank among the sovereigns of Italy. The circumstance of the signor of Milan having reserved for himself nearly all the dominions of their conquered foe, drew forth a strong remonstrance from the signor of Padua, and was eventually the cause of a quarrel between him and his former ally. Fortune did not deal more kindly with him than she had done with his neighbour at Verona. Gian Galeazzo having, with the assistance of the Venetians, stripped him of his dominions, detained him a prisoner for the remainder of his life. His son Francesco, surnamed Novello, to distinguish him from his father, had received from the conqueror a small fief near Asti; but he, thinking this but a poor recompense for the dominions of his ancestors, went through Italy, and afterwards to Germany, representing to the different states the dangers with which they were threatened by the ambition of Visconti. By this means he managed to raise against him a formidable coalition, which was joined by Robert, duke of Bavaria. But the withdrawal of the latter into Germany, at a most critical juncture, disconcerted all the plans of the allies; and, after two years’ disastrous fighting, they were glad to come to terms with their powerful countryman. Galeazzo then steadily pursued his career of aggrandizement, and managed, by diplomacy or by bribery, to acquire considerable influence in many of the cities that had hitherto been independent. In 1395 the Emperor Wenceslaus erected into a duchy the city of Milan, together with its diocese; and in the following year he issued a new diploma, uniting to the duchy the extensive territories that were then subject to Galeazzo, with the exception of Pavia, which was made into a countship. It is worthy of observation, that the towns which were attached to the imperial duchy were very nearly the identical ones which, about two centuries before, had formed the celebrated league against Frederic I.

Galeazzo’s progress was in some degree arrested by a war which shortly afterwards broke out between him and the Florentines, and by a defeat which he sustained at their hands, in the vicinity of Mantua. Nevertheless he managed, in the following years, to acquire dominion over several cities of importance, between Florence and Rome. The deposition of Wenceslaus, and the accession of Duke Robert of Bavaria to the imperial throne, caused the formation of a second coalition against him, which was,

however, to a great extent dissolved by the complete defeat of the imperial forces near Brescia. By the commencement of the fifteenth century the important towns of Genoa, Perugia, Sienna, Pisa, Lucca, and Bologna, had submitted to him, and he was in a fair way to add Florence to his conquests and, indeed, to become sovereign of the whole of the peninsula when he was carried off by the plague, in the vicinity of Bologna, in the year 1402.

After his death the surviving representatives of the Carrara and Scaligeri made an ineffectual attempt to regain the dominions of their families. But in this they were soon opposed by the Venetians, who thought that they should not lose this opportunity of appropriating these provinces to themselves. William, the son of Antonio della Scala, managed, by the assistance of Francesco Novello, to regain Verona, but was a few days afterwards carried off either by dysentery or poison. His two sons were immediately put in possession of the town, but they were afterwards seized by Francesco Novello, who discovered some intrigues that they were carrying on against him. The talents of Francesco soon awoke the jealousy of the Venetians, who began to excite his neighbours and his subjects against him. He himself did not hesitate to go to war with them in consequence, but he found himself no match for the powerful republic of St Mark; and after a heroic struggle of two years, he went to Venice to throw himself at the mercy of the senate. The Council of Ten condemned him to death; and his two sons, who a short time before had been taken prisoners, shared the same fate. The senate afterwards, to their shame be it related, set a price on the heads of the two sons of William della Scala, because they had asked to be reinstated in the heritage of their fathers; and after their flight, the Venetians remained masters of all the territory between the Adriatic and Lake Garda.

In Mantua, Can Grande had made one Louis Gonzaga signor in place of Passerine dei Bonacossi, the head of the ruling family at that place, who had opposed himself to his encroachments. After the death of his great ally, Louis began to act a more independent part than he had done during his life. His descendants managed to preserve their dominions among a succession of ambitious neighbours, and occasionally held a conspicuous position among the second-rate potentates of the peninsula.

After the departure of Clement V from Rome, the pontiffs continued to reside at Avignon, where the luxury of their court, and their open immorality, gave no small offence to all serious-minded Christians. Their principal object in Italy seems to have been to curb the ambition of the Visconti, with whom, from the year 1317 till near the end of the century, they were generally at war. Their authority was little respected either at Rome or in the other cities of their dominions; the former was reduced to a sad state of disorder by the dissensions of the nobles; and in the latter, the feudatory lords began to affect independence. But in the year 1347 a revolution occurred at the eternal city, which attracted their attention as well as that of many sovereigns of Europe. One Cola di Rienzi, a scholar of no inconsiderable talent, undertook to restore the old Roman republic. At first his success was far greater than that which usually attends such chimerical projects. He established a free constitution, at the head of which he put himself, under the title of Tribune; he reformed several abuses which had grown up in the state during half a century of anarchy; he cleared the surrounding country of robbers; he repressed the turbulence of the nobles, and secured the impartial administration of justice for the people. But the Romans were at this time incapable of self-government, and were more fit to be ruled by a politician of the school of Machiavelli than by an enthusiast whose mind was full of the noblest examples of antiquity. The populace, as usual, found that the new constitution had failed to realize all their extravagant expectations; the nobles were eagerly watching an opportunity to get rid of a man whom they both hated and feared; and it was not long before both parties united against him and forced him to quit the city. The king of Hungary, to whom he fled for protection, willing to gratify the pope, sent him a prisoner to Avignon, where Clement VI detained him; but in the year 1452, his successor, Innocent VI, thinking that Rome would be better under him than under those who had taken his place, sent him back to the eternal city. An attempt to impose an import duty on wine caused an insurrection against him, in which he was killed while attempting to make his escape in disguise.

After the death of Rienzi, the pope's legate continued to reside in Rome, and did much to curb the ambition of the Visconti, and to re-establish the authority of his master in Romagna. In 1362 Innocent VI

was succeeded by Urban V. The disorders in France, consequent on the invasion of Edward III of England, made Avignon as insecure a residence for him as Rome had been for his predecessors at the beginning of the century; and in the year 1367 he went to the eternal city. Three years afterwards he returned to Avignon, where he died shortly after his arrival. His successor, Gregory XI, at first took up his quarters at Rome, where he did much to reform the abuses of the clergy, and regain for the church its lawful dominions; but he likewise ended his days in France.

The Romans were now determined that their future pontiffs should permanently reside among them. When the cardinals met in the Vatican to elect the successor of Gregory, a tumultuous mob assembled around, and endeavoured to overawe them to choose an Italian. The majority of the assembled conclave were French, and naturally wished to confer the pontifical dignity upon one of their countrymen; but, being in some degree terrified by the pressure from without, they sought to appease the Romans, and, at the same time, to carry out their own wishes, by electing the archbishop of Bari, who, though an Italian by birth, and a Neapolitan subject, was nevertheless of a French family, and, from having long resided in that country, might be supposed to be imbued with its nationality. The new pontiff took the title of Urban VI. From his excellent character the Romans readily submitted to him; but his uncompromising attempts to restore discipline and morality in the church brought upon him the enmity of the cardinals, who had thought they had chosen a head who would be indulgent to all their vices; and he astonished the queen of Naples, who probably expected to find him an obedient subject, by openly asserting the claims of the Holy See to dispose of her dominions. The discontented cardinals, backed by the queen, declared his election null and void, and chose in his place a Genovese, under the title of Clement VII. Such was the beginning of the famous schism which divided all the churches of Christendom.

For a time each party continued to elect a successor after the death of its own pope. In 1389, Urban VI was succeeded by another Italian, under the title of Boniface IX; and five years afterwards Clement VII was succeeded by a Frenchman, who took the name of Benedict XIII. At the death of Clement, the reasonable men of all parties tried to put an end to the schism; and, on the failure of their attempts, the French, who had hitherto supported their own country-men, declared their church independent of the bishop of Rome a measure which Voltaire thinks so reasonable that he wonders it was not adopted by all other churches of Europe. Boniface was followed by Innocent VII and Gregory XII.

In the twenty-eighth year after the beginning of the schism, the clergy made another laudable attempt to terminate it, and used their utmost endeavours to persuade the rival popes to resign. Experience, however, soon showed them that they could not trust to the promises of either, and in the year 1409 they convened a council at Pisa, in which they deposed them both, and created the archbishop of Milan pope, under the title of Alexander V. He was succeeded by John XXIII, a man whose character, though probably not as black as it was painted, was not such as to command respect for the church; and the clergy, alarmed at the scandal that was caused thereby, called a council at Constance, which, after some difficulty, compelled him to resign. Benedict XIII, one of the rival popes who had been deposed by the council of Pisa, vainly solicited the assembled clergy to acknowledge his pretensions; the Holy See was allowed to remain vacant for some time, while the council occupied themselves in endeavouring to investigate the ecclesiastical abuses to which the reformers of England and Bohemia had directed public attention. After an interregnum of two years the pontificate was conferred on one of the family of Colonna, who took the title of Martin V. And though Benedict did not resign his pretensions, and though after his death his party continued to nominate his successors, the schism may be said to have been terminated, as far, at least, as Italian history is concerned, by this election.

In Naples, Robert, the son and successor of Charles II, did much to regain the influence that his grand-father had enjoyed in the peninsula. Like him he sought to make himself virtually the chief man in Italy, and, if possible, to acquire the title of king; and with this view he spared no pains to reorganize the Guelf party, of which he considered himself the head. It has already been mentioned that he made considerable opposition to the coronation of Henry VII, and that the Florentines, terrified at the approach of that monarch, created him temporary signer of their city. The mysterious death of Henry in 1313 seemed

to open a freer scope to his ambition. The Florentines continued to court his alliance and protection; the Genoese, in the year 1318, made him sign or of their city; and Pope John XXII, who had succeeded Clement V, was among the staunchest of his friends. It was said, indeed, by some, that the pontiff and the king of Naples had made an arrangement to divide Italy between them, by which, if it were once carried out, it was evident that the virtual sovereignty of the whole peninsula must have devolved on the latter. So great was his power at one time, that for ten or fifteen years, says an Italian historian, no sovereign in Europe, not even excepting the king of France, was to be compared to him. The appointment of his son to the dictatorship of Florence, in 1326, seemed likely to assist him in carrying out his ambitious designs.

In the meantime the Ghibellines organized a formidable opposition against him in different parts of Italy. In Tuscany they were headed by Uguccione della Faggiola at Pisa, and afterwards by Castruccio Castracani of Lucca, both of whom defeated the armies that he had sent to cooperate with the Florentine Guelfs. Many of the great families who had been expelled from Genoa endeavoured, with the assistance of the Visconti and other Ghibelline chieftains, to drive his party from that city. This was the cause of Genoa sustaining two sieges, the last of which, on account of its duration, and the skill and earnestness displayed by both parties, has been compared by many Italian writers to the siege of Troy. Though the Guelfs came off victorious, the defence of the city in no small degree exhausted the strength, and crippled the future operations, of the king of Naples; and many blamed him for having expended therein the resources which, in their opinion, ought to have been devoted to the conquest of Sicily.

The death of Robert's only son, the duke of Calabria, just two years after he had been made dictator at Florence, weakened his position and depressed his spirits. The duke had left no issue but daughters, and Robert, anxious to secure the succession of Joan, the eldest of these, against the claims of the descendants of his elder brother, arranged a marriage between her and Andrew, the second son of Charles Hubert of Hungary, and grandson of Charles Martel. The wedding took place when Joan was yet young; but she, inheriting as she did the constitutional disposition, and accustomed as she was to the manners of the Italians and Provençals, at that time far the most refined nations in Europe, could not bear the rustic mien and manners of her Hungarian bridegroom; and it required all the influence and authority of her father to prevent her dislike to him leading to serious disorders during his life. After Robert's death in 1342, Andrew, as he had some claims upon the kingdom independent of his wife, desired to be crowned along with her; but she wished to arrogate to herself undivided authority in the dominions of her grandfather; and the Neapolitans, who disliked Andrew's Hungarian ministers as much as the queen did his manners, sided with her. These differences terminated in the murder of Andrew at Aversa, where his body was thrown from the balcony of the house in which he was residing, to the garden beneath. Joan, whether justly or not, was generally supposed to have been accessory to this deed of violence; and men's suspicions were increased by her immediate marriage with Louis, prince of Tarento, who is said to have been her lover during the life of her husband. Louis, king of Hungary, determined to avenge the death of his brother, invaded the south of Italy with a considerable army, whereon the queen retired to her French dominions. One of the first acts of the Hungarians was to put to death, as being accessory to the murder of Andrew, Charles, duke of Durazzo, who from being son of a brother of King Robert's, and married to a sister of the queen's, might claim to be her heir-presumptive. After a time, it was settled by the mediation of the pope, that, if Joan could acquit herself of all participation in the murder of her husband, the kingdom of Naples was to be restored to her. This she managed to do; and Louis, though he was in military occupation of the south of Italy, withdrew his forces and retired to Hungary. Joan then retained undisputed possession of the Neapolitan provinces for thirty years. Having no surviving children by four marriages, she had declared Louis of Anjou, brother of the king of France, her heir. This roused the indignation of her sister's son, Charles of Durazzo, who, under pretence of carrying into effect a sentence of excommunication pronounced against her by Urban VI, invaded her Italian territories with an army of the king of Hungary, made himself master of her person, and, to save all further trouble, had her smothered in a feather-bed.

Louis of Anjou, the queen's adopted heir, succeeded to her French dominions without any opposition, but was obliged to give way to Charles in the Neapolitan provinces. The latter was, however, ere long assassinated, in consequence of an imprudent attempt to take possession of the kingdom of

Hungary; and, as his son Ladislaus was then only nine years old, Louis's son was enabled for some time to retain the whole of the disputed kingdom, with the exception of a few unimportant fiefs. But Ladislaus, when he came to years of discretion, expelled his rival, after which he overran the dominions of the pope, and, at the moment of his death, seemed to threaten the independence of Florence, and with it that of all Italy. In his reign the kingdom of Naples was restored to the position in Italy which it had lost after the death of King Robert.

While the liberties of Italy were threatened at different times by the signors of Milan, and the kings of Naples, Florence acted a not inglorious part in maintaining the balance of power in the peninsula. According to M. Sismondi, this was the whole object of her policy. This, he says, furnishes us with a key to all her negotiations; this was the motive of all her alliances, and the cause of all her wars. It may, indeed, not without some show of reason, be alleged that she was actuated by views of this nature in her opposition to the Scaligeri and the Visconti, whenever they menaced the independence of the peninsula, as also in the part that she took in forming a league against John of Bohemia, and in her mistrust of Charles IV. And though it cannot be denied that her attacks upon Pisa and Lucca were often prompted by jealousy or ambition, they may nevertheless have sometimes been justified, by a well-grounded fear lest, from their continual alliance with the emperors and the Visconti, these towns might have become the rendezvous of all those who were hostile to the liberties of central Italy. But, in the meantime, she continued to change her laws, her constitution, and her rulers, in a manner that is almost unparalleled in the history of the world.

It has already been mentioned that the inhabitants, when they were terrified by the approach of the Emperor Henry VII, had made Robert, king of Naples, signor of their city. Two years afterwards that monarch sent his brother Peter to command their armies against Uguccione della Faggiola, of Pisa; but he was defeated and slain. The Count Novello, one of his best captains, whom he despatched to take the place of his brother, was obliged to give way to one Lando d'Agobbio, a low demagogue, who was, however, endowed with all the qualities which enable men in unsettled times to rise to the surface of society. The fact that no one had the hardihood to oppose this impudent upstart in the issuing of a debased currency, shows the depth of the degradation to which the city had fallen. After one year his tyranny was brought to an end. But it was not long before the Florentines were again obliged to have recourse to a foreign dictator. Their armies were defeated by Castruccio Castracani, the Ghibelline signor of Lucca; and they themselves had begun to tremble for their independence. In this emergency they put themselves under the protection of Charles, duke of Calabria, son of the king of Naples, by whose assistance they compelled Castruccio Castracani to retire. In the following year, the simultaneous deaths of Castruccio and Charles freed them both from a formidable foreign foe, and from one who might have become dangerous to their liberties, when his services were no longer required.

In the meantime, important changes were introduced into the constitution. Two or three new magistrates, called Pennonieri, were appointed to assist the Gonfaloniere della Giustizia. The chief officers of the state began to be elected by lot. The names of those who were deemed capable of discharging the duties of the several offices for the next forty months were put into a bag, whence a certain number were taken out at random every two months. Those who were thus drawn were obliged forthwith to enter on their duties. As suspicions often arose that the names of certain citizens who were most capable of acting as magistrates did not always find their way into these bags, fresh ones were continually added at different times during the forty months. This practice was begun with the election of the Signoria, but was afterwards extended to that of the other chief magistrates of state.

By the departure of Louis from Italy, which took place immediately after the simultaneous death of Castruccio Castracani and the duke of Calabria, Florence was completely freed from the fear of aggression from abroad, or of tyranny at home. So greatly did the fortunes of the Lucchese decline with the death of their lord, that eight hundred of the German cavalry of the emperor, who had remained after him in Italy, made themselves masters of their city, and offered it for sale to the Florentines. The latter declined the opportunity of peaceably obtaining that principality which afterwards they vainly attempted, at the cost of much blood and treasure, to enslave; and the sovereignty of the city was bought by one Gherardo Spinola,

a Genoese. The Florentines immediately made an unsuccessful attempt to take it from him by force. About this time their opposition to John of Bohemia forms one of the brightest episodes in their history. Lucca then fell under the dominion of Mastino della Scala, the successor of Can Grande at Verona. The power of this prince, which was thus extended into Tuscany, excited the apprehensions of the Florentines, and induced them to enter into an alliance with the Venetians to oppose him. After many fruitless attempts in the course of the war to take Lucca by force, they agreed on the termination of hostilities to buy it from their enemies. They had scarcely been put in possession of it, when it was forcibly wrested from them by the Pisans.

Meantime their repeated discords at home showed that they continued to deserve the character of instability that had been ascribed to them by Dante. The *Imborsazioni*, or the putting into bags the names of those citizens who were to fill the principal offices of state, though admirably designed, was capable of abuse, and might be so managed as to secure for a particular party the places of government. In this manner a small oligarchical clique, composed of the most active and the most wealthy of the citizens, had contrived to monopolise the power of the republic. With the view of confirming themselves in their position, they conferred the dignity of Captain of the Guard, a new office that had lately been instituted, on a creature of their own, Gabrieli d'Agobbio, and assigned him a train of followers, composed of one hundred horse and two hundred foot. This man was peculiarly obnoxious to many of the citizens; but he managed to crush all opposition till the capture of Lucca by the Pisans, which was exceedingly mortifying to the national pride. All classes were then sick of a popular government, and looked out for a dictator. In this time of perplexity, Walter de Brienne, duke of Athens, arrived in the city. This man was descended from one of the Crusaders who had settled in Greece, but he now retained merely the Grecian title, and was in reality an adventurer in the court of France. His character is thus given by Machiavelli : "He was avaricious and cruel, difficult of access, haughty in his tone of reply. He wished for the servile obedience, and not for the affections, of men; and for this reason he was more desirous of being feared than of being loved. His appearance was as disgusting as his character was bad : he was small and black, with a long thin beard; so that for no one reason was he deserving of favour". Seventeen years before, he had appeared in Florence as lieutenant of the duke of Calabria. By some means or other he had then made a favourable impression on the inhabitants, and they now appointed him *Capitano del Popolo*, under the hope that he would bring them through their difficulties. In the beginning of his administration, his hostility to the faction which had lately been predominant secured him the favour both of the old nobles and of the populace. He struck his opponents with terror by the fines, imprisonments, and executions, which he ordered on various pretences. Trusting for support to the favour of one party and the fear of the other, he proposed that they should confer on him the unfettered sovereignty of the city. The *Signoria* remonstrated in vain : he was not only made lord of the city, but managed to have the office conferred on him for life. The first use he made of his power was to endeavour to free himself from those whom he deemed most likely to be his opponents or his rivals. The old nobles of Florence were the peculiar objects of his suspicion; for although they had originally been his allies, he could not believe that his insolence would long be submitted to by such spirits as theirs. The cruelty of his disposition and the meanness of his talents were not fully made manifest till he thought himself secure in his position. He then threw off all the restraint which had formerly been dictated by policy, or imposed on him by fear. Like most vain tyrants, he was unable to perceive the limit up to which he might go, but which he could not transgress. His fondness for French manners, and his partiality to Frenchmen, offended the Florentines as much as the most outrageous acts of his tyranny. In this manner the measure of his iniquity was soon completed; and in less than one year after his accession, he was doomed to drink the cup of retribution. After the anger of the citizens had vented itself in the murder and mutilation of his minister, Gulielmo da Scesi, and his son, Cerrettieri Bisdomini, a youth only eighteen years of age, he fled from the city.

After the expulsion of this tyrant, various attempts were made to establish constitutions, which were always short-lived, in consequence of the reluctance of the old aristocracy to give to the citizens that share in the government which their increasing opulence and intelligence required. Even when they made these concessions, they failed to conciliate the good-will of the people by admitting them to a social equality in the common intercourse of life. At length, in the year 1348, an occasion arose on which the long-smothered

anger and vindictiveness of the latter burst with terrible force on those whom, they deemed the oppressors of their order. The nobles were elated by their success in driving from the city one Andrea del Strozzi, who, by selling corn at a reduced price in a time of famine, had endeavoured to form a party for himself, and they deemed the occasion a favourable one for making an attempt to regain the power that had been possessed by their ancestors. With this object in view, they continued to arm themselves, and even demanded assistance from the tyrants of Lombardy. Such measures could not escape the vigilance of a populace ever jealous of their superiors. On their side they made the same preparations for the defence of their liberties that their opponents had made for their destruction. They sought support from the republics of Perugia and Sienna. Thus the city was divided into two parties, each incensed with the desire, and provided with the means, of destroying the other. Each faction established its headquarters on opposite banks of the Arno. Ere long a terrible conflict ensued, in which, after a protracted struggle, the nobles were completely defeated. The first use that the people made of their victory was to frame a constitution which should exclude the nobles from all share in the government. They divided their own order into three parts the *popolo potente*, the *popolo mediocre*, and the *popolo basso* and ordained that two of the Signoria should be chosen from the first, and three from each of the two last of these divisions. It was arranged that the Gonfaloniere should occasionally be taken from one, and occasionally from another of these, and that all the great offices of state should be filled only by men of plebeian families. In the words of Machiavelli, this ruin of the nobles was so great, and it so completely subdued them, that they never afterwards dared to take up arms against the people, and they continued to become more and more servile. For this reason, continues the historian, Florence lost not only all military reputation, but also all greatness of character. The effects of the decree, however, were considerably modified by the enrolling among the citizens of a considerable number of the ancient nobility. At the same time, some of the most obnoxious of the former were ennobled, and so rendered incapable of holding office.

A comparison made by Machiavelli between these discords of Florence and those of ancient Rome is worthy of notice. Its truth is singularly illustrated in the changes which were brought about both in the constitution of Florence and in the character of its citizens. After adverting to the dissensions that in each of the above-named republics actually took place between the nobles and the populace, and reflecting on their causes, he goes on to say: "The civil dissensions of Rome were settled by discussion; those of Florence always ended in fighting. Those at Rome were terminated by the passing of a law; those of Florence by the banishment and death of many of the citizens. Those of Rome always increased the martial spirit of the nation; those at Florence completely put an end to it. It is evident that these different results must have been caused by the difference in the objects which were sought after by the two people. The people of Rome desired that they might enjoy the highest honours of the state along with the nobles; the people of Florence fought that they might be alone in the government, without allowing the nobles any share in it. And inasmuch as the desire of the Roman people was the more reasonable of the two, their course of aggression was more tolerable to the nobles, who readily yielded to their demands without causing them to have recourse to arms; so that, after some disputes, they generally agreed in passing a law, the object of which was to give satisfaction to the people, and to allow the nobles to remain in their former dignity. On the other hand, the things sought after by the people of Florence were injurious to others, and unjust in themselves, for which reason the nobility prepared to defend its rights with greater force; so that these disputes were attended with bloodshed, and the banishment of some of the citizens; and the laws which were passed after these disputes, were made, not with the view of promoting the general good, but entirely to serve the purpose of the conquering party. Another result of this was, that virtue became more prevalent in the commonwealth of Rome, according as the people carried their point; for as they were admitted to civil and military appointments, and to the governorships of provinces, along with the nobles, they became imbued with the virtue of the order with which they associated, and the state increased in power, while the character of the inhabitants improved. But in Florence the nobles were excluded from the offices of state as the people gained the upper hand; and if they wished to be readmitted to them, it was necessary for them, in all that regarded their public conduct, their feelings, and their mode of living not only in appearance, but also in reality to take after the people. The desire of appearing to belong to the people was the cause of the alterations that they made in their shields of arms, and in the appellations of their families; so that the military valour and greatness of mind which was originally in the nobles was extinguished, and these

qualities could not be kindled among a people in whom they had never existed. The result of this was that at each fresh change Florence became more humiliated and more abject”.

The revolution that has just been recorded was followed by a short interval of internal tranquillity, during which the republic amply maintained her reputation abroad. It was mainly by her firmness that the peninsula was prevented from falling beneath the domination of the Visconti. She alone, among the states of that part of Italy, resisted the exactions and opposed the inroads of certain hordes of adventurers who, under the command of Duke Werner, and afterwards under that of Fra Moreale, were devastating the land. But the demon of discord was not yet extinct. On this occasion it was revived by the heads of the families of the Albizzi and the Ricci. The real cause of their differences was the jealousy with which, in small states, opulent and influential individuals are wont to regard one another. Their hatred was so great, and so manifest, that at one time it required all the authority of the Signoria, backed by all lovers of order and tranquillity, to prevent their respective adherents coming to blows. State intrigues, however, soon afforded them an opportunity of giving vent to their anger. The pretext of their contention was the long-exploded quarrel of the Ghibellines and Guelfs.

At the end of the thirteenth century the republic had appointed a committee of Guelf citizens, whose business it was to see that all the great offices of the state were held by none but the adherents of their party. But after the death of Henry VII all real apprehension of danger from the Ghibellines ceased, and the functions of the committee were rapidly becoming a dead letter. Many whose forefathers had been Ghibellines were allowed to hold high places in the republic. Nevertheless, ancient tradition, and a supposed connection with the tyrants of Lombardy, still rendered the name of Ghibellines odious to the majority of the citizens. Piero degli Albizzi, a man of great influence in the republic, was descended from Ghibelline ancestors. Uguccione dei Ricci, the head of the rival family, passed, or rather revived, a law, that no Ghibelline should be allowed to hold office in the state. Albizzi, instead of opposing this law, and thereby rendering himself obnoxious to the suspicion of being a Ghibelline, gave it his most strenuous support; and thus not only did he parry the blow of his adversary, but even increased his popularity with the multitude. To give greater effect to this enactment, he got it ordained that the Capitani del Popolo were to determine who were Ghibellines, and to admonish them not to hold any place in the republic. Those that were thus excluded from civic honours were termed *Ammoniti*. As might be expected, a system so capable of being made an instrument of abuse was turned to account by both parties to get their friends into power, and to exclude their adversaries. An attempt to modify the evils arising therefrom was made by Uguccione dei Ricci, who got a law passed that three more Capitani del Popolo, of whom two were to be selected from the minor arts, should be added to the others, and that the list of the *Ammoniti* should be finally referred to a committee of twenty-four Guelf citizens. Matters continued in this state till the year 1375, when the animosity of the rival factions began to wear an aspect so serious that many were fearful lest a civil war should break out. With a view of arresting this terrible calamity, the Signoria allowed the citizens to hold an assembly to deliberate on the state of the republic.

A harangue made on this occasion, and containing a vivid description of the then pervading evils of Florence and Italy, has come to us. The speaker, after deploring the general corruption of all the states of Italy, which in his native city manifested itself in party spirit, proceeded to say, “In all have religious feeling and the fear of God died away; men regard their oaths and their pledged faith only where it is expedient so to do : they have recourse to them, not with any intention of observing them, but under the hope of deceiving with greater facility; and as they succeed in deceiving with greater ease and security, they acquire a proportionably larger share of honour and glory. For this reason the wicked are praised as being clever, and the good are despised as being fools. The young men are indolent; the old men are debauched; every sex and every age abounds with vicious customs, which cannot be remedied by good laws, as even they are abused by evil practices. Hence it comes to pass, that when one party is expelled, and one division put an end to, another arises. For in a state that wishes to be governed rather by parties than by laws, when one party has remained without opposition, it must of necessity be divided in itself. It was the opinion of many that, when the Ghibelline party was destroyed, the Guelf might long survive it in honour and happiness. Nevertheless, a short time afterwards they were divided into Bianchi and Neri. Even

when the Bianchi were destroyed, our city did not long remain without party we were always fighting; at one time for the sake of the exiles, at another time in consequence of the differences between the people and the nobility. And now the city is again divided, and the names of Guelf and Ghibelline are revived, which had long since died away, and which it would have been good for the city if they had never existed”.

These internal discords were partially lulled by the aggression of the legate of Pope Gregory XI, who took advantage of the unsettled state of the city to endeavour to add it to the dominions of his master. For three years did the appearance of danger from without unite the energies of the Florentines in the common cause of their country; but, on the cessation of this peril in the year 1378, they were again divided among themselves. The republic had on that occasion, for the first time, entrusted the management of the war to eight citizens, responsible to no other body, who were subsequently termed the eight war ministers; and their successes had made them popular with their country-men. The civil government, which arrogated to itself the honour of being the representative of the old Guelf party, looked with peculiar suspicion on those who conducted a war against a potentate whom they were inclined to regard as their natural friend; and this mistrust of their policy was aggravated by a jealousy of their personal reputation. The existence of such a feeling on the part of the government towards men who had many friends among the citizens, could not fail to rekindle the flames of discord in a state like Florence; and its effects were afterwards conspicuous in tumults as violent as any of those which had taken place between the Ghibellines and Guelfs, or the Bianchi and the Neri. The remnants of the different parties which had previously existed amalgamated together on either side, as they were led by prospects of aggrandizement or feelings of favour, and the republic was once more divided into two great factions contending for power. The more moderate of the nobles had entered into a coalition with the chief men of the burgher aristocracy, and were supported by the government. At the head of this party was Piero degli Albizzi. His ancient rival Uguccione del Ricci made common cause with the citizens who had administered the war, and with those who were jealous of the party in power. They had on their side the members of the lesser arts, as well as the dregs of the populace. The former now comprised a much larger proportion of the people than before. It has already been mentioned that the city was at first divided into twelve arts, which number was subsequently increased to twenty-one. With the increase of population and commerce, and the multiplied subdivision of labour, there had sprung up a number of new trades which did not strictly belong to any of the twenty-one; and those who gained their subsistence in these trades were obliged to attach themselves to that art which bore the greatest affinity to their avocation. In this manner a multitude of the work-people were enrolled in the art of the woollen trade, which soon began to exceed all others in numbers and strength. This art, as well as most of the others whose members were increased in the same manner, belonged to the lesser arts, and sided with the opposition. At the head of the party that was thus composed were the Alberti, the Ricci, and the Medici. Its strength had become so great that, despite the utmost exertions of their adversaries, it was able to carry the election of Salvestro de' Medici to the post of Gonfaloniere. This man, who was placed by the ultra-democratic party in the highest post in the republic, was of a remarkably moderate and conciliatory disposition, and limited his aim to the restoration of the constitution of 1348. The Signoria were reluctantly compelled to yield this point to the menacing attitude of the mob. The latter, however, were not content with the well-timed concession that had been made to their leader; they were anxious to have a large share of power vested exclusively in the lowest of the people. Many of the minor arts, in particular, complained, and brought forward several instances, of the frequent injustice they suffered from being incorporated with the trades to which they did not belong. This feeling on the part of the populace soon vented itself in violence; the mob set to burning and pillaging the houses of those whom they deemed their adversaries, and did not always spare their friends. They were exhorted by one of their leaders to continue their excesses till the number of transgressors should be so great as to preclude all possibility of punishment. The authority of the government and of the peaceful citizens was completely paralyzed. After a time, the mob ennobled Salvestro de' Medici to prevent his holding office, and elected one Micheli di Lando to the place of Gonfaloniere. He was endowed with something of the moderation which had distinguished Medici, and was more successful than he, during the year of his office, in appeasing the anger and restraining the violence of his supporters. But notwithstanding his moderation and his talents, the city was in a sad state of confusion for three years after his accession to power. All his influence with his party was unable to save

Piero degli Albizzi, who was put to death on a very ill- supported charge of holding treasonable communication with the exiled citizens at Bologna.

At length the people grew weary of this reign of anarchy and disorder, and anxiously watched for an opportunity of freeing themselves from the tyranny of an unbridled democracy. This was presented to them by the overbearing behaviour of one Giorgio Scali, a member of the ruling party. His conduct, in endeavouring to prevent the law taking its course on one of his friends, so disgusted the people that they rose simultaneously and had him beheaded. They evinced their dislike to the principles of his party by insisting on the abrogation of the constitution that had been settled in 1348, and re-established by Salvestro de' Medici, and by recalling many of those who had lately been banished during their ascendancy. Maso degli Albizzi, the representative of the citizen who had fallen a sacrifice to the licentiousness of the times, became the leading man in the republic. Not long afterwards was introduced the custom of entrusting the chief management of affairs, and the nomination of magistrates, to a committee of citizens entitled a Balìa, by which means it was evident that any citizen, who by any means could secure the appointment of his own friends thereon, would become the virtual sovereign of the state. In spite of one or two attempts at counter-revolutions, the Albizzi continued to maintain their ascendancy for upwards of half a century.

Lucca remained subject to Pisa till the second visit of the Emperor Charles IV to Italy, who procured its independence. From 1362 till 1364 the Florentines continued to make vigorous but vain efforts to enslave Pisa. After that, she was at various times ruled by petty tyrants; and at the end of the century, she, as well as Lucca, fell under the dominion of Gian Galeazzo Visconti. Both republics regained their independence soon after his death. The former, however, two years subsequently, was conquered by the Florentines; while the latter, under the family of Guinigi, remained independent of her powerful neighbour.

At various times in this century Genoa increased the number and strength of her colonies both in the Levant and in the Black Sea. Her commerce in the East embroiled her with the Venetians, with whom she was continually at war; and though hostilities often ceased, probably on account of mutual exhaustion, the two maritime republics do not appear to have come to any well-defined treaty till after the total destruction of the armament of the Genoese at Chiozza, immediately contiguous to Venice, in the year 1380. This decisive engagement was followed by a peace concluded at Turin in the following year, in which Venice, notwithstanding her great victory over her maritime rival, was obliged to cede the greater part of Dalmatia to the Hungarians, who had been in alliance with the latter. Nor did Genoa enjoy much domestic tranquillity in the meantime. While King Robert was signor of the city, a great number of the exiled Ghibellines took up their headquarters at Savona, where they appear for a time to have established a sort of independent republic; but most of them made their way back after the conclusion of the famous siege. In 1342 the citizens proceeded to elect a chief magistrate of their own, to whom they gave the title of Doge. About ten years after that they put themselves under the protection of Galeazzo Visconti, but reassumed their independence on the partition of his states among his heirs. Though they had endeavoured to guard against the disturbances caused by the contentions of the families of the old nobility for power, by declaring several of them incapable of holding office, they began to be annoyed by the rivalries of the Adorni and the Fregosi, two families of plebeian origin, who had lately risen to importance. Towards the end of the century, one of the Adorni, to exclude his rival from power, made over his native city to the French. She afterwards became subject to Gian Galeazzo Visconti. After this, she can never be ranked among the first-rate powers of the peninsula.

Among the republics south of the Po, the family of Este continued to maintain its position in Ferrara and the vicinity. Nicholas III, who succeeded to this principality in the year 1390, if he could not be said to be one of the leading potentates of the peninsula, certainly occupied a respectable position. At Parma a family of the name of Corrigiani had risen to importance, and occasionally aspired to sovereignty. Bologna was always claimed by the pope, and sometimes conquered by the Visconti; and, like other cities, often suffered from the contentions, or was tyrannized over by the chiefs, of rival factions. The other cities of Romagna remained, as at the time of Dante, subject to tyrants, for the most part the descendants of those that were mentioned by the poet. Among these the family of Malatesta, the lord of Rimini, the founders of

which were said by the bard to have both the ferocity of a mastiff and the cunning of a traitor, had risen to the greatest importance. The descendants of Guido di Montefeltro, who is so often mentioned by Dante, extended their dominions over the town of Urbino, and in the subsequent century were generally known by the title which they derived from the latter place.

BOOK SECOND.

ITALIAN WARFARE. BRACCIO DA MONTONE AND SFORZA ATTENDOLO.

CHAPTER V.

NATIVE MILITIA IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES.

THE mode of warfare in usage among the Italians of the fifteenth century was in itself so remarkable, and is so intimately connected with the fortunes of the man whose life I have undertaken to narrate, that it will not be deemed superfluous if I here endeavour to give some account of its origin and progress.

It has already been mentioned that the inhabitants of the republics that were formed under the successors of Charlemagne and Otho, living, as they did, in constant dread of the irruptions of the Saracens and the Huns, were compelled by necessity to learn the art of defending themselves. Thus it came to pass that each little state had its bands of native militia, who were ready to serve whenever required. Such was

the origin of the military system which trained the armies that defeated the first Frederic at Alessandria and Legnano, and assisted the pontiffs in the protracted struggle that finally broke the heart and the spirit of his grandson. Of the assembling and arming of the city militia of the thirteenth century, when suddenly called on to act, we have the following humorous description given by Tassoni, a poet of the sixteenth century, in which, however, some allowance must be made for the exaggeration of caricature:

The great bell's toll now echoed on the breeze,
And up from bed jumped all the people straight.
Summoned to arms, some bolted quick down stairs,
Some to the windows rushed, and some to prayers.
Some with disdain
Took frying-pans for shields, and forward pressed,
With buckets on for helms; others were fain
To brandish hedgebills, and, in breastplates bright,
Ran swaggering to the square prepared for fight.

Against these bodies of native militia, fighting though they were for the head of the Christian church, the last emperor of the house of Swabia scrupled not to employ the Saracen marauders, who were everywhere to be found in his hereditary dominions of Calabria and Sicily. As these were looked upon by their Italian fellow-subjects as aliens in religion and race, and were robbers by profession, this monarch is generally considered as having been the first to introduce the custom of the employment of foreign mercenaries. After the licentiousness that followed the too rapid growth and the premature prosperity of the Italian republics had caused the decline of the patriotism and bravery so necessary for the existence of an efficient militia, this custom, which had been so strongly reprobated in him, was unanimously followed. In the free cities, the inhabitants, being generally intent upon the making or enjoyment of a fortune, had no wish to encounter the hardships of service; and in the others the petty tyrants were unwilling to rely too much on the valour or fidelity of those whom they had enslaved. The signors of Verona and Milan, who trusted to the assistance of the emperors to enable them to maintain or to increase their dominions against their own countrymen, employed the soldiers of nations whom they affected to despise as barbarians. M. Sismondi informs us that the army with which, in 1313, Can Grande conquered the Paduans, was composed almost entirely of mercenaries, accustomed from their youth to the profession of arms; and that even the latter, though fighting for their liberties, had several hireling bands, including those of two English adventurers, by name Bertrand and William Herman. Though the trade of the mercenary soldier was still in its infancy, this campaign affords an admirable example of the fruits which Machiavelli says must always be expected from their employment : they carried on the war with the least possible danger to themselves, and the greatest disregard of the persons and properties of others. The cruelties which, in the course of the campaign, were inflicted on the inhabitants of Vicenza, are represented on all hands as having been most atrocious ; while on the field of action, which decided its fate, there were found dead only six gentlemen and forty plebeians.

Though the patriotism of the citizens of Tuscany was preserved longer than that of the other Italian states, and though the dissensions of the Ghibellines and Guelfs, and of the Bianchi and Neri, had kept them in the habit of fighting, they came in time to follow the example that had been set to them by their countrymen of Lombardy. The disputes concerning the sovereignty of Naples had introduced a number of French and Aragonese adventurers, whose services might always be bought. Several of the latter also had been brought into Italy by the commerce of the maritime republics; and they became so numerous that, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the name of Catalans was bestowed on mercenaries of every description. Villani informs us that, in the year 1321, the Florentines sent to Frioli to hire cavalry for the purpose of commencing a war with Lucca; and four years later they followed up their hostilities, with an army composed, to a great extent, of mercenaries, under the command of one Raymond of Cordova. When the Emperor Louis of Bavaria entered Italy, his cupidity was excited by the fine German cavalry in the pay of Visconti; and after his departure, eight hundred horse- men of the same nation were able to sell the sovereignty of the city of Lucca so completely had the Italians already become dependent on the arms of the mercenaries.

To explain how this dependence led to the formation of the companies of adventurers by which the peninsula was devastated in the fourteenth century, it is merely necessary to compare its state at that period with that of the other less civilized countries of Europe. Whatever of the spirit of the chivalry, so rife in the latter, had ever existed in the former, was extinguished by the rapid development of its commerce. The military art, elsewhere the most esteemed, was there in little repute; political sagacity was thought more of than personal bravery. The natives of the land whose cities offered the fairest prizes to the captor, whose fields tempted the marauder with the greatest promise of booty, were themselves averse to the toils and dangers of the camp. The manifold political divisions of the land made it a scene of perpetual warfare; and its material prosperity enabled its princes amply to reward the services of others. What wonder, then, if many men were induced to forego the honour which in their own country was attached to the profession of arms, for the more solid prospects of gain in Italy? As might naturally be expected, the soldiers who offered their services to the republics of Italy were tainted by many of the vices which are supposed to be engendered by a military life, but unadorned with the virtues which the profession of arms generally produces : they were remarkable for their cruelty, rapacity, and contempt for the lives and properties of others, but in no way distinguished for personal bravery, generosity, or frankness of character. During the short intervals of peace, they had every inducement to remain in a country where they were quite certain that their services would ere long be again in requisition; and they soon came to be organised into regular companies, for the purpose of plundering the unmartial population in peace, and selling their services to them in war.

The first company of adventurers of this nature, of which we have any regular account, was formed in Sicily in the year 1302, when a number of soldiers from Catalonia, and from Genoa and some other parts of Italy, who remained in the island after the departure of the king of Naples, having chosen for their captain one Fra Rugieri, of the order of the Templars, arrogated to themselves the title of “The Company”, and went about ravaging with fire and sword. The devastations of these men, however, were carried on principally by sea, and for the most part confined to Greece and the shores of the Levant; and we do not hear of the formation of any such company in the interior of Italy till the year 1346. It was then that a German adventurer, of the name of Werner, afterwards known as Duke Guarnieri, proposed to a band of mercenaries, who in the previous year had been discharged by the Pisans, to unite themselves under him, and to follow, on their own account, the trade which they had hitherto carried on on behalf of others. This society of adventurers at first consisted but of two thousand horse, but was soon increased by a number of recruits from all quarters. They went about everywhere pillaging and exacting tribute, and were but feebly resisted by the republics and petty tyrants, whose subjects wanted the courage, and whose hirelings often lacked the inclination, to offer them any effectual opposition. There was no crime or cruelty from which they refrained; and Duke Guarnieri joined to the title of Chief of the Grand Company those of “Enemy of God, of pity, and of compassion”, all of which he bore engraved on his breastplate. A great number of his original followers, after they had enriched themselves with booty, contributions, and sometimes with pay for their services, returned to Germany to enjoy the fruits of their labour. Two years afterwards we find the

same duke in command of a company, bearing the same name, in the service of the queen of Naples. On this occasion he allowed himself to be surprised and taken prisoner by the enemy, that he might enlist in their service, and so have a better opportunity of plundering the territories of his former employers.

The avocation of this adventurer had proved so lucrative to himself and his followers that his example was soon followed by a number of others. A company similar to the one that had been commanded by him was formed by one Montreal d'Alberno, a knight of St John of Jerusalem, afterwards known by the name of Fra Moreale, who, having been employed by the king of Hungary in his wars with the queen of Naples, had become acquainted with Duke Guarnieri. The strength of this company was increased by an accession of noblemen and common soldiers from Germany, and by many deserters from the armies of the states of Italy. After having quitted the Neapolitan territories, it began devastating Romagna, which, from being subject to a set of tyrants who were individually weak and disunited among themselves, was exposed to the ravages of adventurers of every description. Some attempt to restore order in this province was made by the tribune, Rienzi, who summoned Fra Moreale to Rome, and had him executed as a common robber. But after the failure of Rienzi had delivered the company from all fear of opposition from this quarter, they chose Count Lando in the place of Fra Moreale; and, having avenged the death of the latter by ravaging the territory of Ravenna, they passed on to Apulia, and carried on their devastations within sight of the city of Naples. They were soon afterwards employed by the tyrants of Bologna, Mantua, and Verona, in the war which they carried on in concert against Galeazzo Visconti, on which occasion they gave an admirable specimen of their value as soldiers, by enriching themselves at the expense of their employers, and flying before the troops of the enemy. Of the people of central Italy, the Florentines alone had the courage to oppose them. When their services were demanded by the Siennese, they refused them permission to pass through their territory, on their way from Lombardy. On their attempting to force a passage through the Apennines, they were met by a small body of mountaineers, who gave them a defeat so discouraging that many of them, who then for the first time experienced the dangers of warfare, forsook their occupation. This reception, so different from the almost bloodless battles in which they were usually engaged, inspired them with such terror that, two years afterwards, on the failure of a negotiation with the Florentines, they took care not to enter their territories.

Another company, consisting principally of Englishmen, was brought into Italy at a somewhat later period, by the Marquis of Montferrat. The part of France between the Alps and the Pyrenees, which in the twelfth century had taken the lead, even of Italy, in civilization, had, like it, suffered from the depredations of adventurers who had found their way thither, in the wars between England and France. These naturally presented themselves to the notice of the Marquis, when he was engaged in a struggle with his formidable neighbours of Milan, and he found no difficulty in getting a number of them to cross the Alps, and to enter his service. This last company, perhaps, inflicted a more grievous injury on the Italians by the plague, which they brought with them from Provence, than by their subsequent depredations. About the same time another, composed principally of Germans, and commanded by Amichino Baurngarten, was raised by Galeazzo Visconti, and afterwards employed by the Pisans. Another, entitled that of St George, was formed by Ambrose, the natural son of Bernabos Visconti, and let loose by him on the territories of Perugia and Sienna. Thus, at the end of the fourteenth century, Italy was devastated at one and the same time by these four companies of adventurers, or, as they might more justly be called, professional robbers. Though they had no objection to serve on opposite sides, they seldom did much harm to each other, and the different states generally received as much injury from those whom they thus employed as from those by whom they were undisguisedly attacked. Of all these companies, the military reputation of the English was undoubtedly the greatest a circumstance which may be ascribed, in some degree, to the physical superiority of the men, but still more to the talents of Sir John Hawkwood, by whom they were commanded. His conduct of the Florentine war, with Galeazzo Visconti, shows that he surpassed all the other mercenary captains of the time in his knowledge of strategy. On his death in 1394, the Florentines testified their approbation of his services by entombing him with great honour in their cathedral, and perpetuating his memory by an equestrian portrait, which remains to this day.

It has already been remarked, that the absence of the feudal system in Italy was one great cause of the employment of foreign troops and foreign generals by the different states. But towards the middle of the fourteenth century, a class of men sprang up in the Territories of the Church, whose circumstances were not very different from those of the minor feudal lords in some parts of Europe. The tyrants of this province of Italy, who even at the close of the thirteenth century were, according to Dante, continually at war with one another, had always affected a considerable degree of independence of their rightful sovereign the pope : its physical nature, abounding with impregnable positions in the fastnesses of the mountains, was peculiarly favourable to the assertion of this partial independence, and the removal of the pontiffs to Avignon left them almost without the appearance of control. As the inhabitants of Italy were addicted to commerce, and lived principally in towns, these tyrants had not, like the nobles of England and France, a number of vassals ready at all times to follow them to the camp, nor were they possessed of anything like the same extent of territory; but they generally claimed dominion over, and exacted tribute from, some petty town in the neighbourhood. The towns themselves were generally well fortified, and, from their situation, well adapted for defence; and after Italy began to be ravaged by companies of adventurers, even the cultivators of the soil were forced to dwell in them for safety. These petty lords seemed to be peculiarly fitted by their position to be the leaders of the predatory bands : their circumstances, in some degree, resembled those of the robber chieftains, the ruins of whose castles are still seen on the banks of the Rhine beyond the walls of their castles or their cities they were powerless; they had no protector to look up to, and were without union among themselves. Thus, being unable to defend their territories from the companies, they soon began to think it better to despoil others than to be themselves despoiled. By the beginning of the latter half of the fourteenth century, the grandsons of those who, in the age of Dante, were continually at war among themselves, had attained considerable reputation as the captains of mercenary bands; and the names of Francis of Ordelauffi, the signor of Forli, the Malatesta of Rimini, and Rodolph of Varano, the signor of Camerino, whose forefathers are all mentioned by the poet, are frequently noticed in the military annals of the age. One of these robber chieftains, Alberic of Barbiano, the lord of some castle in the neighbourhood of Bologna, succeeded to the command of the company of St George, which had been formed by Ambrose Visconti, and gained great glory by his success. He it was who first showed that his countrymen were capable of being made at least as good soldiers as the foreign adventurers by whom they had hitherto been served.

The custom of waging war by means of companies of hireling troops continued to prevail in Italy, till it had almost ceased to be independent. But towards the end of the fourteenth century, the Italians began to engage in a service which had previously been carried on almost exclusively by men of other nations. They became willing enough to try the profession of arms, for the same reason that, one century ago, they had abandoned it to the foreigner. The premiums of successful warfare had become so great, and the mode in which it was conducted had made its dangers so small, that it possessed at least the same attraction for the artisan as any other profession. M. Sismondi states that the regular pay of the soldiers, varying from thirteen to sixteen florins a-month, was greater than that of a workman of the best-paid trades, besides which the former often received extraordinary prizes in the lottery of war, and was allowed to rob and to commit all sorts of excess with impunity. For these reasons, then, Barbiano found no difficulty in raising a body of Italians, which he named the Company of St George, in honour of that in which he had received his military education. With these troops he entered the service of Pope Urban VI, and on the 28th of April 1379 he attacked and defeated a company of Bretons, then reckoned the best soldiers in Italy. From this time forward, both the military fame of the Italians, and the personal reputation of this general, continued to increase. The captains of the troops also ceased to be mere robbers, and, instead of fighting only to enrich themselves by booty, they looked to titles and fiefs as the rewards of their services. To reign was the great object of ambition among them. Alberic himself attained the dignity of high constable of Sicily. His company was looked upon as the military school of his country all his compatriots who were desirous of serving as soldiers flocked to his standard all who hoped themselves to be generals or sovereigns came to serve in his camp. Among these were Jacobo dei Verme, Facino Cane, Otto buon Terzo, Braccio da Montone, and Sforza Attendolo, the two last of whom became conspicuous in the history of their country.

The arms and equipments of these companies of adventurers were such as would naturally be selected by men who wished to reap as many of the advantages, and to encounter as few of the perils of war as possible. When their nature and the circumstances under which they fought are duly considered, it will not be matter of surprise that, “for once in the history of mankind, the art of defence had outstripped that of destruction”. In general, two thirds of an army consisted of cavalry. The plate armour worn by the soldiers afforded a tolerably secure defence against the pointed swords and lances, the weapons then most in use. Intent as all were upon enriching themselves, each combatant was more desirous to unhorse and capture than to slay his antagonist. A handsome ransom was generally paid for the officers who had been taken prisoners; but the common soldiers, who had nothing to give, were for the most part set at liberty, after they had been stripped of their armour. So eager were they upon the acquisition of booty that many an incipient victory was changed into a defeat in consequence of the troops, the instant they had gained an advantage, dispersing in quest of spoil, and then being set upon by their rallied opponents. The infantry appear to have been used, not so much in regular action as in mountain warfare, and in the attacking and defending of fortresses. As the country so abounded with these, that, in the words of Muratori, one beheld, as it were, a wood of them in many places, no small part of each campaign was spent in the manner last mentioned. Not only were stone fortresses erected in important or naturally strong positions, but wooden towers were also carried about, and placed in situations whence their occupants might prevent or retard the advance of an enemy. Cross-bows and missiles of all sorts were made use of by those who were within, as well as by those who attacked, these towers; but though these missiles might compel an assailant or defender to relinquish his position, and though they might produce much confusion among a compact body of men, they did not often inflict fatal or dangerous wounds.

We have no well-authenticated account of gunpowder having been used in Italian warfare till the battle of Chiozza, in 1378. The Venetians on that occasion brought into the field two pieces of artillery, denominated *bombardi*; but the records which we have of the engagement lead us to think that they were merely used in a clumsy attempt to blow stones into the air, under the desperate expectation that they might fall on the heads of their adversaries. We afterwards read frequently of fortifications having been blown up by powder, and of these *bombardi* having been brought into the field on divers occasions. They were, however, in all probability, nothing more than a rude species of mortar; and though they might have been often effective in compelling engineers to desist from their operations, and in annoying those who might have been in otherwise impregnable positions, it is not likely that they were ever used with effect, from any distance at least, against a body of men in motion. Indeed, it is probable that the time required to load them was so long as to render any continuous fire out of the question. Accordingly, they seem to have been but of little service in regular engagements. It is questionable even if they did much damage to masonry till the year 1447, when the Milanese general astonished his contemporaries by the use he made of them in the capture of a city, said at that time to be the best fortified in Italy. And the success with which he adopted the somewhat hazardous experiment of firing them over the heads of his soldiers, who were then in the trenches beneath, shows that the science of gunnery must have made some little progress during the sixty-seven years that had elapsed since its introduction into Italy. About two years after that, the citizens of Milan caused some panic among the ranks of their opponents by bringing into battle a species of gun called *facili*, probably somewhat resembling a clumsy sort of musket; but the bullets fired therefrom do not appear to have made any impression on the armour of the regular troops.

Thus, though the evils of war were undoubtedly great, they were not, as in more ancient or modern times, aggravated by the horrors of carnage. The Tiber and the Po were not seen foaming with the blood of the combatants. If the woeful tidings of a defeat came to a city, the grief caused by the public calamity was not, as in the heroic ages, increased by the mourning of private families for their many relatives that had been immolated to the god of war by the two-thonged whip in which he is said to delight. Nor did the loss of friends cause conquering heroes to weep on the evening of their victories.

CHAPTER VI.

DA MONTONE AND GIAN ATTENDOLO. BIRTH OF FRANCESCO SFORZA

AMONG the officers that have been mentioned as serving in the camp of Alberic there were two namely, Braccio da Montone and Sforza Attendolo whose military reputation became so great, and who played such conspicuous parts in the history of their country, that their careers deserve to be specially noticed.

The former of these captains was born in the year 1368, the latter in the year 1369, and both were natives of the territory that was claimed by the church. The former of these derived his name from a noble family possessed of the castle of Montone, in the vicinity of Perugia, to the sovereignty of which city he himself afterwards aspired. The latter also was said by some to have been born of noble and wealthy parents, and he is extolled by his biographer Cribellius for having preferred the dangers of the camp to the easy enjoyment of his hereditary honours and wealth. This account of his origin seems to be contradicted by an anecdote of his early life, which is said to have been frequently referred to by his grandson, Galeazzo Sforza namely, that one day, while working in the fields near his native village, Cotignola, he was asked by some soldiers to join them, on which he threw an axe, which he happened to hold in his hand, into an oak, declaring that if it remained in the tree he would follow them, but that if it fell on the ground he would continue in his former avocation, and that, by the chance of the axe remaining, he was induced to adopt the profession which made dukes of his descendants. This account of his former avocations is also confirmed by a caricature, said in the year 1412 to have been painted in all the public places of Rome, representing the great general suspended by his right foot to a gallows, and holding in his left hand a scroll containing the following epitaph : "I am Sforza, a peasant of Cotignola, a traitor, who has committed twelve acts of

treachery to the church contrary to my honour, stipulations, promises, and agreements, all of which I have broken". Be this as it may, he seems to have acquired some reputation as a commander before the formation of the company by Barbiano, after which, following the example of the other captains of his age, he entered the camp of that general.

It was while he was in this service that the name of Sforza was given to him by his great commander-in-chief, in consequence, it is said, of his violent language on the occasion of a dispute about the division of booty. It was possible also that he might have been so called in consequence of his habit, for which he was afterwards renowned, of always attacking the enemy with all his forces. He also made acquaintance with Braccio da Montone, who, like himself, had come to seek military knowledge under the most renowned captain of the day. During the early part of the career of these two generals, their superiority of talent, the cause of their subsequent rivalry, knit them together in the bond of the most intimate friendship, in token of which they made all their followers wear the same sort of short military cloak over their armour, with only a slight difference in the colour for the sake of distinction. Sforza soon afterwards took service along with his former master, Alberic, under Galeazzo Visconti; but being disgusted by the intrigues of one of his contemporaries, in the year 1401, he passed over to the republic of Florence. On the 21st day of July of that year, while he was on his way to the latter city, his concubine, Luscía di Torsano, who remained at San Miniato, a small town in the neighbourhood, presented him with his first-born son, whom, in memory of a deceased brother, he named Francesco. It was this son, the inheritor of all his father's talents and fortune, who afterwards became Duke of Milan. In the same year which brought into the world one who was to add such lustre to his house, the emperor, Robert of Bavaria, conferred on him a mark of honorary distinction by adding a lion to his former crest.

The first campaign in which Sforza was engaged against his old master in arms was not attended with success. He was sent, along with Tartaglia, another condottiere of the day, to the assistance of Bentivoglio, the signor of Bologna, a city which the Florentines regarded as the key of their territory. The forces of the Florentines were hurried into action by the rashness of Bentivoglio, and completely defeated by the army of Alberic. Sforza, justly it may be, but more probably out of envy and a desire to save his own character and reputation, attributed the defeat to Tartaglia's abandoning a post which he had been particularly ordered to maintain, and his reproaches on this head were the cause of a deep-rooted hatred entertained towards him by that general till the end of his life. Though the situation of the Florentines was critical, Sforza managed to rally their spirits in a manner which showed that his influence at least had not been shaken by his misfortune, and he was about to collect what forces he could to make head against Visconti, when that formidable enemy was carried off by the plague. However, he soon had another opportunity of increasing his fame. The Florentines, determined to revenge their defeat, had now become more intent than ever on the conquest of their ancient rival Pisa, which had, for some time past, been under the protection of the Duke of Milan; and with a view to this they invaded its territory with an army in which both Tartaglia and Sforza were employed, under the general superintendence of Bertoldo Ursini. The prosperous issue of the campaign was generally ascribed to some successes gained by a rare combination of artifice and courage exhibited by Sforza, and the republic testified its sense of his merits by conferring on him an annual pension of fifty pieces of gold. Shortly after this he received another accession of fortune for services rendered to Nicholas, marquis of Este. The dominions of that prince were threatened by Otto Terzo, an ancient condottiere, who had held high command in the armies of the Duke of Milan, and endeavoured, after the decease of that prince, to retain part of his conquests for himself. After a short campaign, however, he was defeated and taken prisoner by Sforza, and subsequently put to death by the order of the Marquis. The victorious general was on this occasion presented by the prince, whose dominions he had saved, with the town of Monteculo, and with a standard of adamant.

At the conclusion of this war he returned again to the Florentines, and was employed by them to assist Pope John XXIII against Ladislaus, king of Naples. In this undertaking fortune continued to befriend him. He gained a complete victory over that monarch near Rocca Secca; but unluckily, if not for himself, at least for those in whose cause he was fighting, he was prevented by the jealousy of his brother commander, Paul Orsini, from following up his success. The pope, being short of money, made him Count

of his native village of Cotignola as a recompense for arrears of pay that were due to him. The breaking out of a fire in his native town, kindled, as was supposed, at the instigation of somebody who was jealous of his rising fortunes, afforded him an opportunity of showing his paternal care of his newly-acquired subjects. Immediately after the catastrophe he sent provisions and money to all who had suffered by the flames, and assisted them in the rebuilding of their houses.

The perpetual intrigues and jealousy of Paul Orsini disgusted him with the service of the pope, and on the expiration of the period for which he had been engaged he passed over to Ladislaus. That monarch readily entered into terms with one who was among the most successful of modern captains, and, with the view of attaching him to his service, he made him lord over six cities in his dominions. He also made his eldest son, Francesco, then only twelve years old, Count of Tricarico, which appears to have been the reason of his always having been denominated “the Count” by his contemporaries, until he attained a higher title. And having heard much about the nascent genius of Francesco, who was then being educated at Ferrara along with the scions of the family of Este, he requested that the youth should be brought to him. It was said that the impression which young Francesco made on the king was even more favourable than he had been led to expect by the praises of the father. Already, says his biographer, his excellent figure and carriage, and beautiful outline of feature, had turned the eyes of all towards him, and it was evident that he had even then a vigorous intellect, meditating no despicable projects.

The desertion of this general from the party of the Florentines and the pope allowed scope for the genius of Braccio da Montone. After having, along with Sforza, served an apprenticeship in the camp of Alberic of Barbiano, he had retired to his castle of Montone, and occupied himself with endeavouring to conquer the neighbouring city of Perugia. After several unsuccessful attempts, he was obliged, by the fury of those whom he wished to enslave, to fly from his country and take refuge in the kingdom of Naples. While there, he won the favour of Ladislaus by his military talents, and entertained some expectation of being enabled, by the assistance of that monarch, to return to Perugia. But the inhabitants of that city, dreading nothing so much as the falling under the dominion of a petty tyrant, promised to open their gates to the king if he would cease to show countenance to one whom they believed to entertain designs dangerous to their liberty; and Ladislaus, to his disgrace, not only accepted their offer, but even, it is said, promised to have Braccio assassinated. The latter, getting information of these designs, escaped from the territory of the king, and was soon afterwards engaged by the government of Florence. While in that service, he had gained considerable distinction by the manner in which he conducted a campaign against his former employer. Having placed the small army under his command in the fortresses in the neighbourhood of Cortona, he avoided a general action, but kept diligent watch over the movements of the enemy, so as to be ready to take advantage of the first blunder. By this means he managed to surprise sundry detachments of Neapolitan troops, to cut off their supplies, and to reduce the whole army of Ladislaus to such distress that he was compelled, after having left garrisons in Perugia, Cortona, and several of the fortified places he had taken, to fall back upon Rome. The subsequent desertion of Sforza to the party of the king left him without any rival in the service of the Florentines. It may well be supposed that the rising fortunes and increasing dignities of his former brother in arms, who was now serving under the opposite banner, awakened in him some degree of jealousy, and that it was galling to him to reflect, while he himself had failed in making himself master of Perugia, there were five cities that hailed his ancient contemporary as lord, and that his dignities were increased by many marks of favour from the king.

Little doubt was now entertained of the superiority of these two men to the other condottieri of Italy. But the nature of the tactics in which each of them excelled was very different. It was the custom of Braccio to profit, whenever he could, by delay; to avoid general actions, to accustom his soldiers to fight in small parties, to cut off the supplies and intercept the detachments of the enemy, and to be always on the alert to take advantage of the blunders of those to whom he was opposed. He was never above trying to promote treason in the camp of his adversary. On the contrary, Sforza loved to bring all his army into action at once. He sought general engagements, in which, from his great personal courage, and from the confidence reposed in him by his soldiers, he usually had the superiority; he frequently astonished his enemy by the celerity of his movements; and if he occasionally made use of artifices, they were always for the purpose

of attacking with advantage. Hence it came to pass that his campaigns were frequently more fruitful of glory than of profit, while the former often carried his point without adding to his renown by a single victory. Such was the system of the two generals, who were hereafter, for the most part, opposed to one another by the contending parties of Italy.

The renewal of the war between Ladislaus and the pope was the first occasion on which these captains were employed under opposite banners. In the beginning, neither of them seems to have signalized himself by any exploit worthy of notice. Sforza was ordered to blockade Paolo Orsini, the pope's general, in a fastness in Ancona; while the king, who marched directly against the pontiff, soon made himself master of Rome, and having conquered, himself, nearly all the patrimony of the church, turned his attention to Perugia, Bologna, and other towns on the confines of Tuscany, whence he began to menace even the territory of Florence. After Braccio had made one or two inefficient attempts to recover Perugia, the Florentines were glad to obtain a respite, by signing a truce with the victorious monarch, and were shortly afterwards effectually delivered from their fears by his very sudden illness and death.

This event for a time gave a check to the rising fortunes of Sforza, and in some degree favoured those of his rival. Ladislaus was succeeded by his sister, Joan II, the widow of William of Austria a woman of weak understanding and profligate character, who was generally ruled by the favourite whom she selected for the gratification of her lascivious passion. Sforza, as soon as he received intelligence of the death of the king, and of the accession of his sister, reduced many of the cities of Tuscany to her obedience; for a time quelled the Romans, who had rebelled and driven from their city several Neapolitan officers; and betook himself to Naples, where, after having made tender of allegiance to the new sovereign, he asked permission to be allowed to retain the honours which had been conferred on him by her predecessor. On his arrival there he was received with all apparent marks of sincerity by the queen. The reigning favourite, at this time, was one Pandolfo Aleppo, a man of good birth and great beauty. The queen, who, after the death of her husband and brother, had cast off all affectation of restraint, had made this man chamberlain of the palace, and allowed him to order all things in the kingdom. The illustrious warrior, rendered powerful by his many fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, by his superior talents, and by the devotion of the army which he had so often led to victory, became an object of jealousy to this worthless intriguer, who, disregarding the professed, and it is thought also the real, wishes of his mistress, had him along with his family seized and cast into prison. But as all his towns remained faithful to him, and as his brothers, who had followed the same profession as himself, threatened to avenge the insult that had been offered to the head of their family, Pandolfo began to think it would be his best policy to endeavour to make friends of such a powerful subject. Accordingly he had him liberated from captivity, confirmed in the possession of all his fiefs, and created high constable of the kingdom, but at the same time he retained as hostages for his fidelity his children and two of his brothers.

A revolution was soon caused by the marriage of the queen with Jacques of Bourbon, and her conduct to her husband. She refused to allow him the functions of royalty, or to dignify him with any title except that of Count of Tarento. The Neapolitans, already disgusted with the vices of Joan and the sway of her favourites, joined in hailing him as king on his arrival; and he was not slow to avail himself of their proffered allegiance. His first act was to put to death Pandolfo Aleppo, whom he regarded as the prime counsellor of the queen; and Sforza, who alone of the magnates of the land remained faithful to his mistress, he put into prison, and caused to be tortured. It is generally supposed that his life would have fallen a sacrifice to the rage of Jacques, but for the firmness of his sister-in-law Margaret, wife of Michael Attendolo, who had four of the Neapolitan ambassadors seized and retained in the camp of her husband, as hostages for the safety of her brother. His property, in the meantime, was confiscated, and he was forced to resign all claim to the towns that he had acquired in the Neapolitan dominions. His popularity among all classes was so great that the king deemed it advisable to mitigate the rigours of his captivity, and to allow both him and his son as much liberty as was thought consistent with his object of preventing his services being made available to his enemies.

In the meantime, the weakness that was caused by these dissensions in the kingdom of Naples afforded to the pope an opportunity of regaining his lost ground, and opened to Braccio Montone one of improving his fortune. The news of the death of Ladislaus was tidings of great joy to the inhabitants of Rome, Florence, and the intermediate towns. It was said that many of them lifted up their hands to heaven to show their gratitude for such an unexpected deliverance; and after the departure of Sforza, several cities, which had been taken by him, voluntarily returned to the allegiance of the Holy See. For the purpose of retaining these cities in his possession, John XXIII appointed Braccio, whose abilities he knew how to value, to the governorship of Bologna, the principal one among them. Braccio, while he remained in that city, availed himself of his position to carry on thence operations against the other towns in the neighbourhood; and on the deposition of Pope John, in the following year, he consented to relinquish the post which that pontiff had entrusted to him, on receiving a sum of money from the anti-papal party. He then immediately attacked the city of Perugia, the possession of which seems to have been his principal object of ambition through life; and after having completely defeated the army of Malatesta, the general of the Perugians, he succeeded in making himself master, not only of their city, but also of Todi, Narni, and several other towns in the mountains between Florence and Rome. To dignify Perugia with the appearance of a capital, and to reconcile the inhabitants to his rule, he tried to make all the other places which he had conquered pay a tribute to it, and celebrated his victories by a magnificent tournament. In the year 1417 he marched thence into Rome, and soon took possession of that city, with the exception of the Castle of St Angelo. Having assumed the title of Defender of the Holy See, he appointed a new senator, and continued to remain in the Eternal City under the pretence of awaiting the arrival of the pope. With the view of augmenting his power, and securing himself in his possessions, he got the other renowned condottieri of the time, including Tartaglia and several of the relations of Sforza, to serve under him. The enmity which the former bore to Sforza had been in noways mitigated by the length of time that had elapsed since its origin, or by the many battles they had fought in common; and Braccio, to his shame be it spoken, gave him permission and encouragement, while in his service, to attack and pillage the cities of his rival, then a captive at Naples. The family of the Attendoli had already bound themselves to protect the fiefs of their imprisoned kinsman; but of those who were in the service of Braccio, Michael alone had the courage to refuse to be in any way a party to such an act of perfidy, and withdrew from the captain who sanctioned such a disgraceful proceeding. Braccio's conduct on this occasion was the cause of the hostility which prevailed between him and Sforza till the end of their careers.

CHAPTER VII.

SFORZA LIBERATED BY THE QUEEN, DRIVES BRACCIO FROM ROME.

THE tide of fortune, which seemed to have set against Sforza Attendolo, soon again turned in his favour. Ere long a fresh revolution broke out at Naples. The chief men of that kingdom, who had been so eager to hail Jacques of Bourbon as king, soon found that they had gained nothing by a change of rulers. They had the mortification of seeing the affairs of their nation managed entirely by the countrymen of the king, and of beholding the courtiers of France preferred to all posts of honour before themselves. If the favourites of the queen were worthless and despicable, they were at least their countrymen, and were to them more tolerable than the foreign minions of Jacques. Actuated by these opinions, they soon restored Joan to her former dignity, and expelled her husband from the city. The queen, having regained her power, lost no time in liberating Sforza and his son : the former she restored to all his dignities and fiefs, and she made young Francesco count of three cities, as a compensation for the loss of Tricarico, which had been given to him by Ladislaus, and taken from him by Jacques.

Joan's jealousy, and even her apprehensions for the safety of her realm, had naturally been excited by the position of Braccio at Rome, and she proposed to Sforza to undertake an expedition for the purpose of driving him thence. Burning as he was with desire to punish the treacherous behaviour of his ancient brother in arms, he eagerly availed himself of this opportunity of doing so; and having, not without some difficulty, got together an army, he soon arrived in the plains of the Campagna, south of the Eternal City. Here he tried to bring his adversary to battle; but he could not, either by his taunts or his artifices, induce him to relinquish his usual mode of tactics. To the sanguine temperament of Sforza this delay was intolerable. He therefore determined to cross the Tiber, and to attack his enemy from the Castle of St Angelo, which still held out against him. For this purpose he brought his army over on a bridge of boats near Ostia. As soon as all his troops had landed, he destroyed this bridge, that they might see that their only

chance of safety was in victory. His soldiers, though exhausted by the heats of July, and suffering from great scarcity of provisions, followed with the greatest confidence the general who had so often led them to victory; and he, for his part, ill brooked the delay of one night, which was necessary to recruit and to refresh them on their march from Ostia to Rome. But Braccio, who well knew the superiority of his rival in general engagements, and whose army had already been weakened by the plague, did not await his approach, but fled with great precipitation from Rome by the road to Narni and Perugia. So fearful was he of being pursued that he broke down, behind him the Ponte Molle, trusting that the meandering course of the river would protect him while his adversary remained on the northern bank. Thus Sforza entered the Eternal City without any opposition. He shortly afterwards took prisoner one of Braccio's lieutenants, Nicolo Piccinino, who had annoyed him by predatory excursions, and retained him in his array as a hostage for the liberation of his own captive soldiers.

The following winter he had an opportunity of defeating his old adversary Tartaglia. In this engagement, young Francesco Sforza, then only fifteen years old, made great exhibition of his courage. Though then appearing for the first time in battle, he was generally in advance of the veteran soldiers, and engaged hand to hand with the enemy.

After having thus accomplished the designs of his employers, Sforza returned covered with glory to Naples. The queen testified her sense of his merits by adding the important city of Benevento to his other fiefs. At this time also he showed that he was as ready to advance the fortunes of his family by marriage as by war, and endeavoured to effect a union between his son Francesco and Johanette Stendaria, a connection of the queen's, possessed of the sovereignty of several cities in Apulia, and owner of extensive estates. In this design, however, he was disappointed by the treachery of a friend, who, after having promised him to aid him in his designs, secured the heiress himself; but he soon managed to provide equally well for the fortunes of his house, by obtaining for his son the hand of Polyxena Ruffa, a young lady who, in the words of his biographer, was in possession, not only of all the advantages of beauty, virtue, and nobility, but also of several cities and fertile estates in the province of Calabria.

The advice which Sforza Attendolo gave to his son, when about to start to take possession of his bride, is worthy of notice, as coming from a man who certainly was not dishonest for the period in which he lived, and knew well how to push his fortune in the world; and it must be allowed that, if it was not such as to merit the entire approbation of a strict moralist of the present day, it was at least in many degrees less iniquitous than much of that which one century later Machiavelli gave to those who were desirous of reigning in Italy. After having referred to his past life, and expressed some general wishes for his future welfare, he proceeded to say, "Above all things, I wish you to be assiduous in your observance of justice to everybody. When hereafter you come to rule over people, it will not only recommend you to the favour of heaven, but it will make you especially popular among men. And though you should observe it in all things, be especially careful not to irritate any of your subjects by the commission of adultery. That is an injury which both the wrath of God and the bitter anger of men punish with the greatest severity". He then recommended him never to excite the angry passions of any of his generals by a blow; but in case he should so far forget himself as to do so, to have the person whom he so offended removed from access to his person; and concluded by advising him never to get on a horse that had a hard mouth, or that was not sure of foot.

It was not long, however, before Sforza began to be annoyed as formerly by the intrigues of the palace, and the jealousy of the favourites of the queen. After the liberation of her majesty, and the departure of the Count of Tarento, one Caraccioli succeeded to the place that was formerly held by Pandolfo Aleppo, and entertained the same jealousy against the High Constable. However, he did not dare openly to lay hands on him, but endeavoured to rise up enemies against him in his camp, and persuaded a band of armed men to attack him on his march. But the leading men of the kingdom became thoroughly disgusted at these perpetual quarrels between the chamberlain and the general of the queen, and made the two rivals consent to a re-conciliation, and shake hands in the presence of royalty.

Her majesty had soon an opportunity of freeing her kingdom from the general who was detested by her chamberlain. Pope Martin V, a member of the noble family of Colonna, who had been elected just three years after the deposition of John, was at this time sore pressed by the new sovereign of Perugia; and Sforza, with the permission of his former mistress, entered his service, and was dignified with the title of Gonfalonier of the Church. He soon afterwards set out on an expedition against the only man who could dispute with him the palm of military pre-eminence in Italy; and having arrived in the neighbourhood of Viterbo, close to the army of Braccio, he sent to that city for some reinforcements that had been promised him. Braccio managed by an artifice to intercept these reinforcements; and, attacking the enemy with a vastly superior force, gained a complete victory.

Though defeated, Sforza showed as much ability and courage as he ever did in the hour of prosperity. One of his first measures was to send for his son Francesco to assist him so great an opinion did he entertain of the youth; and with his aid he managed to bring together a considerable army, and took the town of Capito in the presence of his adversary. However, Caraccioli profited by his reverse at Viterbo to undermine him in every possible way at the court of Naples; and though the queen continued ostensibly to befriend the party of the pope, the reigning favourite not only prevented her sending him the promised reinforcements, but even engaged to assist the opposite general with money and troops.

In the meantime, Martin V had gone to Florence, at the solicitation of the government of the city, for the purpose of entering into negotiations with Braccio; and he found no difficulty in persuading Sforza, already sufficiently disgusted with the intrigues of Caraccioli, and the inconstancy of the queen, to repair thither for the same purpose. Here it was proposed to bring Louis III of Anjou into Italy, and to support his claims to the kingdom of Naples; and Sforza, not without considerable hesitation, and a great show of reluctance, consented to become a party to the project. The negotiations which the pontiff managed to conclude with Braccio were sufficiently advantageous to himself. It was agreed that that warrior should restore to him the towns of Narni, Terni, Orvieto, and Orta; but should be allowed to hold, as fiefs of the Holy See, Perugia, and several of the surrounding cities. In return for this, Braccio promised to expel Galeazzo Bentivoglio from Bologna, and to bring that city under the dominion of the pope all which he performed in the course of the same year.

Sforza, when he had made up his mind as to the part which he was to take, lost no time in carrying his projects into execution. Having marched to Naples at the head of an army, he sent word to the queen that the intrigues of Caraccioli made it impossible for him to continue in her service, and at the same time resigned into her hands the baton of high constable of the kingdom. He then proclaimed Louis of Anjou king of Naples, in virtue of the adoption of his ancestor by the first queen Joan; and having invited all the partisans of the French cause, of whom there were not a few in the kingdom, to join him, he invested the city by the side of the gate which leads to Capua. While here, he was much distressed in his mind, and crippled in his operations, from the circumstance of his son Francesco being for a considerable time disabled by a severe wound. At the same time they were both afflicted by the death of Polyxena, the wife of the latter; and, as was usual at that period, there were many sinister reports of her having been carried off by poison. However grievous her loss may have been to young Francesco, it was not to be deemed an unlucky event in his career, that the death of the wife who had brought him a considerable accession of territory left him so soon at liberty to use the same means for improving his fortunes.

Meantime the queen was not slow to find an adversary well capable of opposing this new claimant to her throne. Her ambassador at Rome, Antonio Caraffa, who, from his proficiency in diplomatic deceit, was surnamed "Malizia", had discovered the designs of the pontiff, and thereon entered into negotiations with Alphonso V, king of Sicily, Aragon, Majorca, and Sardinia, and the descendant of Manfred and Constance, and proposed that that monarch should undertake the defence of the queen, on condition of being declared her heir. This proposal, it is almost needless to say, was unhesitatingly accepted by the King of Aragon; and with the view of performing his part of it he arrived before Naples with a considerable fleet, in a very short time after Sforza had been joined by Louis of Anjou. The combined forces of the two latter were unable to prevent the King of Aragon from effecting a landing; but when he attempted to drive them

from their position before the walls of the city, they repulsed his troops with great loss. It was said that the Aragonese monarch, during the course of the engagement, got a prisoner to point out Sforza to him, and that he was much struck by his personal bravery and his omnipresence in the battle; and expressed his admiration of his person and courage in somewhat the same terms that were used by Priam on beholding the Grecian heroes from his own city walls, or by Aladdin on seeing Tancred from those of Jerusalem. And the sample he here had of his fighting convinced him of the necessity of opposing to him his great rival.

Braccio, after the conclusion of the negotiations at Florence in 1418, had retired to his newly acquired principality at Perugia, and employed himself chiefly in the embellishment of his capital. He, however, was easily persuaded to leave these peaceful recreations for the avocation to which he had been used; and in the following spring he entered the Neapolitan territories with an army. On his arrival at the capital, he was received with marked distinction by the queen and her adopted heir, and created Prince of Capua, Count of Foggia, and High Constable of the kingdom, an office which had become vacant by the resignation of Sforza. In the meantime Sforza had retired for winter quarters to Aversa, a town in the immediate vicinity of Naples. While there, he formally renounced all claim to the town of Monteculo, with a view of facilitating negotiations between Nicholas of Este and the duke of Milan. The loss of the city, the first that he had held, could not have been of much importance to him, now that he had become lord of so many; and he received more than compensation for it in the dignities that were conferred upon his son. Louis, duly appreciating the talents of that youth, sent him to Calabria, the part of the kingdom of Naples where his influence was greatest, with the title of Viceroy. Here he showed himself well deserving of the confidence reposed in him; and the party of Anjou gained considerably by the ability and talent which he displayed. He reduced several towns to the obedience of his employer, and won for his cause the goodwill of the chief men of the province.

The advance of the spring was the signal for the renewal of hostilities between Braccio and Sforza. The campaign, however, was not attended with any decisive result. The latter, as usual, tried every means to bring his adversary to a general action, which the former assiduously avoided, and sought to get what advantage he could by manoeuvring, by fighting with detachments, and by treachery. He is even said to have entered into negotiations with Tartaglia, who had been despatched to the assistance of Sforza by the pope, for the murder of his adversary. Whether this is true or not, it is certain that he endeavoured to corrupt the officers in the opposite camp; and Tartaglia, the unrelenting enemy of Sforza, lent a ready ear to his proposals of treachery.

The perfidious conduct of the latter, however, was discovered, and he paid the penalty of his treachery on the gibbet at Aversa.

In the meantime, Louis of Anjou had retired to Rome. The indecisive nature of the campaign, and the protracted difficulties of accomplishing a design, the reported facility of which had brought him at a most inconvenient time from his hereditary dominions, seemed to have inspired him with disgust; nor were the other parties less tired of a war by which they got nothing. Braccio was more anxious to strengthen his power, and to extend his newly-acquired dominions, than to fight the battles of the queen; Sforza was embarrassed by the failure of Louis and Martin to supply him with money; Joan had already begun to show symptoms of jealousy towards her adopted successor, and was desirous, under any terms, to be rid of a rival whose armies occupied one of the fairest provinces in her dominions. Under these circumstances they all readily consented to the cessation of hostilities proposed by the pope. Braccio was glad to be reconciled to his ancient brother in arms, and to return to Perugia; the queen also was willing to reinstate in her service the former high constable of the realm.

The most graphic descriptions have been preserved to us of the first meeting and reconciliation of the two great captains who had so often been enemies and friends. The first overture was made by Sforza, who entered the camp of Braccio attended by only fifteen unarmed followers. There he represented to his adversary the futility of carrying on a war by which neither of them could gain much, but both might suffer considerable losses. He admitted the difficulties in which he himself was placed, being no longer supported

by the pope or Louis of Anjou, and used every argument to show that peace was generally desirable for both parties. The readiness with which Braccio consented to his propositions showed that he also thought with him as to the expediency of peace. After having gone through all the forms of a reconciliation, the two condottieri entered into explanations of their past differences, and freely criticized each other's conduct in war. Braccio frankly admitted his secret negotiations previous to the battle of Viterbo, as also those which in the last war he had carried on with the traitor Tartaglia. Sforza, on the other hand, declared that he had never attempted to gain any advantage over his adversary by any underhand dealing whatever, and that he never would have ceased to regard him as a friend, if, during the period of his captivity, he had not permitted and encouraged Tartaglia to attack his cities. He concluded by saying that his spirits were now as much elated, by his reconciliation with his former friend, as his feelings had been wounded on the occasion alluded to. After these explanations had been concluded, Braccio is said to have expressed his admiration and surprise at two traits he had invariably witnessed in the conduct of his opponent. The first was, that whenever his army was drawn up in line of battle, he would on no account suffer it to retreat, but would continue fighting under every prospect of disadvantage; whilst he himself, on the contrary, took every account of times, situations, contingencies, and risks, and always thought it better to desist in any enterprise than to be defeated. The second was, that he seemed too great a protector of the country people, and too great a disciplinarian in his army, for that he punished with too great severity the offences of the soldiers against the rustics a mode of acting very different from the true policy of a condottiere, who ought to try to allure men to his service by every prospect of license. In reply to these observations, Sforza is said to have reminded him, in a jocular manner, of the different devices by which, when they were in the camp of Alberic, their colours were distinguished; that his device of broad straight folds might be regarded as an emblem of his rule of conduct, both in the camp and in the common affairs of life; that he was willing to stake the reputation of his name on his adoption of it, and to leave it as a model to be followed by his successor. With regard to the second characteristic of his conduct, he had never yet had reason to repent of the observance of justice towards everybody; and he was uncertain whether he would deem it the greater glory to be termed the bravest or the justest of generals, since, without the latter qualification, it was impossible either to manage the affairs of mankind or to perform the duties required by God. Having concluded these explanations, they are said to have remained a considerable time in private conversation, in the course of which it was agreed that Braccio should despatch letters to the Queen of Naples, entreating her to take Sforza into her favour again.

Braccio, having performed his part, returned to Perugia, to set the affairs of his kingdom in order; and Sforza proceeded to make his peace with her majesty. She had accepted the mediation of Braccio, and consented to restore Sforza to the office he had formerly held; but, on going through the ceremony of presenting him with the baton of constable, she was unable to avoid making a joke at his expense. Some difference having arisen among her ministers about the form of the inaugural oath, she exclaimed, "Let Sforza himself decide; he has made so many oaths to myself, and to my enemies, that nobody knows better than he in what manner people bind themselves by engagements, and afterwards loose themselves from the same".

The subsequent events of the very year in which this reconciliation had taken place showed that, in the then state of Italy, it was vain to expect either peace in the kingdom of an intriguing and childless woman, or an alliance between two rival military adventurers. The friendship of the latter seemed like the coalition of oil and vinegar when poured into the same vessel. Scarcely had Louis consented to relinquish his claims on Naples when the adopted heir of the queen showed himself anxious to anticipate the course of nature, and to exercise during her lifetime the functions of sovereignty. To effect this more easily, he is said to have formed a plan for seizing the person of Sforza, after he had enticed him on board his own ship. Whatever truth there may have been in these allegations, the supporters of the queen were filled with joy when they beheld him safe landed at Gaeta; and rumours were prevalent that the execution of this design was merely hindered by the delay consequent on the dissensions that had arisen among the partisans of the King of Aragon. The suspicions of the queen's friends became so general that she deemed it advisable to adopt measures not to be taken off her guard in the event of their turning out to be true; and with this view she reinstated Sforza in greater favour than before, and solicited his protection, should circumstances

require. Even the courtier Carracioli saw that the services of the veteran were absolutely necessary for the independence of the mistress in the sunshine of whose favour he was basking; and he, for a time, was obliged to forget or dissemble his former animosities, and to enter into the closest alliance with his ancient rival. It was agreed by the warrior, the queen, and the courtier, that if Alphonso did not behave himself to their satisfaction, Louis of Anjou was to be adopted in his place. After this Sforza retired to Villa Franca for winter quarters.

On the opening of the following year, 1424, which was destined to terminate the careers of the two great captains of the age, the designs of Alphonso of Aragon were made manifest. His first act was to engage Braccio da Montone to lay siege on his own account to Aquila, a fortified town which, from its contiguity to his newly-formed principality of Perugia, might be deemed a valuable acquisition thereto. Having thus, as he thought, turned to that quarter the attention of those whom he was about to make his enemies, he himself marched to Capua, thinking that, if he was once master of the person of the queen and her favourite, there would be little to prevent the execution of his plans. He managed to seize the latter before he was aware of his danger; but the former, having got intimation of his design, had the fortress prepared to stand a siege, and despatched messengers to Sforza to come to her assistance. On his way thither, Sforza was met by the ambassadors of Alphonso, who reminded him that he was bound by the same treaty of friendship and alliance towards their master as towards the queen, and endeavoured to procure his services for him by the representation of the superior advantages which would accrue to himself thereby, and by the most liberal offers of reward. Sforza, however, either thinking that he would be more powerful as commander of the forces in the service of a woman, than in that of a monarch well skilled in the arts of war or, it may be, from principles of honour and friendship for the queen replied that he had promised allegiance to Joan and Alphonso when they were acting together as mother and son; that on the present occasion he had received orders from the former which he was determined to obey; that he, for his part, was truly grieved at the dissensions between his patrons, and at the ingratitude of the adopted son of the queen. On the receipt of this answer, Alphonso continued to press the siege with greater vigour than ever. Sforza came up with his army and compelled him to give him battle in the plains of Formella, almost beneath the walls of Capua. The engagement, though contested with the greatest obstinacy and skill, and with many turns in the favour of both parties, terminated in the complete defeat of the Aragon, and the consequent liberation of the queen from her critical position. The affairs of the former were, however, retrieved by the arrival of a fleet from Aragon, unexpected by both parties alike; and, in spite of the diligence of Sforza, a considerable force landed and entered the city of Naples. The number of the invading host was so great, and their position was so formidable, that Sforza and Carracioli did not deem it safe for the queen to remain at Capua, and sent her under the protection of a strong escort to Aversa. In this position of affairs, it was agreed by Joan and her two counsellors that the adopted son of the former had shown himself utterly unworthy of the favour that had been conferred on him, and that her old enemy, Louis of Anjou, should be substituted in his place. Letters to this effect were despatched to the pope, and to many of the crowned heads of Europe. Thus, in the short space of a year, a new combination of parties was formed among those whom mutual distrust, or never-ceasing ambition and conflicting interests, would not permit to remain at peace : so little did treaties and protestations of mutual friendship avail in an age when wars were justified by expediency, and oaths were reckoned binding only as long as it suited the mutual convenience of the parties to observe them.

In the beginning of this campaign, an event occurred which exhibited to great advantage the genius of Francesco Sforza, and gave proof how well he was qualified to occupy the position that was so shortly to become vacant by the death of his father. The young viceroy, then only in his twenty-third year, had been despatched into Calabria, accompanied by several condottieri of minor note, who had sworn fidelity to his father, and were generally supposed, from private friendship and length of service, to be attached to him. While he was manoeuvring in the face of the enemy, the majority of these captains, terrified by a report of the death of the elder Sforza, which had been industriously spread in the camp, and possibly also allured by the gold of Alphonso, came to a determination to quit his service, and to pass over to the opposite party. When their designs were fully prepared, they announced their intentions to Francesco; and he, surprised, though in no way intimidated by their behaviour, merely requested them to make a semblance of remaining

with him as long as he continued in front of the enemy. In the meantime, he despatched messengers to one Loysius Sanseverinas, a condottiere of some note, who happened to be close at hand, as also to his father, informing them of his situation. The former immediately marched to his assistance, and he was shortly afterwards joined by a considerable force under the command of his uncle, Michael Attendolo, who was sent to him by the latter. With these reinforcements he managed to attack his adversaries almost before they were aware of his approach, and, after a complete victory, to make prisoners of the majority of those who, a short time before, had so shamefully deserted him. In the hour of triumph, his behaviour was remarkable for moderation and good sense. Intelligence of the victory of his son had been conveyed without delay to the elder Sforza, and he despatched messengers with orders that no mercy should be shown to the traitors who were then in his hands. On receipt of these commands, so repugnant to his own feelings, and to the general practice of his father, the young man is said to have asked the bearer of them how his parent looked when he delivered them. On his being told that he was violently enraged at the time, Francesco replied that he could not regard the words that had been spoken in anger in the light of an order; after which he had the captives brought into his presence, and informed them that both he and his father granted them a free pardon, and gave them the option of remaining in his service or not, as they pleased. The conduct of his son, by which so many lives were spared, and the services of so many able generals secured, is said to have given such satisfaction to the elder Sforza that he exclaimed with tears of joy, that his child was a much cleverer man than himself.

In the meantime, Alphonso, disgusted at the small progress that his cause was making, and embarrassed by troubles at home, departed for his native kingdom of Aragon. While on his way thither, he pillaged and set fire to the city of Marseilles, the property of his adversary; and even carried his malice so far as to take with him thence the bones of St Louis, and many of the sacred vessels from the churches. Though he had left at Naples his brother, Don Pedro of Aragon, along with several condottieri, the queen deemed herself freed from all immediate danger in that quarter, and despatched Sforza to the relief of Aquila, which Braccio continued to besiege without any intermission.

On this the last occasion on which the two rival condottieri were to be opposed, each made an eminent display of the tactics for which he had been conspicuous through life. Sforza was ever anxious to fight and to conquer; Braccio watched every opportunity to steal an advantage over his adversary. Sforza's design was to bring his opponent to battle; Braccio's endeavour was to throw every possible impediment in the way of his advance. Though it has been the invariable practice of Italian warfare to retire from the field in the winter, the former collected all his forces in the middle of December, and marched directly against the enemy. The latter having brought together a portion of his troops from their winter quarters, took positions in the different towns and strongholds in front of his adversary's line of march; and though not daring to come to an engagement, caused him no small delay, and often led him a fruitless pursuit from place to place. By this means he hoped to gain sufficient time to render himself master of the city, whose inhabitants were already suffering the severest privations. After the manouvring had lasted nearly one month, Sforza found himself with his army at Ortona, while his enemy was at Chieti, a city on the high-road between his own headquarters and Aquila. Sforza, impatient of delay, determined on marching along the coast, and crossing the river Pescara close to its mouth, which would enable him to turn his enemy's position at Chieti, and march straight upon Aquila without farther opposition. Braccio, true to his policy, and well acquainted with the tactics of the man with whom he had to deal, had placed a small body of men in the town of Pescara, a little way above the mouth of the river, and had fortified its banks with a palisade, behind which he had placed several men armed with cross-bows. These obstructions were such that few men, except the general whose forward mode of fighting was denoted by the folds on his military colours, would have persevered in the attempt.

The 4th of January 1424 was chosen by Sforza for his hazardous undertaking. There are many reports extant of omens of ill-luck having appeared to him before the commencement of this day, which was destined to terminate his career. Some of these may possibly have been invented after the tragic event had taken place; trivial incidents, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been forgotten, may have been recorded and exaggerated, or may have made an impression upon those of his followers who had

less heart for the enterprise than himself; and it is not improbable that visions may have been conjured up by the imagination of Sforza himself, intent upon his enterprise, and fully aware of its danger. After having, as was his custom, performed the ceremony of mass, and taken the sacrament before daybreak, he is said to have related, that while he lay awake at night there appeared to him the head of a man of gigantic stature, and that he afterwards had a vision of himself struggling in the current, and vainly imploring assistance. Before starting, he was reminded of the prediction of an astrologer, that he should, above all things, beware of crossing a river on a Monday, and implored by his companions in arms not to despise such evident indications of the will of the Almighty. Nor did the circumstance of the horse of one of the standard-bearers having fallen fail to produce its due effect on the minds of the superstitious and timid among his followers.

When he arrived at the river he found that the elements, as well as his enemy, had rendered the passage more than usually difficult, as, besides the preparations before mentioned, made by Braccio, a strong east wind had set in, and caused a sort of conflict between the current of the river and the waves of the sea. But he, as little daunted by the reality as he had been by the visions of danger, gave orders to the foremost men in his army to cross the river by the shallows adjoining the beach. Five of the best-mounted men in the army dashed into the stream, trusting to the strength of their heavy armour to defend them against the javelins and cross-bows of the enemy : after them came young Francesco Sforza, followed by his father. Notwithstanding the opposition of the enemy, aided by the wind, the waves, and the sea, they all effected a safe landing on the northern bank of the Pescara, and their success emboldened others to follow their example. Already had fortune begun to declare in favour of the brave. Forty of the best men in the camp had arrived in safety after the Sforzas. The bowmen, who had been placed behind the palisades, having fled in terror to the city, brought word to the garrison of Braccio that they had been unable to defend the passage of the river, and entreated them to attack the enemy before they had landed in considerable numbers. Already a party had come from the city for that purpose, but they were unable to stand the onset of a small number of heavily-armed knights, headed by Francesco Sforza; and a great number of them were made prisoners before they could reach the walls of the city. In the moment of his exultation, the elder Sforza beckoned to his followers on the southern bank to lose no time in crossing the river to assist in following up their success; and impatient of delay, he dashed into the water, determined to return again to the other side and lead the way for the timid or the doubtful. But on this occasion, the wind, which is said to rule the waves of the Adriatic, showed itself a more formidable enemy than the bowmen of Braccio. The waves which it continued to raise met the flow of the river with redoubled violence; the heavy armour of the warrior and the increased conflict of the waters were too much for the horse, which had already had some hours of exercise. Sforza, while in the middle of the passage, stooped forward to extend his hand to one of his soldiers, who, being dismounted, seemed to be in danger of being carried off by the current; the animal lost his balance, slipped behind, and precipitated his steel-clad rider into the dangerous eddy. The horse, freed from his burden, swam to the bank. The warrior was unable to struggle with the billows. Twice were his steel-clad hands seen raised above the waters, clasped together, as if he were imploring assistance, though any words that he may have attempted to utter were choked by the rage of the elements; after which he sank to rise no more, and his body was never afterwards found. Thus perished Sforza Attendolo of Cotignola, a man who, in the words of the historian of the Italian republics, was universally acknowledged to be one of the first generals and politicians of the day.

At the moment of this catastrophe Francesco Sforza was beneath the walls of Pescara, engaged in the close pursuit of the enemy. Never did the genius of the future duke of Milan appear more conspicuous than on the receipt of the mournful intelligence. Though tenderly attached to his father, and belonging to a nation who feel more keenly the passions of grief or joy than the colder inhabitants of the north, he never for one moment lost his presence of mind. His first object was to endeavour to secure for himself the army, who were released from their engagements by the death of their leader, and whose fidelity, at all times uncertain, seemed more doubtful than ever, now that they were opposed to one who had no rival left in military science. With this object in view, he immediately recalled his cavalry from the pursuit of the enemy, and led them back to the fords of the river, under the pretence of rendering assistance to the others in the dangers of the passage. While crossing the water himself, he gave an example of that devoted attachment to his companions in arms which had cost his father his life. On beholding some of his men in

danger of being carried out into the deep, he dismounted, and entered into a small and fragile punt which was lying near the mouth of the river, and which he guided about with one oar, so as to render assistance to many. When he had assembled around him, on the southern side of the fatal stream, the chief men among the followers of his deceased father, he laid before them, in strong and forcible language, the true state of their affairs, reminding them of the riches and renown they had attained under his sire, representing to them their prospect of success if they attached themselves to him, and the contempt they could not fail to bring upon themselves should they, in the present emergency, go over to the enemy. The words of Francesco, aided, it may be, by his already well-established reputation, and the vivid recollection of his conduct when deserted in Calabria, prevailed; they all promised fidelity to the young chief, and expressed their readiness to assist him in securing for himself the inheritance of his parent. After this he lost no time in marching at the head of his troops to Benevento, which he regarded as the most important of the fiefs of his father, and afterwards visited in the same manner nearly all the other cities that had at different times been allotted to him. Having thus secured to himself the allegiance of his troops and his subjects, he proceeded to Aversa, and there made tender of his services to the queen.

The report of the death of Sforza was brought to Braccio after the intelligence of his partial success at the Pescara had made him resolve upon relinquishing the siege of Aquila. In those days the casualties of war were so rare among the chief of the condottieri that he was at first utterly incredulous; but when no longer able to feel any doubt on the subject, he is said, so far from evincing any tokens of joy at an occurrence by which his prospects of success were so enhanced, to have actually betrayed many symptoms of sorrow for the fate of one who for so many years had been his brother and rival in arms, and at the same time to have expressed a presentiment that he should not long survive him. After this he continued the siege of Aquila as before, under the expectation that the disappointment of all hopes of assistance from Sforza would soon induce the inhabitants to capitulate. But they dreaded nothing so much as falling under the dominion of the tyrant of Perugia; and as they did not despair of further assistance from the queen of Naples, they continued to hold out with a fortitude worthy of a better age.

In the meantime the affairs of Joan had taken a still more prosperous turn. An alliance had been formed between Louis of Anjou and the duke of Milan, and the latter had engaged the Genoese to send a fleet to expel their old enemies, the Aragonese, from Naples. After they had driven them from the adjoining maritime towns, they drew up in front of the capital, while Francesco Sforza commenced an attack thereon by land. The fidelity of the condottieri in the service of Don Pedro had already been shaken by the unpropitious state of the Aragonese affairs; some of them had before this left him to take service under Braccio; and the chief man amongst them, Jacobo Caldora, having no wish to encounter danger in support of a falling cause, entered into treaty with the party of the queen, and opened the gates of the city to Francesco Sforza. It now remained for Joan to complete her triumph, by relieving her faithful subjects of Aquila; and she despatched an army for that purpose, under the command of Caldora, accompanied by Sforza.

The tactics of Braccio on this, the closing scene of his life, are worthy of notice. He seemed to think himself certain of victory, now that he was no longer opposed by his former rival. So confident was he on this occasion, that, although he knew the forces of his adversaries to be three times as numerous as his own, he sent word to the enemy that, if they would come and attack him in the plains in front of Aquila, he would not oppose their passage through the mountain passes of St Larrent. To one of the messages, young Francesco is said to have replied, that he would soon come, to his cost. On the 4th of June 1424, the army of Caldora set out to cross these extremely difficult passes; and though a mere handful of men might at any time have arrested their progress, Braccio, true to his promise, offered them no opposition whatever. In descending the mountains, the cavalry were obliged to dismount and lead their horses down the steep and stony paths which conducted to the foot, and could arrive but in small numbers at a time in the plain beneath. Nevertheless, the whole army was allowed to assemble before the attack was begun. The plain in which the battle was to be fought had recently been inundated by the overflow of the river, and offered every impediment to the action of heavy cavalry after the fatigues of the passage of the mountain; and as the steepness of the path precluded all possibility of retreat in the event of a defeat, it is not improbable that

Braccio hoped that, if he suffered them all to descend, the whole force would fall into his hands. At the beginning of the battle this expectation seemed likely to be fulfilled. The troops of Caldora, fatigued by the labours of the morning, and unnerved by the perilous situation in which they had been so long exposed, gave way at the first onset. Victory seemed almost in his hands; but the troops of Braccio had, in the eagerness of pursuit, come upon an unbroken body of infantry belonging to Sforza : many horses of the former were killed, and a great number of them driven back in confusion. Niccolo Piccinino, one of Braccio's most promising pupils, anxious to restore the battle to its former success, brought his men from the post where they had been placed by their commander-in-chief to prevent the egress of the inhabitants of Aquila; and the citizens immediately profited by the advantage thus given them, to sally forth upon the rear of the army that had besieged them so long. To add to the confusion of Braccio, his signals was either unseen or unheeded by a reserve body of men whom he had placed at some distance with the intention of bringing them up in the hour of victory; and his army, pressed both behind and before, was obliged to give way. All accounts represent this engagement as being different from the almost bloodless battles that were so often fought between the condottieri in the fifteenth century. The soldiers of Caldora well knew that, if defeated, they had no chance of retreat; their adversaries were maddened with disappointment ; and the general, who had his own ambitious objects in view, sacrificed the lives of his men with less reluctance than if he had been fighting the battles of a neighbouring prince.

Young Francesco was everywhere in the thickest part of the engagement. Braccio, on first seeing him, asked "Who is that man with the black cockade whom I behold wherever I turn my eyes?", and, on being informed, he exclaimed, "A worthy son of the great Sforza!"

Francesco, at the close of the engagement, eagerly pursued the old rival of his father, as if anxious to have the honour of capturing him himself. The latter had cast away his helmet, to prevent his being identified, and met with his death-wound from one of Sforza's knights, who afterwards took him prisoner. The great captain, when in his enemy's hands, refused all sustenance or comfort. Ere long he expired a captive in the camp of his adversary.

The principality which Braccio had formed was completely destroyed by his defeat at Aquila. All the towns which he had held in the Territories of the Church, including his own capital of Perugia, returned to the allegiance of the pope. Capua, and the other fiefs that had been given to him in the kingdom of Naples, reverted to the queen. His son, Count Oddo, was allowed to retain nothing but the castle of Montone. On the other hand, Francesco Sforza, having secured both the dominions and the reputation of his father, retired to the town of Acqua Pendente, to meditate plans for the future.

BOOK THIRD.

LIFE OF FRANCESCO SFORZA FROM THE DEATH OF BRACCIO TILL HIS MARRIAGE
WITH THE DAUGHTER OF FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUSES OF WAR BETWEEN THE DUKE OF MILAN AND THE FLORENTINES.

THE soul of Gernando, one of the heroes of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Tasso, was not more intent upon doing great deeds than was that of Francesco Sforza during his stay at Acqua Pendente. The crusader, as well as the condottiere, was more ambitious of honour than covetous of gold. But the former sought after the empty glory of a name; the mere renown of deeds of heroism performed, as he thought, in the cause of his religion, was sufficient for him. The latter had in view the more solid honours of fiefs, dukedoms, and kingdoms. To be celebrated as a hero was the darling wish of the former; to reign was the actuating passion of the latter. The former was willing to seek fame by traversing remote parts of the world, or discovering the hidden sources of rivers; the latter confined his views to the Peninsula south of the Alps.

It must be allowed that Italy, in its then state, presented a fair field of enterprise to one who had learned the arts of war in the camp of Sforza Attendolo, and those of intrigue in the court of Joan II. Indeed, most of its states were rotten to the heart's core. The monarchs of the south, for several generations, had been abandoned to vice, and failed to inspire their subjects with respect or affection; and the evil effects of generations of misrule were aggravated by the profligacy and weakness so conspicuous in their then representative. She was without children, and her kingdom was torn in pieces by the civil wars of those who were contending for, or anticipating the rights of, succession. The Neapolitan subjects were not less enervated than their rulers, and the whole kingdom was falling into that state of social dissolution which

causes the disappearance of public and private virtues alike, and extinguishes all great hopes and thoughts for the future. Nor were the States of the Church, if this denomination could be still given to the provinces that had been assigned by Charlemagne and Otho to the bishops of Rome, in a more vigorous condition. The semi-feudal semi-anarchical spirit, which one hundred and twenty years ago had made the heads of the Catholic religion fix their residence at Avignon, still continued. Order had in no way been restored by their return to the city of the Caesars. The authority of every one who had been put into the pontifical chair, since Gregory XI, had been disputed by an anti-pope. It was long since these states had had any chief to unite them in any bond of union, or inspire them with any common sentiment. The different parcels of territory into which they were separated, by mountains and by rivers, were at the mercy of any one who was strong enough to gain and to keep possession of them. The northern parts of the province of Romagna were always coveted, and often possessed, by the Visconti; its southern parts had fallen under the dominion of the monarchs of Naples; the cities in the fastnesses of the mountains, as well as those between the Apennines and the Adriatic, were ruled by their hereditary tyrants, or by upstart adventurers. In Tuscany, the republics of Sienna and Lucca still continued independent. Florence, indeed, enjoyed some degree of repose from internal dissensions under the rule of the Albizzi; but though she had conquered Pisa, she ceased not to covet possession of Lucca; and the Lucchese themselves were fully determined to maintain their independence. She was also frequently involved with her neighbouring subjects and allies. In the north, Nicholas, marquis of Este, by far the most respectable of the minor sovereigns of Italy, continued to rule over Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio. Besides him, several of the inferior potentates, whose independence had been almost annihilated by Gian Galeazzo Visconti, had begun to raise their diminished heads. The marquises of Montferrat on one side, and the family of Gonzaga at Mantua, regained their former position; the counts of Savoy were no longer obliged to confine themselves to their dominions north of the Alps; free scope was given to the ambition of the great party chiefs at Parma and Bologna. The Venetians still remained in possession of the territories between the Adriatic and Lake Garda; but they, as well as the aforesaid princes, had become alarmed at the ambition and the successes of Gian Galeazzo Visconti's second son, Filippo Maria.

The character which Dante has given of Guido Montefeltro

L'opere sue

Non furon leonine ma di volpe :

Gli accorgimenti e le coperte vie

Seppe tutte

may with justice be applied to this prince. His mode of working was not that of the lion, but the fox. This disposition, which he had in part inherited from his father, had been fostered and developed by his early fortune and education. Galeazzo had ordered his dominions and conquests to be divided between his two sons, Gian Maria and Filippo Maria. The former was to succeed to the title of Duke of Milan, along with all the territories between the Ticino and the Mincio; the latter, under the title of Count of Pavia, was to inherit all the possessions of his father beyond those rivers. As both were minors at the time of their parent's decease, it was arranged that the government should be intrusted to his widow, Catharine Visconti, till they should come to manhood. In consequence of the weakness and incapacity of the regent, the chief authority in the different provinces was usurped by the condottieri, who had earned their laurels in the armies of Galeazzo. Nothing recorded in history surpasses the cruelty of their rule, or the misery of their subjects. As the young princes advanced in years, these condottieri determined to rule over their lawful sovereigns as well as their dominions; and they often fought among themselves for the favours and patronage of the duke of Milan and the count of Pavia. Of these military tyrants the most ferocious, as well as the most successful, was Facino del Cane, the signor of Alessandria and Vercelli. By making himself master of the person and the states of Filippo Maria, and compelling the elder brother Gian Maria, to put him at the head of his councils, he became the virtual ruler of the whole heritage of the Visconti. But this state did not long

continue. By the assassination of Gian Maria, who was killed in a tumult, the ducal dignity devolved upon Filippo Maria; and by the death of Facino del Cane, who was carried off by disease, the young duke was freed from the tyranny to which his brother had been subject. Though he had till then been a prisoner in the castle of Pavia, he knew how to take the tide of fortune at its turn in his favour. Having been liberated from his confinement, he assumed a haughty tone towards some of his former oppressors, insinuated himself into the favours of the old adherents of Cane, and married his widow and heiress, Beatrice di Tenda. He had no sooner acquired the army and dominions of her late husband than he freed himself from the encumbrance of a wife twenty years older than himself, by putting her to death on a charge of adultery. Having thus made a victim of the person who had helped him to his dukedom, he turned his thoughts to regain and extend the conquests of his father; and he continued to follow this as his object during the whole of his eventful and chequered career.

Not only did the political state of Italy present a fair field of enterprise to Francesco, but the character of its rulers was such as to enhance the value of such services as he was able to perform. The sex of the sovereign of Naples, and the holy calling of the pontiff, made it unfit that they should put themselves at the head of their armies; a curious union of ambition and cowardice in Filippo Maria made the service of the condottieri indispensable to him; and though Florence had gloriously maintained her independence against Galeazzo Visconti, as well as against Ladislaus of Naples though her merchants were as princes, and her great men among the honoured of the earth, yet every spark of military virtue had been extinguished with the destruction of her nobility, and she, like the other states, was content to leave to hirelings the carrying out of her plans of conquest, or her defence. The Venetians and Genoese had confined themselves to the sea, till the custom of warring with mercenary troops had become general throughout Italy; and they probably would have continued to do so, had the carrying on war by land required that their citizens should serve as soldiers, and their chief men as generals. Most of the minor sovereigns of Italy had themselves taken to the profession of arms, and sought for glory and additional dominion in the same manner as young Francesco Sforza. The most remarkable hireling captains of the day, besides Sforza, were Carmagnola, Niccolo Piccinino and Niccolo Fortebraccio, (both pupils of Braccio da Montone), Jacobo Caldora, Michael Attendolo, the uncle of Sforza, besides the Malatesta, and several other feudatory lords of Romagna and barons of Rome. The year after the death of Sforza Attendolo, a war broke out in Italy, which caused the services of his son to be in requisition. Its origin was as follows : Filippo Maria, in pursuance of his object aforementioned, had made himself master of the country between the Adda, the Ticino, and the Alps, and subjugated the different tyrants who, during the minority of himself and his brother, had acquired dominion in the towns of Lower Lombardy. For these successes he had been in no small degree indebted to the talents of Carmagnola, who had attracted his notice when a common soldier, and been promoted to the chief command of his armies. He then turned his attention to Genoa, a city which, for some time past, had been unable to maintain a fixed government of its own. Though this attack upon the liberties of a neighbouring city was viewed with no small degree of distrust by the Florentine government, the duke gave signal proof of his address, by managing not only to lull their suspicions, but even to persuade them to sign a treaty of alliance with him, in which it was stipulated that they should not meddle in the affairs of Lombardy north of the Panara and the Magra, and that he was to abstain from attempting the conquest of any cities situated to the south of these two rivers. After Genoa had submitted to him in 1421, he made himself master of Domo d'Ossola and Belinzona; and having conquered the whole of the valley of the Levantine from the Swiss, he threatened the states on the Venetian frontier.

The Florentines soon became aware of the error they had committed in trusting the duke. The latter being now lord of all the territory between the heights of the St Gothard and the Gulf of Genoa on one side, and Piedmont and Romagna on the other, could not but seem formidable in the eyes of a people who were, above all things, anxious to preserve the balance of power in Italy. He had already violated the conditions of his treaty in assigning to the ex-doge of Genoa the city of Sarzana, which lay south of the Magra, and by entering into negotiations with the pope's legate at Bologna. But the immediate cause of their rupture was the duke's treacherous occupation of Forli, the infant prince of which had been committed to his guardianship. On hearing of this, the Florentine people, not without some opposition on the part of Giovanni de' Medici and others, openly declared war against him. Filippo, on his part, seeing the inutility of any

further disguise, proceeded to follow up his conquest by sending one of his generals, Agnolo da Pergola, to invest Imola. Having made himself master of that city, the victorious general proceeded to Zagonara, and compelled its tyrant to agree to a surrender within fifteen days, if, in the meantime, he was not succoured by the Florentines. The latter, with the view of saving the place, brought all their available forces under Charles Malatesta against the Milanese general, and attacked him with great promptitude under the walls of the city. But in their anxiety to avoid one disaster, they brought a much greater on their country. Fatigued as the soldiers were with their march of several hours through rain and mud, they were no match for the fresh troops of their adversaries, and, in consequence of their rashness, they sustained a complete defeat, and left their general and a large portion of their army in the hands of the enemy. In this battle, which seemed likely to be decisive of a contest between two of the greatest states in Italy, Machiavelli says that there perished only three men, two of whom had fallen from their horses and were suffocated in the mud.

At Florence the news of this defeat, fraught with danger as it was to its very existence as a state, caused the usual recriminations and exhortations which, in a city divided into parties, never fail to follow a national calamity. Giovanni de' Medici bade the people look upon his opponents as the cause of all these misfortunes; upbraided them with having listened to their counsels; asked them whether they thought their liberty would have been in greater jeopardy by remaining at peace with the duke than it was now; and reminded the war party of the magnificence of their promises, and the shortcomings of their performances. On the other hand, Rinaldo degli Albizzi, the head of the moderate aristocratical party, exhorted them to be of good cheer; reminded them that, though their misfortunes were great, they had steered the republic through a more dangerous crisis than this; and entreated them to show themselves worthy descendants of the fathers who had so successfully struggled to maintain the independence of their country and the liberties of Italy. Whatever opinion the citizens might have formed as to the prudence of having embarked in a contest with the duke, they were now as determined to make an effort to redeem their misfortunes as their enemy was to continue his career of aggrandisement and success.

Such was the posture of affairs when both the belligerent parties turned their eyes towards the promising son of Sforza Attendolo. Both sent ambassadors to make terms with him at Acqua Pendente. For a time the young soldier seemed uncertain which side he would join; and being anxious to gain leisure to consider, he listened with great courtesy to all, but would make promises to none. At last, however, he determined to enter into the service of the duke of Milan, for the following reasons. The Florentines, anxious to lose no time in making preparations, had already engaged Oddo, the son of Braccio da Montone, Niccolo Piccinino, the most promising of the pupils of the latter, and Carmagnola, the most successful general of the age, who, on account of some private pique, had quitted the duke's service. It was naturally much more tempting, to a young man of ambition and self-confidence, to seek opportunities of measuring himself with the first generals of the day, than to act either in conjunction with them or under their orders. The commander of the forces was likely to be a much greater man with the duke of Milan than with the republic of Florence. The extensive dominions of the former consisted of a number of cities and provinces united by no common bond of union, and likely enough, on some future occasion, to fall asunder, or to pass, as they had done after the death of Galeazzo Visconti, under the dominion of military adventurers. The latter presented a fairer field for the ambition of a powerful citizen, or a turbulent demagogue, than for that of a mercenary captain. If it was to fall under the dominion of a tyrant, that tyrant must be a native of the state. Add to this, as Sforza possessed extensive fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, it might be advisable for him to secure the good will of the queen; and she was much more likely to approve of his joining a sovereign who was at that time her nominal ally, and whose interests appeared little at variance with her own, than of his attaching himself to a state, part of whose territory had been conquered by her brother Ladislaus, which she might perhaps hope some future day to regain. Actuated, no doubt, by these considerations, in the summer of the year 1425 Francesco Sforza took service under the duke of Milan, with a body of 1500 cavalry, chiefly composed of old soldiers of his father.

The beginning of the campaign made by the young commander under his new master was not signalized by any brilliant action or decisive result. His first step was to lead the forces placed at his disposal

to Flaminia, to act in concert with Guido Torcelli, one of Philip's generals, against Niccolo Piccinino and the Florentines. Thence, after some indecisive manoeuvring, he betook himself to Milan, in conformity to the orders of the duke, who wished for an interview with him. On his arrival there, he was received by Philip with marked distinction, and loaded with many favours; and, judging from circumstances, he seems to have made as favourable an impression on him as he had done, when a boy, upon Ladislaus, king of Naples; for the duke, cold and reserved as he was to the majority of men, appeared to love and to prefer him to all others, and already to look upon him almost as a son. Every day he was more and more struck with his cleverness, his pleasing manners, and excellent mode of expressing himself, as well as with his advantages of person and the dignity of his carriage. He is said even then to have foretold his future eminence. During the whole of his stay at Milan he was honoured among the magnates of the land.

In the mean time the tide of adversity continued to press heavily on the Florentines. Their forces were opposed to those of the duke, both in the states of Genoa and Romagna; and in the course of the year 1425 they received no less than four defeats. In addition to this, Niccolo Piccinino, the general to whom they looked above all others as likely to deliver them from their distress, being anxious to found an empire for himself in the neighbourhood of Perugia, had deserted them. Shortly afterwards he passed over to the service of their enemy. But the Florentines of the middle ages, as well as the Romans of yore, might be compared to the oak, which, as it were, gathers fresh sap and vigour from the very axe by which it is hewn down: their continued misfortunes served only to convince them of the necessity of redoubled exertions; and they sent ambassadors both to Genoa and to Venice for the purpose of getting up a party against their formidable opponent. The first of these cities had long since lost all love for independence; its inhabitants cared but little to whom they were subject, provided they were allowed to continue their avocations or their amusements in peace; and the proposition of the Florentines in consequence found but little favour in their eyes. But in the second, which retained all its love of independence, they were the means of lighting a flame of war which burned for several years in the north of Italy. The fears and the hatred of the Venetians had already been excited by Francesco Carmagnola, and in him the Florentines found a ready abettor of their wishes. It is said that Philip, aware of the implacable enmity which this general bore him, and also of his military talents, which would render his enmity formidable, had a dose of poison administered to him by some of his agents, which, however, was not potent enough to produce the desired effect. The discovery of this plot served to dispel whatever doubts might have been entertained of the sincerity of the deserter, and to give a potent handle to the enemies of Philip.

On the 25th December 1425, the Venetian senate assembled for the purpose of deciding the all-important question of peace or war. Permission to speak was first given to the Florentine ambassador, who, having brought before them all the proofs he could collect of the ambitious designs of the duke, and the little reliance that could be placed on his promises, represented the danger with which every independent state in the peninsula would be threatened if his career was not checked while yet there was time. On the other hand, the ambassadors of Philip endeavoured to show that the war with the Florentines had been begun by themselves, and that it was the great wish of their master to live in peace and good-will with all. When both parties had spoken, Carmagnola, who, in addition to his reputation as a commander, had acquired the interest of a martyr, addressed the senate in a powerful speech. He descanted on the ambition and the cruelty of the man they were called upon to oppose, and gave weight to his arguments by an exposure of the tricks he had played with others, and the unscrupulous designs he still entertained all of which he had opportunities of knowing while in his service. Finally, he stirred up the passions of his audience by expatiating on the cruelties to which his own wife and children, then prisoners of the duke, were subjected. At the same time he assured them that, though his ambition was great, he had neither talents nor courage to carry out his plans if he were properly opposed. "Give me an army", he said in conclusion, "and I will soon bring this unprincipled and dangerous man to his senses". The doge Andreas Foscari threw his whole weight into the scale, already turned against the duke; and the result was, that the two republics signed a treaty of alliance offensive and defensive against him. This confederation was afterwards joined by many potentates and princes who, in consequence of his ambition, had lost, or were already trembling for, their dominions. The principal of these were the marquises of Ferrara, Mantua, and Montferrat, and the duke of Savoy. They were also supported by Alphonso of Aragon, the ex-king of Naples. Francesco

Carmagnola undertook the command of the forces designed to lower the man whom his valour had assisted to raise.

The campaign was opened by a successful attempt on the part of Carmagnola to take the city of Brescia by surprise. That city is situated between Verona and Milan; and as it commanded the line of communication between the headquarters of Philip and the territories which were coveted both by him and his enemies, its possession must have been important to both parties alike. Though it had for some time past belonged to the lords of Milan, there existed within it a formidable remnant of the old Guelf party, opposed by traditionary recollections to the Visconti, and friendly to the Florentines. By the assistance of this party, Carmagnola was introduced into the city on the night of the 16th of March 1426. The citadel, however, along with the adjacent part of the suburb, remained faithful to the Milanese. The duke and Francesco Sforza were as well aware of the importance of this place as was their adversary; and so anxious were they to regain what they had lost that the latter arrived before the citadel, along with all the forces that had been scattered through the Milanese, within three days after the revolt of the inhabitants. Here, with the assistance of the garrison, he managed to give considerable annoyance to his enemies; but as the armies of his master were scattered far and wide through his extensive dominions and conquests, and as their lines of communication had been intercepted by an artifice, by which the marquis of Ferrara had managed to swell the water of the Panara, he was no match for the forces which his enemy was able to bring against him on the spot. After having infused an addition of strength into the garrison, he retreated from the city by night, before the Venetian general was able to attack. The latter pursued him with a great part of his army. As Carmagnola's available forces were weakened, from his having been obliged to leave a considerable number behind him to protect the town and its inhabitants from the Milanese garrison in the citadel, Sforza, as soon as he had arrived at an advantageous situation, determined on offering him battle. An engagement took place, in which neither party could claim the honour of having gained any advantage; but to one who is anxious to gain time, an indecisive encounter is often attended with profit; and as Francesco Sforza managed thereby to infuse strength into the garrison, to impart confidence to his friends at Brescia, and to concentrate his own forces at Montechiaro, within nine miles of the enemy, there to keep watch over his movements till his own reinforcements should arrive, its results must be regarded as reflecting great credit on the enterprise and the sagacity of the young general.

Late in the season the Milanese reinforcements arrived, under Piccinino and some of the best captains of the age. It seemed now as if nothing could prevent the execution of Sforza's plans for the relief of Brescia. But, unfortunately, among all the generals there was no one commander-in-chief; and the result of this campaign, so well planned by him, was merely destined to show the disadvantage of a multiplicity of counsellors in war. On the one side was Carmagnola, sole general of the forces; on the other were a number of condottieri, all equal in rank all, except Niccolo Piccinino, jealous of the rising fortunes of him who had begun the campaign, and almost preferring to suffer defeat themselves to adding aught to his glory. The result of this was as might be expected. While the Milanese generals disputed among themselves, their enemy made steady progress with the siege, and in the course of time received reinforcements from the Florentines. It was in vain that Francesco Sforza pointed out several opportunities of attacking them to advantage in the whole camp he found but one to back him : the rest carried their jealousy so far that they tried, though fruitlessly, to undermine him in the confidence of the duke. At length the garrison, giving up all hope of assistance, surrendered to Carmagnola, and the Venetians remained masters of the most important city between the confines of the disputed territory of Verona and Milan.

The result of the first year of the war was so mortifying to Philip that he for some time lent a not unwilling ear to the pacific propositions of Pope Martin, and, according to some, had even consented, among other things, to allow the Venetians the undisputed possession of the territory of Brescia. But this last condition was too galling to the spirit of the man who had aspired to the dominion of the whole peninsula, and too mortifying to the national pride of the Milanese, for either to abide by it. Whether Philip ever signed a treaty to that effect or not, it is certain that, in the beginning of the year 1427, he prepared to follow up the war with greater vigour than ever against the Lion of St Mark.

In this campaign the Venetians first made use of the naval skill they had acquired in the Adriatic and the Levant to annoy their inland enemies. The Po, styled by the Latin poet the king of rivers, extending from beyond Turin to the Adriatic, watered their richest cities and fairest provinces, and by means of subsidiary streams opened a communication into the very heart of the Milanese. Its broad waters afforded the Venetians an opportunity of attacking their enemies on an element which they still conceived to be their own. Accordingly, on hearing of the warlike intentions of the duke, they lost no time in preparing a fleet, which in the spring of the year they sent up the river, with directions to cooperate with Carmagnola. The fleet ascended as far as Cremona, where they found several ships belonging to the duke. Of these they took four, and so impressed their enemies with an idea of their superiority by water that they caused them to retreat to Pavia, leaving behind them several of their finest vessels.

In the meantime Carmagnola had advanced from his winter quarters at Mantua, crossed the Po, and had begun to lay waste the territory adjoining Cremona. Philip and his generals had opened the campaign by an attempt to regain Brescia; but however desirable the acquisition of this place might appear to the duke, he ordered it to be abandoned for the defence of the Cremonese. Having arrived with a considerable force within a mile of the Venetian camp, he gave directions to his generals to attack to advantage if possible, but on no account to risk the loss of the army. Though they were inferior in numbers to their enemies, the captains were inspired by the hope of performing something brilliant in the presence of their sovereign, and acquiring a proportionate reward; they advanced to attack, and found their enemies strongly fortified by their baggage-waggons, with a trench in the front. On beholding this impediment, the elder and more experienced of the captains counselled the others to desist; but their younger and more sanguine brothers in arms would not hear of retreat after they had advanced so far. Francesco Sforza, like his father, preferring to run the risk of being beaten to being forced to turn, was the first to pass the line of intrenchments : he was followed by several others; the battle commenced, and was carried on with great vigour by both parties, till they were separated by night. In the course of the engagement, both Carmagnola and Francesco Sforza were almost taken prisoners. The horse of the former having fallen under him in the place where the engagement was hottest, he was immediately surrounded by both friends and foes, and with great difficulty saved : the latter was lingering within the entrenched position of the enemy, after his men had retreated, and found himself encircled by the soldiers of the opposite party; but the dimness of the light, and the clouds of dust, which, in the words of Corio, a Milanese historian, were so thick that everything appeared in a mist, and none, however near, could be distinguished except by voice, prevented him being recognized. This drawn battle was followed by some unimportant operations : the fortress of Bina was retaken by the Milanese, and again fell into the hands of the Venetians; and, after some further manoeuvring, the hostile armies found themselves within four miles of one another at Macalo.

Philip having, by this time, experienced the evils of a multiplicity of rulers in his camp, determined to elect a commander-in-chief; but unfortunately on this occasion he did not display his usual sagacity, and Charles Malatesta, the object of his selection, turned out to be a man of no ability whatever. A few days before their arrival at Macalo, a certain foot-soldier of Sforza's, by name Nardo Torquato, had challenged one of the enemies to single combat. While at the above place, it was suggested by Carmagnola, and consented to by Malatesta, that they should be allowed to gratify their wishes. Accordingly, it was arranged that the combat should take place on the 11th of October. When the day came, a large number of the Milanese soldiers went out of the camp as spectators, and the majority of those that remained, thinking that, for the present, they were safe from molestation, had laid aside their arms. Francesco Sforza alone suspected some treachery on the part of Carmagnola, and entreated the commander-in-chief to have all his men in readiness. But his advice was as vain as Cassandra's; only Niccolo Piccinino and one other captain agreed with him; the remainder, including the Commander-in-chief, heeded him not. Carmagnola had secretly given orders that his men should be kept under arms; and as soon as he was well assured of the unguarded state of his adversary, he attacked him. The troops of Sforza and Piccinino alone were prepared to receive him; and though a large portion of the others, including Charles Malatesta, were made prisoners, the effectual resistance offered by these two generals allowed time for some of their less prudent allies to make good their retreat.

The result of this battle, though it served to show the sagacity of Sforza, was highly disastrous to the duke. He endeavoured by his diplomacy to retrieve the ground that Malatesta had lost by his simplicity. His first step was to send ambassadors to the Emperor Sigismund to implore his assistance. But a temporary respite was, above all things, necessary for him; and in order to obtain this, as he never regarded the terms of any treaty longer than suited his convenience, he did not hesitate to make considerable sacrifices. For this purpose he entreated Pope Martin to arrange the terms of a peace, to obtain which he agreed to yield to the Venetians the town and territory of Bergamos, and that of Vercelli to the duke of Savoy. And having, at the same time, married the daughter of the latter, he managed, by his alliances and his concessions, to dissolve the formidable confederacy that seemed likely to threaten his very existence as a monarch.

CHAPTER IX

FAILURE OF FRANCESCO SFORZA IN AN EXPEDITION AGAINST GENOA.

BEFORE the peace was concluded, Francesco Sforza had been sent by Philip to the relief of Genoa, which was sore pressed by Alphonso of Aragon from the sea, and by Thomas Fregoso, the ex-doge, with a large party of exiles, by land. But in the conduct of this expedition he did not show his usual prudence : in crossing the ridge of mountains which separates Liguria from the plains in the north-east of Italy, he was attacked by a large body of the mountaineers, whom he had hitherto believed, or professed to believe, well-wishers to his cause; and in the midst of the defiles his army was sore pressed by the showers of stones, arrows, and javelins, which came upon them from all sides thick as a hailstorm in the Alps. The regular troops of the condottiere were no match for the mountaineers at this sort of fighting. Many were killed; and the greater part of the army must have been lost, if they had not been saved by the friendly offices of Eliana Spinola, a lady of rank in the neighbouring city of Villa Ronca. On hearing of the danger of the Milanese army, she afforded them a refuge within her walls; and she afterwards arranged with the Genoese that they should be allowed to retire without molestation.

The circumstance that a general like Sforza should allow himself to be surprised in the manner described, and then find such a convenient way to escape, is not free from suspicion; and his enemies availed themselves of the occasion to accuse him of treachery to the duke. On his return he was ordered to take up his winter quarters at Mortara, where he remained for some time in disgrace. There is no clear evidence whether he continued after this in the duke's service or not, but it is certain that for two years at least he did not receive any pay from him. All this time his officers and soldiers remained with him with a wonderful constancy. The Florentines and Venetians also made repeated offers to him; but, either from a sense of duty or interest, he preferred remaining in his present disagreeable situation to joining those who might soon become the enemies of the duke. In the course of the year 1430 Philip again took him into favour, and it is said became convinced of his innocence. If this last fact be true, it affords no small presumption in his favour. But in reviewing the history of these times, when everything was a combination of tricks, intrigues, and treachery, it is impossible to form a right estimate of the motives of a man's conduct on any one occasion : the condottiere might have brought his army into a scrape with the connivance of his sovereign, or the sovereign might have been convinced of his treachery, and yet determine on turning his talents to account; or he might still prefer him to others, his equals in treachery, and inferiors in ability.

The subdivision of the country into such a number of minor principalities, and the restless spirit of the people, rendered the long duration of peace an impossibility. The Florentines, who were as anxious to destroy the independence of neighbouring states as they were jealous of their own, were the first to rekindle the flames of discord. An attempt to extend to their allies the *catasto*, a species of income-tax, which the expenses of the war had rendered necessary, caused an insurrection among several of them. A partial success which they gained at Volterra, a city which had shown itself foremost in opposition to the new

impost, so whetted their ambition that they determined on hazarding another effort to make themselves masters of Lucca. That city was then under the dominion of one Paul Guinigi, and was perhaps enjoying a greater degree of prosperity than it had done at any time since the halcyon time of Castracani. Niccolo Fortebraccio, the nephew of the great Braccio da Montone, was then in the pay of the Florentines; and they, for the purpose of making experiment of the possibility of their project, persuaded him to invade the territory of the Lucchese, as it were, on his own account, after the manner of the predatory bands of Duke Werner and Fra Moreale. Not long afterwards they threw off all disguise, and openly declared war against the Lucchese. Paul Guinigi sent ambassadors to Philip for assistance; and he, though bound by treaty not to pass the river Magra, could not bear the idea of seeing a city of such importance pass into the hands of the hereditary enemies of the house of Visconti. For this purpose he persuaded Francesco Sforza to go to the assistance of the Lucchese, much in the same manner that Fortebraccio had in the preceding year invaded their territory. The latter retired on his approach. Mutual suspicions, however fomented, it is said, by the Florentines had grown up between Paul and the Lucchese; the latter delivered their tyrant a prisoner to Sforza, who had joined them either because he believed the report that the former was about to sell the city to the Florentines, or because he would not give him all the money he wanted. At the same time, they are said to have offered the signory of their city to Sforza himself. This, however, he had the prudence or the patriotism to decline; and after he had sent Guinigi and his sons in bonds to the duke of Milan, he continued to prosecute his conquests in the vicinity of Lucca. The Florentines, knowing that with mercenary soldiers corruption often avails more than force, promised to Sforza a considerable sum of money if he would, within a given time, take his departure, which he consented to do. To give an appearance of honesty to the transaction, he received the money as the arrears of his father's pension, and pretended that he could not find supplies for his army. At the same time, he said that he was not bound by any further engagement with the duke. But though repeatedly solicited, he refused to enter into the service of the Florentines, and merely promised not to bear arms against them for three months.

The Florentines were again disappointed in their expectations of remaining undisturbed masters of the coveted territory; the duke was still as determined as ever that it should not fall into their hands, and for that purpose he sent thither Niccolo Piccinino in the same manner as he had previously sent Francesco Sforza. Piccinino executed his task with less intrigue than his brother in arms, and he completely defeated the forces of the Florentines on the Serchio. The duke, elated with the success of his general, endeavoured to get up a league with the Lucchese and the Siennese against the Florentines; and the latter, on their part, determined to form another treaty with the Venetians against him. Thus, in little more than four years after the last peace, the flames of war were rekindled throughout the north of Italy.

Each commencement of hostilities was, of course, an important epoch in the life of one whose home was the camp, and whose element was war; and to Sforza, who was above all things desirous of reigning, it was evident that much of his future fortune might depend on the part which he decided to take. He was, as before, sought after by both parties alike. His conduct in the affair with the Lucchese, which at other times, and with other people, would, at the least, have been very questionable, seemed then to have cast no slur upon the character of one of his profession. Neither that nor his doubtful fidelity in the expedition against Genoa caused his former employer to set less value on his services. And he, too, for the same, and even still more cogent, reasons than those which had formerly weighed with him, determined on fighting for the duke. Philip had now been married four years to the daughter of the duke of Savoy; he had no issue : his natural daughter, Bianca Maria, was generally looked upon as his heir. It is true that in those times he might have put himself at liberty to form another connection by murder or divorce, and he had already shown that he was not very scrupulous in such matters; but the impolicy of breaking with the duke of Savoy would prevent his behaving towards his present wife as he had done towards a friendless woman. The prospect of succeeding to the glorious heritage of the Visconti might well dazzle the son of Gian Attendolo; and in holding this out to Francesco Sforza as the reward of his services, Philip showed that he knew well the character of the man with whom he had to deal. It is probable, also, that other reasons, in addition to the desire of retaining the ablest general of the day, weighed with him on this occasion. The prospect of a line of heirs is gratifying to most men who have anything to leave, and often strengthens their position. The ambition of the duke, and his uncertain title to a great part of his dominions, rendered the

latter an object of great importance with him. The military abilities and the address of Francesco Sforza qualified him above all others to make up for anything that might seem deficient in the title of his natural daughter; and whatever side future circumstances might induce him to take, the prospect of this heritage would be a check upon his conduct. Actuated, no doubt, by these considerations, the duke received Francesco Sforza with the greatest possible distinction, promised him the hand of the heiress, honoured him with the title of his adopted son, made him count of four cities, and gave him a standard with the emblem of the Visconti.

On the commencement of the war in 1431, the Venetians beheld their party in Italy strengthened by the elevation of one of their countrymen, under the title of Eugenius IV, to the papal chair. In addition to this, their spirits were in no small degree elated by their recollection of the former victories of Carmagnola, and the boastful anticipations in which he, unaware of the tragic fate in store for him, indulged. The campaign was opened by a smart skirmish between him and Francesco Sforza, near Soncino, in which the latter took five hundred horsemen prisoners. Piqued at this partial success of their adversaries, the Venetians ordered their general to advance into the territory of Cremona, there to act in concert with Niccolo of Trevigi, the commander of their armament. The beginning of this movement was attended with a partial success : the Venetians had taken six galleys of the Milanese, and struck terror into the whole of their fleet, when the arrival of Francesco Sforza and Niccolo Piccinino restored some degree of confidence. The former had sent into the Venetian camp two spies, who, feigning to be deserters, spread false intelligence therein; in consequence of which Carmagnola had taken a position considerably north of the Po, where he was expecting his enemies to attack him, while they were in reality on the southern bank of the river, taking part in the engagement. Pachino Eustachio, the Milanese admiral, managed, with great dexterity, to bring his adversaries in contact with the bank, close to the place where his friends were stationed; the heavy-armed troops of Sforza dismounted and boarded their galleys; and the unprotected sailors of the Venetians, being unable to contend with the steel-clad and almost invulnerable soldiers, were all slaughtered or made prisoners. When the battle was nearly over, Carmagnola, having discovered his error, arrived at the north bank of the Po, close to the scene of action; but his presence was of no avail : his heavy cavalry could take no part in the action on the opposite side of the river, and he was doomed to witness, without in any way being able to relieve, the losses of his friends. The general result of the action was, that the Milanese took twenty-eight galleys, along with all the arms, stores, and about eight thousand prisoners of the Venetians, and destroyed the rest of their fleet.

Nor was Carmagnola more fortunate, or Sforza less so, in the conclusion of the campaign. On the 15th of October, a small party of the soldiers of the former attacked and took the fortress of San Luca, in the town of Cremona. It was generally supposed that, if he had followed up this partial success, he must have made himself master of the whole town; but though his friends continued for two days in the citadel, he declined doing so, alleging that he was fearful of some ambush on the part of the enemy. While he was there doing nothing, Francesco Sforza was crowning the victories that he had already gained in the east of Lombardy, by further successes in the west. At the instigation of Philip, he invaded the territories of the marquis of Montferrat, and took all the principal fortresses in his dominions among others, the castle of San Enasio, the ordinary place of his residence. The marquis, in despair, fled across the Alps, into Germany, and betook himself to Vienna. He was, however, shortly afterwards reinstated by the mediation of the duke of Savoy and the Emperor Sigismund, the latter of whom about this time came to Milan, and went through the ceremony of having the crown of iron placed upon his head. But the duke of Milan, for some reason or other, refused to see him. The fruits which the rival captains reaped from the campaign were exactly in proportion to their successes : Francesco Sforza, after a splendid succession of victories, returned to Milan, and was there, at the age of thirty-three years, declared the betrothed husband of the heiress, then only seven years old. But a sad fate awaited Carmagnola. The Venetians, always too ready to control and to cripple the movements of their generals, did not hesitate to impute to them the blame of any disaster. The haughty temper of Carmagnola had already raised him many enemies at Venice, to whom his extraordinary want of success afforded an opportunity of accusing him of treachery. The Council of Ten lent a ready ear to these insinuations; but, not daring to quarrel with him while at the head of an army, they requested him to come to them to take measures for the future. During the whole of his journey he was received with every mark

of distinction; but on his arrival at the city of Venice he was thrown into prison, and tortured till he confessed himself guilty of all that was laid to his charge. After the council had satisfied themselves with this proof of his crimes, he was brought into the Place of St Mark, his mouth gagged, lest his tale of woe might excite the people, and there beheaded between two columns. Though it may appear strange that such an experienced and able general should have allowed himself to be deceived by a man so much his junior as Sforza, and afterwards neglect a favourable opportunity of taking Cremona, it is certain that no proofs of his guilt have descended to posterity, and the proceedings of his adversaries lead us to infer that none such existed at the time of his execution. But neither innocence nor virtue could shield anyone who, either on public or private grounds, had incurred the enmity of the terrible and mysterious Council of Ten.

Before the end of the year Sforza had a narrow escape from suffering the same fate as his unfortunate adversary. The continued insinuations of his enemies had begun to make some impression on the mind of the duke, and he sent for him to Cremona, authorizing his messengers, if required, to bring him there by force. It was arranged, as was said, to despatch him on his arrival at Milan. His friends had been informed of these reports, and entreated him not to put himself in the duke's power; but he, relying either on his innocency or his address, determined on going to Milan and clearing himself before his accusers. His good fortune carried him through this, as through all emergencies; and the duke, when satisfied of his conduct and intentions, is reported thus to have addressed him :

“My son, you have given an example of the truth of a proverb that has now become trite. It is said that one person may be so often told by everybody that he has no nose, that he will distrust himself, and put his hand to feel, as if in doubt whether he really had one or not. Thus, though we have never really doubted of your fidelity, courtesy, and the sincerity of your intentions, we merely put you on your trial that we might be able to reply to the insinuations of your enemies. We have acted in this manner, that others might be as well acquainted with your innocency and virtue as we are”.

CHAPTER X.

WAR IN THE STATES OF THE CHURCH. BANISHMENT AND RETURN OF COSMO DE MEDICI.

EIGHT years had now elapsed since Francesco Sforza had succeeded to be the chief of the school of arms that had been founded by his father. In this period he had shown himself fully competent to sustain the reputation of his name. In his first campaigns in Lombardy he had been often thwarted by the jealousy, or clogged by the incompetency, of his confederates; and he had at times been obliged to act contrary to his own judgment, in deference to that of senior generals. But success had invariably attended him when he acted alone; and whatever disaster befell the army in which he had a command might generally be traced to the neglect of his advice. Of this no one was better aware than the duke of Milan. His failure in the expedition to Genoa was more than compensated by his brilliant successes in the campaign of 1432. From that time he cannot be said to have ranked any longer among the ordinary condottieri of the age. He contested the palm of military superiority with Niccolo Piccinino, the head of the Braccian school of arms, who was at least twenty years older than himself. In astuteness and address he had shown that he was inferior to none. He had already formed a sort of matrimonial engagement with one who might be the heiress of the most powerful sovereign in Italy; and though he had no dominions but the fiefs he had inherited from his father, he began now to take a part in the politics of the peninsula which was more like that of an independent prince than a hireling commander.

His engagements in Lombardy had hitherto allowed him but little time for looking after his paternal inheritances. To these, after the pacification of the north, and his betrothal to the heiress of Milan, he began to turn his attention. But while he was on his way to Apulia for this purpose, an opportunity of making a large addition to his dominions presented itself, which he did not fail to turn to account. The inhabitants of the March of Ancona implored his assistance against the pope's legate, Vitellius, by whom they were cruelly oppressed. This he readily promised to give; but, as the strong ally generally enslaves the weak who claims his protection, it need hardly be said that he took measures to make himself master of that province in the place of Vitellius. In twenty-three days he had overrun the whole of the territory, and taken all the cities therein except Camerino thus almost following the example of the man who described his own career in three Latin dissyllables. In this expedition he received no small assistance from his kinsman, Michael Attendolo, by whom he had been joined. All this time there is no doubt but that he was certainly acting with the approbation, if he was not positively following the advice, of the duke of Milan. It cannot but be a matter of regret that, forgetful of the example of his parent, he abandoned all the cities that he took to the plunder of the soldiers.

Pope Eugenius was in no small degree startled at beholding Sforza forming a principality in the heart of the dominion that he claimed as his own. But, at the same time, he was pressed by still greater troubles. A general council, which shortly before had assembled at Basle, refused to acknowledge the rights of the bishops of Rome either to their supremacy over the church or to their territorial possessions; and Fortebraccio and other condottieri of the duke of Milan had, with the sanction of their master, availed

themselves of the decisions of this council as a pretext for invading his dominions. Deeming it advisable, , under these circumstances, to conciliate the man whom he was least able to oppose, he created Sforza marquis of Ancona, and standard-bearer of the church, on condition of his expelling the other condottieri from his dominions. Thus the former not only obtained a legal title to his own conquests, but he was also honoured with a dignity which rendered his station much higher than that of any of his rivals in arms. But his rising fortunes soon provoked the envy of those who had formerly been his friends; Piccinino asserted a claim to some of the cities which he had subjugated; and it was thought that the duke of Milan, disappointed at his not having made over to him the province of Ancona, and jealous of his increasing power, stirred up enemies against him. The result was, that, about the middle of the year 1434, a war broke out in the States of the Church, between Francesco Sforza on one side, and Niccolo Piccinino and Fortebraccio on the other. Though these generals had no other object but their own aggrandizement in view, the former pretended to be acting under the authority of Eugenius, the two latter under that of the council of Basle.

The campaign was commenced by an attack by Sforza's generals on Fortebraccio, near Tivoli, in which the latter had the worst. This slight disaster, however, was soon repaired by the timely arrival of Piccinino, with whom he continued for some time to lay waste the territory in the immediate vicinity of Rome. In the meantime, a strong party was being formed against the pope within the walls of the Eternal City. On the 29th of May, a large body of the people went to him, and, after complaining bitterly of the loss of property entailed on them by his policy, demanded that he should entrust to them the temporary management of affairs. To add force to their entreaties, they besieged him in his palace. He, however, managed to escape in disguise down the Tiber; and, though recognized, he made his way out to sea in a small boat, amidst a shower of javelins and stones. He afterwards landed at Leghorn, and betook himself to Florence.

Sforza, however, whose fortunes were now for the present bound up with the pope, determined to lose no time in striking a vigorous blow at his adversaries. The duke of Milan, anxious above all things for the success of the pope's enemies, and well knowing the abilities of his son-in-law, sent ambassadors to expostulate with him; but he for a time paid no attention to their representations. They, however, relying on his connection with their master, persevered in soliciting him, even after he had taken the field; and he, on one occasion, after he had given orders to his kinsman, Michael Attendolo, to commence the attack, replied that, if they could now stop his troops, he would endeavour to effect an accommodation. It was his opinion that, before this message could be given to his soldiers, they would be actually engaged with the enemy. Accordingly, a trumpeter was sent forward with orders to sound a halt if the battle had not actually commenced; and he found the Sfortian army just emerging from a valley which lay between the camps of Michael Attendolo and Fortebraccio, the traversing of which had occupied a longer time than Sforza had expected. The signal for the halt was given just as they arrived in front of Fortebraccio's position. The soldiers of the latter, ignorant of what was going on in the hostile camp, were terrified when they saw the number of their enemies, which appeared infinitely greater when they were drawn up in their immediate vicinity than while they were on march; they were consequently seized with a panic, and, abandoning their camp, with all its stores and baggage, they fled in all directions. Sforza was, however, prevented, by the intervention of the ambassadors, from following up his success; and the disputants soon after came to an agreement, by which Piccinino and Fortebraccio bound themselves not to interfere in the affairs of Rome.

This treaty, however, only served to transfer the seat of the war into the more distant part of the Territory of the Church. Sforza, anxious to extend the limits of his own dominions, continued to take several cities in the name of the pope; and the two other generals did not think themselves bound by treaty to abstain from opposing the standard-bearer of the church in his own career of aggrandizement and conquest. The details of the campaign are uninteresting, and it was not attended with any decisive result. Sforza was prevented by a severe attack of fever from bringing all his talents into play; while the skill of his uncle, Michael Attendolo, and of his brother, Leo, prevented his adversaries from gaining any important advantage.

While these things were going on in the States of the Church, there appeared in Romagna a fresh source of discord, which gave rise once more to a general war. The populace of Imola rebelled against the pope, and availed themselves of the assistance of the Milanese soldiers to obtain their independence. At the same time the faction of the Canedola, a powerful family at Bologna, had expelled thence the pontifical governor, and brought into the city two hundred of the cavalry of the duke. Eugenius, who was still at Florence, used all his influence with the inhabitants of that city, as also with his countrymen, the Venetians, to repel this fresh act of aggression on the part of Filippo Maria. At first these republics merely remonstrated with the duke against his violation of the last treaty; but when they saw that he was determined to retain possession of these two cities, and that he had sent Nicolo Piccinino to Imola, they did not hesitate to send assistance to the partisans of the pope. As Francesco Sforza, however, was still oppressed by illness, they had no captain capable of opposing Piccinino, and they were soon out-generalled and defeated by him. His success was the cause of a third coalition being formed against Philip. But, in the mean time, events specially deserving of notice had taken place in Florence.

From the time of the expulsion of the extreme democratic party from that city, the government had continued in the hands of the moderate aristocracy; and under them she had enjoyed a degree of internal tranquillity which perhaps had been unknown to her since the unfortunate disputes of the Buondelmonti. This party had been successively headed by Maso degli Albizzi, Nicolo d'Uzzano, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi. In the course of time, many of those who had been obliged to leave the city in the dark days of its discord were allowed to return. About the year 1420, Giovanni de' Medici, the descendant of Salvestro de' Medici, who had shown such moderation as the leader of the democratical party, was possessed of considerable wealth, and universally esteemed for his integrity. Of his general character, Machiavelli speaks in the following terms : "He loved everybody; he spoke well of good men, and pitied the bad. Though he never sought honours, they always accrued to him. He loved peace, and avoided war; he relieved men in their adversity, and helped them on in their prosperity. He was averse to public spoliation, and always had the general good in view. In office he was always gracious in his address, but more remarkable for his prudence than his eloquence. At his death he was rich in treasure, but still more wealthy in the good-will of all". His refusal to join Albizzi and Uzzano, in an attempt to monopolize the chief honours of the state, gained him additional popularity. He left behind him two sons, Lorenzo and Cosmo, whom he is reported thus to have addressed on his deathbed : "I die contented, in that I leave you rich in health, and of a standing that, if you follow my footsteps, you may live in Florence with honour, and with the good-will of all. Nothing adds to my happiness so much as the consciousness of never having offended any; on the contrary, whenever I had an opportunity, I have always done good to everybody. With respect to public honours, if you wish to enjoy security, take of them as much as the laws of your country and your fellow-citizens allow; then you will never bring on yourself unpopularity, or run into danger. By acting in this manner, while I lived among so many enemies, and amidst the prevalence of such differences of opinion, I have not only maintained, but also augmented, my reputation".

The influence and the popularity of Cosmo increased so much after the death of Giovanni, that those who had rejoiced at this event, as freeing the state from too powerful a citizen, began to wish the father back in place of the son. After the death of Nicolo di Uzzano, the jealousy of the contending parties was left without any restraint, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi soon saw that Florence could not hold both him and Cosmo de' Medici. For the purpose of getting rid of his rival, he urged all the citizens, who ever hoped themselves to attain a high position in the state, to take arms to free the country from one who, availing himself of the evil intentions of a few, and the ignorance of the many, would be sure to enslave it. By dint of activity and intrigue, he managed to get one Bernardo Guadagni, a person most attached to himself, and jealous of Cosmo, appointed to the office of gonfaloniere. One of the first acts of the latter was to summon Cosmo de' Medici before the Signoria. That great citizen, though warned of his danger by several of his friends, obeyed the mandate of the chief magistrate, and as soon as he arrived in the palace was surrounded by armed men and cast into prison. After the perpetration of this act of violence, there was no small contention among the leaders of the dominant faction as to whether they were to kill or to banish the man whom they all hated and feared : those who were of the one opinion urging strongly, that, "if you lay hands on great men at all, you must utterly destroy them"; the others counselling them to avoid bloodshed if

possible, and warning them of the risk that they ran of bringing on themselves, by such a sanguinary act, the vengeance of a populace of whom Cosmo was the idol. He himself seemed to be of opinion that his adversaries would not be very scrupulous as to the means they might employ of getting rid of him, and, for fear of being poisoned, refused for four days to taste the food that was supplied to him in his confinement. On the fifth day, however, Frederic Malavolti, the person to whose care he had been committed, declared, in the most solemn manner, that no such treachery was intended, and, to prove the truth of his words, promised to take his meals with him for the future. In order further to mitigate the rigours of captivity, he one day invited one of the friends of his prisoner to sup with them. At the request of the latter, he allowed them to be alone together; and Cosmo, profiting by the occasion, gave his friend an order for eleven hundred ducats, of which he requested him to accept one hundred for himself, and to give the other thousand to the gonfaloniere. The metal, which has been celebrated for making its way through guards, and destroying barriers of stone, touched the heart of the latter, and in spite of all the influence of Rinaldo, and others who wished for the death of Cosmo, the result of the deliberations about him were that he was banished to Padua. On hearing his sentence, he professed the same resignation to the will of the governors of his country as did the noble Englishman who said that it would be his comfort that “the same sun that warmed his sovereign should shine on him”. On his departure from Florence, he was, by his own request, attended by an escort, to save him from any attack that might be made on him. Every mark of attention was shown to him by the cities through which he passed on his route to Padua ; and on his arrival there, he was received with the greatest honour by the Venetians.

The great and pompous letter that came from Caprese, for the execution of Sejanus, did not cause more distrust and fear at Rome than was produced by the banishment of the great Cosmo from Florence. Fear, and a sense of insecurity, came upon all alike, both those who had the upper hand and those who had been obliged to give way. Now that the illustrious exile had departed, the apprehensions excited by his power were forgotten by all but the leaders of the government party; the recollection of the good that he had done lived after him. The poor missed his charities, the populace his largesses; the tradesmen complained of the absence of their best customer; and Cosmo, being even while in exile possessed of the weapon which overthrows governments and drives men from their homes, knew how to turn all these dispositions to his advantage. Thus his party was strengthened by the power of his wealth, by the memory of his former reputation, by the expectation of his return. This state of public feeling was not unperceived by Albizzi, who, despairing of salvation by any other means, determined on making one more effort to monopolize the chief offices for his own party. The populace were thoroughly roused by what they deemed an attempt to infringe upon their liberties : they rose in arms, and completely overpowered their rulers. It is needless to remark that the friends of Cosmo de' Medici profited by these events. The Medici had for generations past been the nominal heads of the extreme democratical party, and their wealth and their munificence had made them special favourites with the lower class of the populace. The Signoria passed a decree recalling Cosmo, and banishing Rinaldo degli Albizzi, with such a number of others that, in the words of Machiavelli, there was scarcely a state in Italy to which some of them were not sent, and many of these were quite crowded with them.

On the 23d of October 1434, Cosmo de' Medici reentered Florence. Never was a conqueror, on his arrival home after a triumph, received with greater demonstration of popularity; by every one he was saluted as father of his country and benefactor of his fellow-citizens. Thus, after so many changes of government, did Florence fall under the rule of a powerful citizen, whose descendants were destined to be its dukes. These events had just taken place when the new coalition already alluded to was formed against Philip.

On this occasion, as before, Francesco Sforza was sought after by all the belligerents. There were, however, reasons arising from his altered circumstances that induced him to join a different party from what he had formerly done. He was now in possession of several cities and a considerable strip of territory in the provinces of Umbria and Ancona, and had laid the foundation of what he hoped might be an independent principality on the coast of the Adriatic. Though he had acquired these cities by arms, he held them by a title which had been granted him by the pope, and he was not yet sufficiently confirmed in his possessions to dispense with this advantage. Moreover, as gonfaloniere of the church, and generalissimo of

Pope Eugenius's forces, he might have opportunities of strengthening and extending his dominions. As Eugenius was the prime mover of the league against Philip, it would have been very inexpedient in Sforza to have joined the party to which he was opposed. It is true that Philip's natural daughter had been betrothed to him, and he had been declared his adopted son and the heir of the duchy of Milan, but he naturally preferred, to the uncertain reversion even of this splendid heritage, the more certain prospects of establishing a kingdom, the foundations of which had already been laid. Moreover, the duke had previously engaged, and had begun to show a decided preference for, Nicolo Piccinino; and Sforza's dislike and jealousy of that captain rendered it impossible that he could cordially co-operate with him. And as Bianca Maria had already been betrothed to him, and could not veil be given to another, he was not without hopes that he might still retain the advantage which that connection had seemed to hold out to him.

The events of the campaign of 1434 were principally confined to the place in which it had begun the Territories of the Church. Francesco Sforza was furnished with eight hundred horse and five hundred foot, or, according to others, with three thousand horse and one thousand foot, and was ordered by the pope to oppose himself to Fortebraccio, the most persevering and the most annoying of his enemies. That general was in possession of several strong places in the heart of the pope's dominions, whence his troops made frequent sallies, and did much injury to the neighbouring inhabitants. In order effectually to check their pillaging sorties, which often took place simultaneously in different places, Francesco Sforza deemed it necessary to maintain the shortest lines of communication throughout the whole of the country so exposed; and for this purpose constructed over the Tiber, a little above Rome, a bridge which was chiefly formed of boards placed on very strong ropes, stretched across the river on the side of a dilapidated arch, and supported by its foundations. The construction of an artificial bridge in this manner would scarcely be deemed worthy of notice in modern warfare; yet at that time Sforza gained no small reputation, both on account of the novelty of the idea and the ingenuity of the plan. Having effected this object, which he deemed essential for the prosecution of his plans, he laid siege to a garrison of Fortebraccio's in Assisi, and made himself master of Fano and several of the surrounding cities.

In the meantime, intelligence arrived that Nicolo Piccinino was about to invade Flaminia, and Eugenius particularly requested that Francesco Sforza would meet him with the greater part of his disposable force. He therefore left his brother, Leo Sforza, in command of a small number of men to keep in check the garrison of Fortebraccio, and marched himself with the great body of his troops to execute the wishes of the pontiff. But while he was on this expedition, an incident occurred which did him considerable damage, and wellnigh caused the destruction of his army. A tempest, followed by heavy rains, had arisen while he was encamped by the Tiber, near its source in the Apennines. From the insignificance of the stream in this place, it had never occurred to him that it might be swollen so as to damage his army; and though the waters descended like a torrent from the neighbouring mountains, he remained in security in his camp. But here, as in the Genoese expedition, he was saved by the courtesy of a lady. Eufrosina, the noble proprietrix of a city in the neighbourhood, was well acquainted with the nature of the river in this spot, and having experienced the inundations that invariably followed such weather, she sent to warn the general of his impending catastrophe. Her messengers arrived just as he, unaware of the danger, was about to sit down to dinner. Even after this warning he was unable to bring off his army without great loss of men, horses, and baggage; for the river had already begun to overflow its banks and to flood the neighbouring country. The greatest terror prevailed; it was impossible to preserve any sort of discipline: some were anxious to save their horses, others tried to bring their armour out of their tents; darkness added to the confusion of the scene; and when day broke, Sforza ascertained that the Tiber had done him more damage than he had ever sustained from an enemy.

After this catastrophe it was found necessary to make a halt of several days to restore order in the camp. But notwithstanding this disaster, and the consequent delay, he managed to cross the Apennines, and, in spite of the inferiority of his force, to keep Piccinino in check on the river Savio, and even to gain some advantages over him in skirmishes fought on its banks. But he received a reverse in another quarter. As soon as Fortebraccio had ascertained that he had divided his forces, he withdrew a certain portion of the garrisons from the strong places in the States of the Church, and brought them to attack that division of the

army which he had left under Leo near Assisi. The latter, being taken by surprise, was completely defeated, and he himself was taken prisoner.

The captivity of his brother, and the loss of a large portion of his army, considerably affected the spirits of Sforza; and the vicinity of his victorious opponent to the territories he himself had so recently acquired, filled him with alarm. He therefore turned his chief attention to the operations in that quarter. For this reason, though he had lately received considerable reinforcements from the Venetians, he merely kept in Flaminia a body of troops sufficient to enable him to act on the defensive, and he despatched the rest of his available troops, under two of his ablest officers, to support his brother, Alexander Sforza, who still remained in Umbria. The latter availed himself of this fresh infusion of strength to march against Fortebraccio, who occupied the heights which overlook the town of Camerino. In spite of the strength of his position, Alexander succeeded in making himself master of it. After the troops on the summit were routed by their victorious aggressors, their general, while endeavouring to effect his escape on horseback, tried to ride over some uneven ground on the side of the mountain road, which was blocked up by the fugitive soldiers. While making this attempt, he was closely pursued by a mounted officer of the enemy. In one place, the horses both of the pursuer and the fugitive, who were equally careless of the nature of the ground they were traversing, rolled over together. The former was comparatively unhurt, while the latter was considerably shaken by his fall, and, when forced to fight hand to hand with his opponent, could offer but a feeble resistance. After having been easily overcome, he was brought, more dead than alive, into the camp of Alexander, where he expired, much in the same circumstances as those under which, ten years before, his master, Braccio da Montone, had terminated his career. The victorious general after this marched to Assisi to liberate Leo from captivity, and to continue the siege which had been begun by his brother. The inhabitants of that place, having no longer any hope of succour from without, made a voluntary surrender to the pope, merely stipulating that the son and the property of Fortebraccio's widow should be respected.

The defeat and the death of Fortebraccio left Francesco Sforza at liberty to bring all his forces against Nicolo Piccinino. Even when his army had been divided, that general had not been able to gain any advantage over him, and it did not seem likely that he could withstand him, now that his large accession of force would enable him to act on the offensive. For this reason his employer, the duke of Milan, was glad to avail himself of the mediation of the marquis of Este to come to terms with his enemies. He agreed to relinquish all the places that Piccinino had taken in Romagna, and to withdraw his troops from that province.

It now merely remained for Francesco Sforza to reduce Bologna to the allegiance of Eugenius, which, as the antipapal party was no longer succoured by the Milanese troops, he found no difficulty in doing. He then led his forces to Cotignola, the birthplace of his father, and thence he betook himself to Florence. He was there received with the most marked attention, both by the pope and the people, in whose services he had been engaged. And though he had plenty of serious matters to occupy his mind, he managed to gain the affections of the latter by giving tournaments, and by being present at all their diversions. Here, too, he laid the foundations of that intimacy with Cosmo de' Medici, which lasted through life.

CHAPTER XI.

DEATH OF JOAN II. ALPHONSO OF ARAGON

WHILE Sforza was at Florence enjoying the honours due to his past successes, and forming friendships and negotiating plans for the future, events happened at Naples which began to attract the attention of the leading men of Italy. In November 1434 died Louis of Anjou, the adopted heir of the queen of Naples. René, his nearest relation, and the head of the house of Anjou, was chosen by her in his place. But when the death of Louis became known to Alphonso of Aragon, he determined to try to regain by courtesy what he had failed to do by arms; and for this purpose he took up his quarters at Ischia, whence he sent many flattering messages to the queen. But she, though she returned them with civility, made no alteration in her will; and at the end of the year the king of Aragon signed a treaty of ten years' duration with her, and departed. But after her death, which took place in the following February, he determined to maintain by arms his rights as the descendant of Constance, the daughter of Manfred, against those of the house of Anjou. He was supported in his pretensions by many of the Neapolitan provincial nobles, while his rival, René of Anjou, was the favourite with the inhabitants of the capital. There was also a third claimant to the vacant crown. Eugenius, emboldened by his success in the last war, was unwilling to neglect the opportunity of reviving the claim of the Holy See to the kingdoms of Apulia and Calabria, which had been, one century and a half ago, invariably asserted by the pontiffs, but which, during their absence in Avignon, and the contentions that followed their return, had been suffered to lie dormant. Accordingly, he declared the kingdom a tributary province of the Holy See, and said that he would send Vitellius, the patriarch of Alessandria, to take possession of it. But neither the pope nor the patriarch found favour in the eyes of the people.

The possession of the island of Sicily gave Alphonso a considerable advantage when he came to contend with his opponent. At the instigation of the duke of Sessa, and other nobles of his party, he sailed thence with a considerable armament for Gaeta. The inhabitants of that city, like those of Naples, were in favour of René; and fearing lest they should not be able to withstand the Aragonese forces, they demanded assistance from Philip and the Genoese. In compliance with their request, the duke sent to their aid a small force of three hundred foot, under Francesco Spinola, along with an ambassador, to plead the cause of René among the magnates of the land. At the same time, he requested the Genoese to send succours by sea, and they, always retaining their hereditary enmity to the Aragonese, and being anxious to save the city of Gaeta, in which they had much of their merchandise, from being pillaged by them, sent thither a fleet of twenty-two ships. They met the Aragonese near the island of Ponza, and by the superiority of their naval tactics they gained a complete victory, in which they captured or destroyed all the enemy's ships, with the exception of one commanded by Peter of Aragon. Alphonso himself, as well as his ally John, king of Navarre, and his infant sons, along with several of the elite of the Neapolitan noblesse, fell into their hands. Blasio, the admiral of the Genoese fleet, after he had sailed to Gaeta in triumph, brought his royal captives to Milan, and placed them at the disposal of the duke.

This victory redoubled the apprehensions of those who had for some time past been so jealous of the ambition and the increasing power of Philip. But on the arrival of the royal prisoners at Milan, an unexpected change took place in his policy. The courtesy with which he received, and the hospitality with which he treated, his captives, has been celebrated by all the historians of the period. But he did not confine his good treatment of them to kindly words or empty civilities. During their many interviews, Alphonso endeavoured to convince him of the impolicy of supporting René against himself, reminding him that it would be the first object of a king of the house of Anjou to have his countrymen and his allies established in the north of Italy, and to reduce Milan to a dependency of France; while, on the other hand, it would be his interest, both as king of Aragon and of Naples, to maintain and to strengthen such a formidable barrier

against the encroachments of those to whom he was politically opposed; that, as it would be in the power of the sovereigns at Milan at any time to facilitate the entry of the French into his dominions, he would have tolerable security for his fidelity, and obedience to his wishes; and if he might be a sovereign in name, Philip would be in reality the chief ruler of the kingdom of Naples; that if the duke of Milan had René of Anjou on one side, and the king of France on the other, he must either lose his dominions, or at best live in perpetual fear of two such neighbours; whereas his own success would render him the virtual sovereign of the peninsula. These arguments produced their desired effect on the astute mind of the duke. Alphonso was liberated, and conducted with great honour as far as Genoa, whence he was sent back to his own kingdom. He shortly afterwards went again to Gaeta, which had fallen into the hands of his partisans as soon as the altered views of the duke of Milan had become known. The change in the policy of Philip caused the greatest disgust among the Genoese. They recollected that it was at his instigation that they had sent the fleet to Gaeta, and borne the first brunt and cost of the war; they now saw with indignation that they were used as a mere cat's-paw by that monarch; they deemed their glory tarnished by the fruits of their victory being thus thrown away; and they thought their commercial interests endangered by the re-entrance of the Aragonese into Gaeta. Francesco Spinola, one of their leading citizens, had been among the foremost to bring the republic under the duke; nevertheless, he was one of the first to fall under his suspicion. From the part he had taken in the affair at Gaeta, he participated in no small degree in the dissatisfaction of his countrymen, and he resolved to join them in an effort to throw off a yoke which had become distasteful to all. The day chosen for the attempt was that of the entrance of a new governor into the city, which happened on the feast of the Baptist. On his arrival in the principal piazza, in company with the former governor and several citizens, Spinola rushed forth from his house, followed by a number of friends all well armed, and raised the cry of liberty. It was wonderful with what celerity the citizens flocked together, on hearing this magic and often much-abused word. The place became so crowded that the partisans of the duke could do nothing they had even great difficulty in providing for their safety : the new governor effected his escape into the citadel; the ex-governor was killed, while endeavouring to fly into the palace and call out the guards. The people followed up their success by electing the popular magistrates according to the established forms of the ancient republic. In a few days afterwards they made themselves masters of the citadel, along with other places that had been in the possession of the Milanese, and once more became entirely free.

This revolt of the Genoese elated the spirits of those enemies of the duke who had been terrified by their successes against the Aragonese. The Venetians and Florentines watched their proceedings with interest, and were glad to form an alliance with them. Those two old wranglers, the maritime republics of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, were willing to make truce, and to unite, through fear of one whom they now deemed their common enemy. The then state of things also brought together other people who had been formerly opposed. Rinaldo degli Albizzi and his friends, who had been driven from Florence after the return of the Medici, when they beheld the formation of this new alliance, began to entertain hopes of returning to their country; and with the view of facilitating their designs, they endeavoured to persuade Philip to declare war against the party who had driven them thence.

The arguments Rinaldo made use of on this occasion are detailed by Machiavelli in a style equal to that of the first authors of antiquity. Their chief purport was as follows : Though he and his friends had always acted with those who were opposed to the ambition of the Visconti, he had now many excellent reasons to justify his proposal. The patriotism which had prompted him to the course he formerly pursued was also the leading principle of his present line of conduct : as he then wished to preserve his country from foreign aggression, he now desired to free it from domestic tyranny. Bodies politic, he said, in some respects resembled the human body, in which sores sometimes broke out that could not be healed without burning or cutting; and there could be no greater sore in any body than the slavery now existing in his country, which demanded a very stringent remedy. The duke would now have justice on his side, as the Florentines had not scrupled, in the face of a treaty ratified with the greatest solemnity, to join the Genoese in their rebellion. He need not be discouraged by want of success in bygone wars, inasmuch as the people had neither the power nor the perseverance they formerly had; for what power could they have, after they had banished the best and the wealthiest of their citizens? or how could perseverance be looked for in a people kept disunited by faction? Finally, if he succeeded in restoring him to his country, he would for ever after

be able to count upon him as his most grateful ally; and he would never have another such opportunity of gaining to his friendship a state which had always more than any other presented the most formidable obstacles to the aggrandizement of his house.

It did not require much force of argument to persuade Filippo Maria, influenced as he was by a blind ambition and a hereditary hatred to the Florentines, to adopt the course suggested by Rinaldo; but prudence, and the recollection of former reverses, made him at first cautious in his mode of attack. Nicolo Piccinino had been despatched by him against the Genoese; and he, though he gained some advantage over them in the country, was unable to make any impression against the city. The duke, finding that he was only wasting his time there, ordered him to carry on the war in that part of Liguria that joins Tuscany, so as to threaten the territory of Pisa. He hoped in this manner to show the Florentines what they must expect if they continued their alliance with the rebellious Genoese. Agreeably to his instructions, Piccinino took the town of Sarzana, and prepared to enter the territory of Lucca, under pretence of marching to the assistance of Alphonso, in the kingdom of Naples. The Florentines, of course, could not permit this, and were about to declare war. However, with a view if possible to stave off actual hostilities, Pope Eugenius went from Florence to have an interview with the duke at Bologna, and represented to him that, if he persevered in his aggressions, he would be obliged to place the services of his gonfaloniere, Francesco Sforza, at the disposal of his enemies. Philip, however, would listen to no compromise which did not include the restoration of Genoa; and the other two republics refused to abandon their ally in such critical circumstances.

While these things were going on among the potentates of Italy, Francesco Sforza was engaged, as standard-bearer of the church, in reducing some rebel towns for the pope, and enlarging his own dominions in the province of Umbria. The details of his proceedings are generally uninteresting, and would not be worth recording, if they did not bring to light one or two instances of the double-dealing of Eugenius and others, peculiarly illustrative of the morality of the times. His first acquisition of territory was the town of Fabriano, in the Apennines, the inhabitants of which, having cruelly massacred their rulers, purchased immunity from the consequence of their crimes by surrendering their liberties to, and claiming the protection of, the first captain of the period. After having quelled a revolt of the Camerines, and reduced several strongholds in the vicinity, he betook himself to his recent conquest of Fabriano, and continued going through the cities of his territory till he received orders from the pope to attack Forli. Before obeying this mandate, he sent three days' notice of his intentions to Antonio Ordellaffi, the signer of that town. While engaged in this enterprise, an incident occurred to him indicative of his popularity with all classes. While at a considerable distance from his camp he was surprised and surrounded by a party of armed men, who had sallied forth on a foraging expedition from Forli. When he was recognised, one of the leaders of the party took him by the hand, and told him to fear nothing from them; they were well aware that he had attacked their city in obedience to the orders of others; and so far from wishing him any harm, they would even expose themselves to defend him from danger. After he had reduced this and other places, he went to Bologna to watch the movements of Piccinino, who was then in the territory of Parma.

But by this time Eugenius, having quelled his rebellious subjects, and expelled from his territories his enemies, began to repent of the favours that he had conferred upon Sforza. From the conduct of that general previous to his receiving the marquissate of Ancona, it was evident that it must have been the direst necessity that had compelled the pope to patronise him; and, indeed, from the rapid growth of his dominions, there now appeared too much reason to fear lest, in the manner adverted to one century later by Machiavelli, he should aspire to greatness by the destruction either of his employer or of those whom his employer wished to preserve. But being unable to get rid of him in the manner that the Venetians had freed themselves from Carmagnola, when they dreaded a similar result, he determined to attempt his ruin by other means. For this purpose he formed, with one Baldassar Offidano, a man of as little principle as any of that period, and peculiarly jealous of Sforza, a plan in which it was arranged that Baldassar should ask Sforza to place a part of his troops at his disposal, for the purpose of expelling some usurpers from some castles in Romagna. Sforza, though surprised at the request, and thinking it in some measure derogatory to his dignity, did not hesitate to comply with it when it was backed by Eugenius. Baldassar, when he had thus

abstracted part of Sforza's forces, wrote word to Nicolo Piccinino that his great rival in the art of war was in an almost defenceless state in the neighbourhood of Bologna, and might be easily crushed. At the same time, he promised to join in an attack on him with what troops he had at his disposal. But about this period an incident happened, which must have tended to soften Piccinino's animosity to him, and may, perhaps, have prevented him joining these insidious plots of his enemies. Two soldiers of the former made their way into his rival's camp near Bologna, and offered, for a sum of money, to assassinate their general. For this Sforza reprimanded them in the severest terms, adding, at the same time, that it was by arms, and not by treachery, that he wished to conquer. Whether Piccinino was aware of this or not, it is certain that he continued to turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of Baldassar.

Baldassar then resolved to try another method to get rid of the man whom he feared and hated. It happened that the camp of Sforza was pitched on the banks of the river Reno, in the immediate vicinity of a bridge which was commanded by a tower. The general was in the frequent habit of marching about in front of his camp without his arms, and might easily be despatched by arrows or javelins from an ambush. Baldassar, being aware of the manner in which he exposed himself, had introduced into the tower twelve men armed with bows and javelins, who were ordered to watch their opportunity to murder him; and it is not improbable that they might have accomplished their nefarious design, if he had not received timely warning of his danger, and immediately changed his quarters.

As soon as Baldassar had heard that his intended victim had escaped from all the snares he had laid for him, he wrote a letter to Nicolo Piccinino, full of reproaches for having neglected such an opportunity of crushing his own and the pope's greatest enemy. The letter having been intercepted and brought to Sforza, left no doubts in his mind as to who had been the real authors of the mischief. On this he immediately marched with his army to the camp of Baldassar, and, declaring that he only wished to take vengeance on the traitor, summoned all his soldiers who were along with him to surrender. Many of them obeyed; but some, who had always shown the greatest jealousy of the pope's gonfaloniere, determined to remain with his enemy. Sforza lost no time in attacking the refractory soldiers; and having gained an easy victory, he pursued Baldassar as far as the fortress of Bruti. The owners of the fortress were induced, by the threats of the victorious general, to give up the refugee, who was found with his face covered with flour, and clothed in woman's apparel. The instant he was recognised he was brought forth and delivered to his indignant enemy. He was subsequently confined in a fortress, where he lost his life by the accident, as was said, of a tile falling on his head. Having thus taken vengeance on one who had been the chief agent in all the machinations against him, Sforza behaved with great generosity towards Eugenius, who, he must have known, was Baldassar's instigator throughout. An opportunity of aggrandising himself at his expense soon presented itself. The anti-papal party in Bologna, when the circumstances of the pope's treachery, and Sforza's discovery of it, had come to their ears, thought that they now beheld a favourable opportunity of throwing off the power of the former, and putting themselves under the protection of the latter. Accordingly, they made an offer of their city to him. But as he did not deem himself yet in a position to set up as an independent sovereign, or to maintain armies at his own expense, it was still expedient for him to retain his place as commander of the forces of the Holy See, and to hold his acquisitions in the March under the sanction of the pope; and he thought it not improbable that an open rupture with him might disturb his relations with the Venetians and Florentines. So he not only declined the offers made to him by the Bolognese, but he even carried his magnanimity so far as to pretend to give credence to the excuses and the protestations of innocence that were made by Eugenius. Francesco Sforza, after he had thus enlarged his dominions and chastised his enemies, without quarrelling with the man whose protection he needed, was called upon once more to fight against the sovereign who had adopted him as a son. As he was swayed by the same reasons as on a former occasion, he did not hesitate to obey, and was declared general of the forces of the combined republics. He was first ordered against Nicolo Piccinino, who, while the pope was engaged in negotiation, had been allowed to take several places in Tuscany without opposition, and was now laying siege to Barga. While he was there, Francesco Sforza attacked him at a moment that he least expected it, and completely routed his forces. On this occasion Louis, the son of Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua, was taken prisoner by the victorious general; and though offered his liberty, he preferred attaching himself to

him, and fighting under his banner so popular had he become with all who were not jealous of his rising reputation.

Shortly afterwards, Nicolo Piccinino was recalled from Tuscany, with orders to march against the army of the Venetians commanded by the older Gonzaga; and Sforza availed himself of his absence to recover for the Florentines all the cities that he had taken. Emboldened by the success of their armies and the reputation of their general, the Florentines thought this a favourable opportunity of resuming their darling project of the conquest of Lucca. To accomplish their desires, Francesco Sforza entered the territory of the devoted republic with his army in the spring of the year 1437, laid waste their land, burned their houses and their trees, and took several of their cities. Among the latter was the town of Casanova, after the capture of which, the victorious general exhibited an instance of self-restraint, which, considering the times in which he lived, redounds much to his credit. However, the Lucchese were not daunted either by the name or the fortunes of Sforza, or by the damages they had already sustained at his hands. As the hostile army approached their walls, they strengthened the fortifications by every possible means; and hoping that they would ultimately be relieved by the duke of Milan, or that the Florentines would, for some reason or other, be obliged to draw off their army, they made up their minds to resist to the last. At the head of the party determined to maintain the liberty of the state were the leading nobles : for themselves they feared nothing; their only dread was lest the populace, disgusted at the losses they had already sustained, and were still sustaining, should be influenced more by dangers that were pressing than by the hope of liberty, and compel them to some ignominious surrender. In order to secure their adherence, they made them assemble in one of the chief places of the town, and there reminded them of the many unsuccessful attempts that Florence had already made against their liberties; of the friendship that had existed for so many generations between their state and the Visconti; and the certainty that the present representative of that family would never let them fall into the hands of his most inveterate enemies; finally, that they would gain no material advantage by a surrender, for, if they lost their liberty, they would never again be allowed to reap the fruits of their own industry ; but that, if they made their enemies feel how vain were their attempts to subdue them, they would scarcely be again subject to the inconvenience they were now experiencing. These arguments produced their due effect upon the mind of the populace. Though Sforza pressed the siege with great vigour, and carried one position after another, they never wavered in their resolution. At length, when dangers were augmenting on all sides, they sent intelligence to the duke of the real state of their case, reminding him that, though they were determined not to lose their liberties except with their lives, yet, if he allowed his friends to fall a sacrifice to the ambition of others, he would lose his own honour, and the fidelity of those who might at any time be called upon to risk anything for him; adding, that if he was not actuated by any sense of obligation, at least compassion for their sufferings should induce him to afford them assistance. Philip, moved as well by these representations as by his inveterate dislike of the Florentines, determined to make a diversion in their favour. There were two ways in which this might be done, either by an invasion of Tuscany, or by directing such a vigorous attack against the Venetians that the Florentines would be obliged to send Sforza to their assistance. It was not long ere the latter were alarmed by the report of an army being about their own territory. At the same time they received ambassadors from the Venetians, informing them of their leader Francesco Gotizaga having deserted to the duke, and their inability to carry on the war without their most vigorous cooperation. The Venetians also, as they had sustained several defeats from Nicolo Piccinino, were particularly anxious that Francesco Sforza, the only man in Italy capable of opposing him, should put himself at the head of their army.

The Florentines were in a great strait on the receipt of this intelligence. On the one hand, they feared the duke, and wished for nothing so much as to strike a decisive blow at his power; on the other hand, they were above all things anxious to conquer Lucca; and they suspected, not without reason, that, in asking for the services of Sforza, the Venetians were in no small degree influenced by jealousy of their probable success in that quarter. However, the former feeling prevailed, and they yielded their general to the solicitations of their allies. Sforza, in obedience to the orders that were sent to him, after he had left garrisons in all the fortified places he had taken in the vicinity of Lucca, crossed the Apennines and went to Reggio. But here a difficulty occurred, which put a stop to the progress of the allies. Francesco Sforza asserted that he had made a private agreement with the duke of Milan never to invade his dominions north of the Po.

Whether this was really the case or not, cannot now be ascertained; but it is not difficult to divine the motives of his conduct. When he first fought on the side opposed to the duke, the latter seemed likely to overturn the balance of power, and to threaten the independent existence of the different states in Italy; and as he himself now aspired to be the sovereign of a new principality, it was above all things important for him that the independence of the different states and the general balance of power should be preserved. But the maintenance of this balance did not require that the person who once threatened to destroy it should be deprived of any portion of his lawful territories; and Sforza had the strongest reason for preserving the integrity of the state of which he still expected the reversion. He still looked for favour from the duke: the changes of party in Italy were so frequent that he might possibly need his protection; and it might be useful to him to be able to claim it on the same grounds that the great Athenian general did that of the king of Persia, when he wrote to him to say that, though he had done his father more injury than any other Greek while he was invading the shores of his country, he had done him still more good, inasmuch as he had allowed him to return in safety after the battle of Salamis.

The stedfast adherence of Francesco Sforza to this resolution in no small degree irritated the Venetians, and embarrassed their relations with the Florentines. The latter vainly endeavoured to accommodate the differences between their general and their allies. To the former they represented that he surely might act as required, if he were to write a public manifesto expressive of his reasons; that no private promise could be as binding as public engagements; and that, if he were once to declare his willingness to concede this point to the Venetians, he might never be required actually to cross the Po. To the latter they wrote word, that as their general was bound to obey the promise he had made, and would, under any circumstances, be reluctant to proceed to extremities against the father of his betrothed, they hoped they would be content to confine the scene of their operations to the right bank of the Po. But on this point both parties were inflexible. Sforza had scarcely arrived at Reggio when he received an order from the Venetians to form a junction with their forces to the north of the river, and this he positively declined to do. His inflexibility on this point was the cause of a serious dispute between Andreas Mauroceno, the Venetian ambassador, and himself; each accused the other of selfishness and faithlessness: the former threatened to withhold all arrears of pay, if the wishes of his country were not complied with, and the latter declared his intention of quitting their service altogether. After fruitless attempts at negotiation, both parties departed in disgust, the former to Venice, the latter to the vicinity of Pisa.

On Sforza's return to Tuscany the Florentines again turned their attention to Lucca, and requested him to complete the conquest of that place. But Philip had already become informed of his conduct with regard to the passing of the Po, and seeing the hold he had over him, he determined to turn it to further account. He therefore requested Sforza to negotiate a peace between the Lucchese and the Florentines, and at the same time gave him to understand that he himself was ready enough to come to terms with the latter. Sforza, being quite willing to purchase the good-will of the duke by compliance on this point, dexterously managed to postpone the prosecution of the war. When urged on the subject, he declared he would do nothing till he received all arrears of pay from the Venetians, and that, if he was not properly supported by them, he must turn his attention to the safety of his dominions, and come to terms with the duke independently of others.

The tricks and the threats of Francesco Sforza were a source of great alarm to the Florentines. They already looked upon the conquest of Lucca as hopeless, and they even began to tremble for their independence in the event of his proposed union with the duke. In order to set matters right they sent Cosmo de' Medici to the Venetians, trusting much to his universal popularity, and to the friendship they had shown him during the period of his exile. He made a long oration in their senate on the then state of Italy, the power of the duke, and the talents of Sforza, and added that, if the two latter were once united, the Venetians would be driven back to the sea, and they themselves would have to fight for their very existence. But the Venetians remained firm in their refusal to pay Sforza. They said, that if the Florentines set such high value on his services, they should pay him themselves; that they knew their own resources as well as those of their enemies, and were confident, under any circumstances, of being able to maintain their position; that Sforza seemed to set no bounds to ambition there was no saying what he might next ask, if they once

consented to pay him without receiving a full equivalent of service; and that there was nothing that they so much desired as to humble his power, already too great.

Though the mission of Cosmo was fruitless, the Florentines still left no means untried to preserve the adherence of Francesco Sforza to the league. He himself seems to have continued undecided as to the part he should take, till an event occurred which induced him to come to terms with the duke of Milan. Intelligence was brought to him that the captain whom he had left in charge of his territories in Umbria had deserted him, and gone over to the duke; and as he could not leave them unprotected, he negotiated a peace between Philip and the Florentines, in which it was settled that the duke should not interfere in the affairs of Romagna or Tuscany. At the same time he arranged terms between the Florentines and the Lucchese, in which it was agreed that the former might continue to hold Monte Carlo, and some strong cities that had been taken by him; and that the latter should be guaranteed in the full enjoyment of their independence. For the part he had taken in these negotiations he received from the duke the towns of Asti and Dertona, in the north-west of Lombardy. At the same time Philip renewed his promises of bestowing on him the hand of his daughter, and gave him his permission to serve under whatever banner he pleased, provided he was not actually opposed to him.

CHAPTER XII.

WAR IN THE NEAPOLITAN PROVINCES.

WHATEVER may be thought of Sforza's principles, it must be allowed that, in the events just narrated, he had managed to act with the greatest dexterity. In the province of Ancona, which properly belonged to the pope, and which was coveted by the duke of Milan, he had erected a principality for himself with the formal sanction of the former, and without quarrelling with the latter. He had effectually thwarted the intrigues of Eugenius, without coming to an open rupture with him when it did not suit his convenience. Though he had on several occasions opposed the armies of the duke, and had actually accepted the chief command of the forces of the coalition that had been formed against him, he obtained from him a renewal of his promise of the hand of his daughter. The influence which he had acquired in Italy was so great that he was able to negotiate a peace between the belligerent powers of Florence; and though by so doing he curried favour with Filippo Maria Visconti, he seems in no way to have weakened Cosmo de' Medici's friendship for himself, which was so often of use to him in the subsequent events of his life. It now remains to be seen how he enforced the performance of the duke's promise, when it appeared to him that it ought no longer to be deferred.

The peace which he himself had arranged left him at liberty to attend to the affairs of his new principality. In this he displayed his usual talent and discretion. He reduced some towns that had revolted, and by his mere presence confirmed the allegiance of many that were supposed to be wavering. The details of his proceedings, however, are totally void of interest.

The attention of all Italy was now directed to the war which had broken out in the kingdom of Naples. One of the rivals for the crown, René of Anjou, was now a prisoner in the hands of the duke of Burgundy, but his wife Elizabeth had gone to Naples to organise his party. Alphonso, too, after his liberation by Philip, had lost no time in repairing to the scene of action. The pope having withdrawn his own pretensions to the vacant crown, followed the policy of his predecessors in supporting the house of Anjou, and ordered his legate, Vitellius, to give Elizabeth all the assistance in his power. The conduct of the duke of Milan at this juncture was extremely wavering and uncertain, and can only be accounted for on the supposition that he wished his enemies to weaken themselves by mutual wars, while he himself was recruiting his resources in peace. In the words of Muratori, "He made a promise one day to break it the next. The passions of ambition and vengeance were so strong in his heart that no settlement could extinguish them. He was familiar with all sorts of tricks and cabals, to do injury to another, and afterwards to prove himself innocent of all offence. At this time he affected a friendship for Eugenius, but did his utmost to stir up a party against him at the Council of Basle. With all his professions of goodwill for Sforza, there is very little doubt of his having endeavoured to set Eugenius against him, and his having stirred up rebellion among his fiefs and his generals. And though he had liberated Alphonso of Aragon from captivity, and promised him his support, he now requested Sforza to make a demonstration in favour of René of Anjou. Shortly afterwards, when Alphonso had begun to fear the opposition of Sforza, he requested the Florentines to order the latter to desist, making use of threats in the event of their refusing. And he crowned his treachery against the pope by sending Piccinino to obtain money from him, for the avowed purpose of restoring to him the fiefs of Sforza, and ordering his general to make use of the supplies so obtained to befriend the revolutionary party in Bologna and Ravenna, and then to prosecute his conquests in the whole province of Romagna. It was evident that, as long as this firebrand existed, no peace could be of any duration in Italy. The other powers at this time seem to have been desirous of repose : the Florentines were content to abide by the terms they had made with the Lucchese, as also by those which Sforza had arranged with the duke of Milan; and Sforza himself seems to have wished for nothing so much as to maintain a good understanding with all parties, so as to be able to attend to his own affairs in the province of Ancona. As René of Anjou

had never been very anxious about following up his claims, and was now a prisoner in the hands of the duke of Burgundy, the contention for the crown of Naples seemed likely to come to a speedy termination. And though there is no account of any truce having been established between Philip and the Venetians, yet the war in that quarter had for some time been carried on languidly enough. Eugenius could do nothing for himself, and, if unassisted by others, must be compelled to lick, though he might loathe, the hand of his standard-bearer, who had deprived him of half his dominions. But the ambition of the duke was insatiable; he could not endure that the Venetians should remain in possession of Brescia and Verona; and now that they were abandoned by the Florentines, he determined on making a vigorous effort to expel them. Moreover, he entertained the design of making himself completely master of the whole of Romagna, by which means he might keep the pope, the Florentines, and the marquis of Ancona in check. He trusted also that the resentment which the Florentines and Sforza, each for different reasons, still harboured against the Venetians, the hopes that the latter cherished of obtaining the hand of his daughter, and the mutual distrust which he had endeavoured to diffuse among his former opponents, would prevent the formation of another coalition against him.

In the meantime Nicolo Piccinino continued to obey Philip's orders in Romagna. Having made himself master of Ravenna and Bologna, he proceeded to the attack of other places; and after a short time he took all the strongholds therein that once belonged to the pope. To justify his proceedings to the other powers of Italy, he pretended to have discovered that Eugenius was carrying on intrigues with the Venetians, in direct violation of the agreement that he had made with his master. On his part, Philip declared that his general was pursuing his career of conquest in Romagna contrary to his wish; and, to give colour to his assertions, after he had subdued nearly all that province, he recalled him therefrom, and ordered him to attack the territory of Brescia, then in the hands of the Venetians.

The latter, though thus pressed, were at first too proud to ask the assistance of their former allies, and contented themselves with opposing to Piccinino an insignificant captain of their own, of the name of Catamelata. But one stronghold after another fell into the hands of their enemy; all the armaments that they sent up the river were defeated; the entire territory of Brescia was overrun; and the two towns of Brescia and Verona were closely blockaded, and seemed likely ere long to surrender. Their pride was then subdued by their misfortunes; they knew that nothing could save them except the aid of their former allies. They sent, not without feelings of deep mortification, and trembling at the prospect of a refusal, to beg for assistance from the Florentines. The lately kindled resentment of the latter had been extinguished by their jealousy and dread of their old enemy the duke, and they gave a ready audience to the Venetian ambassadors, and endeavoured to procure the services of Sforza for their common cause. The son of the peasant of Cotignola had now risen to such importance that the probable issue of the contest seemed to rest in his hands. Of this Philip was as well aware as his enemies; and, with a view to keep him from them, he promised, day after day, to allow him to conclude his marriage with his daughter, who had then attained the age of thirteen years. He had even sent him the stipulated dowry of thirty thousand florins. But the long delay disgusted and irritated Sforza; and, finding that his former generosity had profited him nothing, he determined to try if his future father-in-law could not be worked on by fear as well as by friendship. He was already acquainted with the double part he had played with Alphonso and Rene, and had more than a suspicion of his treacherous dealings towards himself. He therefore lent a ready ear to the Florentine and Venetian ambassadors, who represented to him that he, above all men, was interested in keeping down the power of the duke, and maintaining the independence of the Venetians; that, if they were once subdued by him, it would be difficult to resist his further encroachments; that, in that case, so far from being able to maintain him in his newly-acquired position, they could not even guarantee their own independence; and that, so far as his future prospects were concerned, they were more likely to be advanced by the adversity than by the prosperity of Philip. On the 18th of February 1439, the allied republics signed a treaty with Sforza, in which it was agreed that he was to take the command of the forces against Philip for an annual salary of twenty-two thousand florins; that the Florentines should bear one-third and the Venetians two-thirds of the expenses of the war; and that they were to assist him in the event of an attack being made on his dominions in Umbria. He himself consented, though not without some difficulty, to pass the Po any

time he should be required to do so in the course of the two following years. This league was joined by the pope, the Genoese, and several of the minor tyrants of Italy.

At the commencement of the war, Verona and Brescia were closely blockaded by the forces of the duke; and it was not generally believed that they would be able to hold out much longer. As many thought that the eventual issue of the contest depended upon the possession of these cities, and that, if they were once lost, all future attempts to curb the power of Philip would be fruitless, it was determined to make one vigorous effort for their relief, and to request Sforza forthwith to march into Lombardy. There were two difficulties in the way of this course. Though he himself had laid aside all scruples about passing the Po, the Florentines feared that, by his entering Lombardy, they would be exposed to an invasion from the duke; for, if he were to retire into his strongholds, he might with a small number of men keep Sforza in check, and send into Tuscany a considerable army, which might be joined by the exiles, and such of their subject states as were inclined to shake off their authority. Secondly, as Sforza was now in the marquisate of Ancona, as many of the strong places in Romagna were garrisoned by Philip, and as the intervening country was in many places flooded by the overflowing of the rivers, he might find it no easy matter to effect a junction with the Venetian army in Lombardy.

Their first difficulty was overcome by the diplomacy of the Venetians. The Florentines, however, being anxious that the concession of this point should be considered as a special favour, sent an ambassador to Venice for the purpose of extolling their own generosity, and smoothing over any feelings of enmity their allies might still entertain towards their general. The ambassador, on his arrival, made a speech in the senate, which throws considerable light on the spirit of the times, and shows clearly the reputation which Sforza had already obtained. He began by stating that the power of the duke, if allowed to increase, would be the ruin of both states alike; and that, if the Venetian government had understood that as well as the Florentines, they would now have been free from the dangers with which they were menaced, and in every way in much better condition. After casting in their teeth some of their past differences, and contrasting their selfishness and inconstancy with the generosity and perseverance which he claimed for his own country, he tried to persuade them that even then they were waging war with Philip more out of friendship for them than from the prospect of gaining or preserving anything for themselves, or from any immediate fears on their own account; that they might easily have remained on good terms with Philip while he was engaged in making himself master of Lombardy, and so have avoided all the expense and the danger of the present contest; that, even after he had annihilated the Venetians, they might make a vigorous stand for their own safety, as his increasing power would alarm and set against him all the other states of Italy; that, nevertheless, they were influenced more by the recollection of friendship for their former allies than by any such selfish considerations, and determined on making the same efforts to preserve their allies that they would to save themselves. "Wherefore", he added, "the rulers of my country, thinking it afore all things necessary to relieve Brescia and Verona, and being of opinion that this could not be effected without the Count Sforza, first of all sent me to him to urge him to enter Lombardy, and to carry on the war in every quarter of that province, (for you know that he is under no obligation to carry it north of the Po. This I have persuaded him to do by dint of those arguments which I am now laying before you. And he, invincible as he is in arms, does not wish either to be behind any in courtesy : he is willing even to go beyond that liberality which he sees displayed in our conduct towards you; for he clearly perceives the dangers that threaten Tuscany after his departure; but as he saw that we thought nothing of our danger in comparison with your safety, he also is willing for your sakes to put his private feelings in the back-ground. I am come, then, to offer you the service of the count, with seven thousand horse and two thousand foot, prepared to go against the enemy anywhere. I therefore join the rulers of my state in entreating you that, as the number of Sforza's men exceeds those which he is obliged to bring into the field, you also recompense him with becoming liberality, so that you may never give him cause to lament having come to your assistance, nor us of having recommended him to do so".

To men sorely pressed by the adverse fortune of war, the messenger who comes with promises of reinforcement, and offers of the services of the best general of the day, is sure to be acceptable. The Florentine ambassador, while delivering his speech, was listened to almost like an oracle; and, at the

conclusion of it, his audience became so excited that they would scarcely allow a formal reply to be given. They all rose on their feet, and, with uplifted hands, the majority of them with their faces bathed with tears, expressed their gratitude to the Florentines, both for the kindness of their intentions and their celerity in carrying them into effect; and vowed that they and their descendants, for all future generations, would ever retain the most grateful sense of their kindness.

To conduct his army into Lombardy, Francesco Sforza selected the route by Bologna and Ferrara, as the one in which he was least likely to be delayed by the strongholds of his enemies, or by the difficulty of crossing the rivers. He effected his march without any remarkable adventure till he arrived on the banks of the Po, in the vicinity of Ferrara. Here, however, he was a second time in danger of having his army destroyed by the floods. The king of the rivers had, as in the fine simile of Tasso, "broken from his confines as a bull from his pastures, carrying destruction over the surrounding country, and butting against the Adriatic with his many horns, appeared to be waging war against, not paying tribute to, the sea". But as he had been formerly rescued from a danger of a like nature by the gallantry of a princess, so, if we may credit his biographer, he was on the present occasion saved by what might appear to many an interposition of Providence. An immense number of snakes, having surrounded the tents of the general and many of his soldiers, awoke them from their slumbers, and, ere it was too late, made them aware of their danger. On this they managed, without any loss, to effect their march to the Fossae Claudianse, where they found the boats of the Venetians awaiting them, and were conveyed in safety to the northern bank. His arrival was to the Venetians what the first glimpse of sunshine is to mariners in a storm. Thnew general caused a change both in their prospects e and plans. Though but recently trembling for their very existence as an independent state, they now began to speculate on further acquisitions of territory. The first object of Sforza was to relieve Verona Piccinino's wish was to starve it into a surrender before he could arrive there with his forces. He was unwilling to risk a general action to obstruct the advance of his adversary; but, true to the tactics he had learned in the school of Braccio, he endeavoured to delay him by throwing a small force into every stronghold, and contesting every position on the way. For this purpose he left a garrison in the city of Leonico, and took up a strong position near Soave, a town between the territories of Vicenza and Verona, which appeared to command the only entrance into the latter, between the mountains and the marshes on the northern bank of the Adige. But Sforza was not to be diverted from the main object of his enterprise by such obstacles as these; he had learned his tactics in the camp of the great opponent of Braccio, and he determined to push on to Verona, by a manoeuvre similar to that by which his father had endeavoured to bring his army to Aquila on the day of his death. The only manner in which he could effect this was by a mountain route to the north of Soave, hitherto deemed impassable. Notwithstanding its difficulties, he succeeded in penetrating into the open country between that place and Verona. Piccinino, finding his position turned and his forces divided, raised the blockade in the greatest haste, and, after an indecisive engagement near Soave, retired to the south of the Adige, leaving his adversary in undisputed possession of Verona, and the whole line of communication between that city and Venice.

Sforza, having thus completely succeeded in relieving Verona, turned his attention to Brescia, which was still blockaded by the enemy. The latter place is separated from the former by the water, whose course has been so beautifully described by Dante. At the foot of the Alps it assumes the form of a lake, which, in the time of the poet, was called Benaco, but now takes its name from the town of Garda, on the eastern bank. This lake is so situated on the confines of the territories of Verona, Brescia, and Trent in the Tyrol, that it was said that there was a point in the centre of it equally within the jurisdiction of the bishops of each of those places. From its southern extremity issues the Mincio, which, after passing through green meadows, and occasionally assuming a marsh-like form, flows into the Po. At the point where it leaves the lake is Peschiera, a beautiful and strong fortress on the road between Verona and Brescia; a little to the west of the lake lies the town of Brescia itself. For some time it had received supplies of provisions from the Venetian fleet which plied on the lake; but the enemy having managed to get possession of the whole of the intervening territory, the fleet could do nothing for its relief, and they seemed destined to be passive spectators of the distress and fall of their allies. They now, however, determined to convey Sforza's army across the lake; and Sforza himself laid siege to the fortress of Bandolino, from which, if it were once in his hands, he might easily embark. But fortune was at first unfavourable to him a fever, brought on partly

by excessive heat, and partly by insufficient and insalubrious diet, broke out in his camp; a great part of his force was rendered incapable of acting, and he deemed it prudent to retire to Zevio, a fortress in the territory of Verona, for the purpose of recruiting his own health and that of his soldiers. This unforeseen accident gave Piccinino an opportunity of hazarding a blow to redeem his lost honour. The Milanese had a considerable number of vessels in different ports on the lake, which he manned with the flower of his infantry, and then attacked and almost annihilated the fleet of the Venetians. By this means he acquired possession of nearly all the strongholds on the lake, and deprived the Brescians of all hopes of receiving supplies by water. But Sforza was resolved to make a vigorous effort for the relief of the place; and as the destruction of the Venetian fleet had deprived him of all hopes of crossing the lake, and as his march along its southern bank would be considerably retarded by the beautiful and strong fortress of Peschiera, and others that were garrisoned by the enemy, he determined, as before, to turn his adversary by a mountain route to the north of the lake; and having proceeded by the Val d'Acqui, and the small lake of St Andrea, he brought his army in safety to its north-western bank. After this he set about the reduction of Tenna, a fortress to the north of Brescia.

The undisputed possession of the lake gave Piccinino a great advantage in being able to collect his forces against his adversary on whatever side he happened to be. The latter had scarcely invested Tenna before he was attacked by a considerable army brought across the lake from Peschiera. The battle was obstinately contested, but ended in a complete victory being gained by the Venetians; a considerable number of prisoners fell into their hands, though some managed to effect their escape by the same ships that brought them from Peschiera. Piccinino himself narrowly escaped being taken by a ludicrous device. Being compelled to retire into Tenna, which was soon surrounded by the victors, his capture seemed inevitable. He was, however, attended by a German soldier who was much attached to him personally, and who now put his illustrious master into a sack, and carried him in this position through the ranks of his enemies, being himself disguised as an agricultural peasant!

Machiavelli remarks of this victory, that, if it had been properly followed up, it might have effected the relief of Brescia, and completed the triumph of the Venetians. But nobody knew better than this acute politician that the vigorously following up any advantage, so as to bring the war to a successful termination, formed no part of the practice of those who were employed to lead the armies of others, and paid during the continuation of hostilities. These mercenary generals might wish to gain a triumph over their enemy in order to enhance their own reputation, or to gratify their private animosity; they were anxious to avoid defeat, as entailing loss upon themselves; they eagerly hailed every opportunity of encouraging their soldiers with booty; but they seldom bestowed much pains in obtaining the object most desired by the belligerent parties. In the present instance, the command of the lake afforded Piccinino great facility in bringing together and rallying his discomfited forces out of reach of the victors; and Sforza, having already made the duke of Milan sensible of his power, might have been unwilling to press him too severely. Accordingly, ere the latter had reaped any of the advantage of his victory, the former had reorganised an army in the vicinity of Peschiera. And it was not long before he had an opportunity of redeeming his own honour, and bringing back his enemy from the scene of his triumph.

The city of Verona is situated at the foot of a low ridge of the mountains, just where the Adige issues from the Alps, "impetuously descends into Italy, and cleaves in two, like the Meander, that delightful land, that is above all others delightful". It is divided into two parts by the river, the upper and smaller portion of which is built on mountainous ground, and contains two fortresses of great strength, San Piero and San Felice, which command the whole of the city: the lower portion is situated entirely on level ground, and surrounded by walls of great strength, in which are likewise two fortresses, called the old and the new, distant about a mile from one another, and joined together by another wall, which forms a sort of cord to the exterior one of the city. As the whole of the territory beneath was open to an invasion from the marquis of Mantua, who at that time was in alliance with the duke, Francesco Sforza, on marching forward thence, had given the strictest directions about these two fortresses being vigilantly guarded; but the removal of the scene of operations to the west of the lake, and the reputation and triumphs of Sforza, had produced so great a feeling of security that these precautions were neglected. Piccinino being well aware of the defenceless

state of the city, and knowing well that no enterprises are so frequently crowned with success as those which are deemed impossible by the enemy, determined to make an attempt upon the lower quarter. Accordingly, on the evening of the 5th of November 1439, he went thither along with the marquis of Mantua and a select body of soldiers, and succeeded in the course of the long night in making himself master of the New citadel. The men who had thus acquired an entry into the city opened the adjoining gate of San Antonio, and made way for the cavalry to charge through the streets.

The winged soldiers of Alexander did not strike more surprise into the occupants of the fortress of Petra Oxiani than did the appearance of the Milanese troops into the inhabitants of the lower quarter of Verona. A small party of Venetian soldiers descended from the old fortress and attempted to summon them to arms; but though the majority preferred being the subjects of the republic of Saint Mark to being ruled by the dukes of Milan, they could not risk their lives and their properties every time they were exposed to the attack of one of her enemies. Accordingly, ere the depredations of the soldiers had extended beyond the wall which joined the two fortresses, they came to terms with their conquerors. The garrison of the Venetians, along with the inhabitants that were most attached to their cause, succeeded in making their escape to the upper quarter of the city, where they ensconced themselves safely in the fortress of San Felice. In the mean time, Piccinino and the marquis of Mantua, feeling assured that ere long they would be attacked, turned every moment to account in getting possession of all the most commanding positions, and cutting off by means of barricades all communication between the town and those fortresses that still remained in the hands of the enemy.

Tidings of the capture of Verona were soon brought to Sforza; but he, like many greater generals than himself, was for a long time unwilling to believe that his enemy had made a movement for which he was so little prepared. It required several successive messengers to convince him of their truth. Whatever might have been his real views as to the inflicting further losses on the duke, he was determined to give up none of the advantages that he had gained. His present position seemed fraught with danger, the enemy were in possession of all the country south of the lake, winter was already setting in, and threatening to render impassable the roads to the north. Piccinino, having rallied the spirits of his troops by his recent success, might bring a considerable force from Brescia and other places to act against him, and so possibly surround him or cut off his supplies. For these reasons he was urged by his colleagues to retire without loss of time to Vicenza. But he remained inflexible in his determination to make an effort to recover Verona. However, the report that he adopted the former alternative had spread among his enemies, and was so generally credited, that when Piccinino, on the 9th day of November, beheld his army among the mountains to the north, he believed him to be on his route to his winter-quarters in that place. He was then struck with no small consternation when he saw him turn to the south and march straight in the direction of the town.

During the four days that the Milanese soldiers had been in possession of the town, they had made but little progress with their work; regardless alike of the wishes of their general, and of the express stipulation of the treaty, they had been intent on enriching themselves. Thus the fortress of San Felice still remained in the hands of the Venetians; its communications with the rest of the city were uninterrupted; the other strongholds in the upper quarter were scarcely occupied; and it was found impossible to bring together a sufficient number of troops to make any effectual opposition to the entrance of Sforza into the castle of San Felice. The latter, having established himself there, gained an easy victory over the Milanese in the upper quarter. He took a great number of them prisoners, and might possibly have almost annihilated the whole of the army, if one of the bridges had not broken down, after they had effected their retreat to the south of the Adige. The following day, Sforza having entered this part of the city by another bridge adjoining the castle Vecchio, the Milanese evacuated the city, and fled across the open country to Mantua. Thus within the short space of four days was Verona taken and lost by the troops of Piccinino.

After this the victors returned to Tenna, to follow up their operations for the relief of Brescia. But the winter was now too far advanced for Italian mercenaries to continue fighting the battles of their employers in the Alps; and Sforza, having managed, not without some difficulty, to send a supply of provisions to the besieged, placed his army in cantonments in the neighbourhood of Vicenza and Verona.

In the latter place he endeavoured to have all the booty which had been taken by the soldiers of Piccinino, and had fallen into the hands of his men, returned to their rightful owners. To mark their sense of his generosity, the citizens presented him with two thousand ducats, which he distributed among his soldiers in recompense for the booty to which, according to the rules of war, they might have considered themselves entitled. The Venetians were actively engaged during the winter in reorganising a fleet on the waters of Lake Garda.

CHAPTER XIII.

NICOLO PICCININO RAVAGES THE COUNTRY NEAR FLORENCE. MARRIAGE OF SFORZA WITH BIANCA MARIA.

THE events of the past year having convinced Filippo Maria that, while Sforza remained in Lombardy, all further attempt to extend his conquests would be fruitless, he wisely determined to make a diversion to free himself of that general, who seemed destined through life to be his scourge. The Florentines who had been banished by Cosmo de' Medici still continued to exhort him to an invasion of Tuscany; and whatever other merits this plan might possess, it now appeared to him the readiest method of freeing Lombardy from Sforza. Being well aware of the personal friendship which that general entertained towards Cosmo de' Medici and the Florentines, and of the ill-concealed jealousy that still existed between him and the Venetians, he thought, naturally enough, that he would be more solicitous about the safety of the former than the aggrandizement of the latter. Moreover, it seemed to him that, if the seat of war could by any means be transferred to the vicinity of his own dominions, he would not long remain at a distance from home, fighting the battles of others. For these reasons, in the month of February 1440, he sent Piccinino to Tuscany and Romagna with six thousand horse. In the following month that general arrived at Bologna, accompanied by a considerable number of Florentine exiles. Philip also endeavoured to raise a new enemy against Florence, in the person of Vitellius, the late patriarch of Alessandria. That prelate had on a former occasion received from the pope the temporary appointment of Regent of Naples. Shortly after he had resigned this office he attained the dignity of cardinal, and continued to impress the pope with such an idea of his talent that, in the absence of Sforza, he was appointed to the command of his armies. The phantom of regal power, short-lived as it was, seems to have awakened in him an inextinguishable ambition : he was no longer content to remain in a subordinate situation; and while he affected to be in the confidence, he in reality acted quite independently of his master. Being ill-disposed towards the ruling party in Florence, and jealous of Sforza, he lent a ready ear to the suggestions of Philip, to lead the forces of Eugenius to cooperate with Nicolo Piccinino in an invasion of Tuscany. The latter had already compelled Malatesta of Rimini, and several of the condottieri of Romagna, to join his standard, so that a formidable force seemed likely to be brought together against the Florentine republic.

Such was the state of affairs when Sforza and the Florentine ambassadors repaired to Venice to deliberate on the plan of the ensuing campaign. Both of the allied republics were, as usual, equally anxious to obtain the services of the first general of the day for the object most important to themselves : the Venetians were of course desirous that he should follow up his successes in Lombardy; the Florentines wished that he should repel Nicolo Piccinino from their own frontiers. The old arguments on each side were used: each endeavoured to show that the independence of their own state was most necessary to cripple the power of the duke, and that its subjugation would be fraught with the greatest danger to the liberties of Italy; in addition to which, it was urged with great force by the Florentines, that it could not be expected that they should allow their very existence to be perilled for the sake of enabling the Venetians to extend their dominions in Lombardy, by which they themselves would gain nothing. For his part, Sforza seemed anxious to bring his forces to a spot where he might most easily watch any attack made upon his own dominions. But the argument which really weighed most in their deliberations, and which ultimately prevailed with both the Florentines and Sforza, was this, that the real object which Philip had in view, in sending Piccinino to Tuscany, was to procure the recall of Sforza from Lombardy; that by sending him to Tuscany they would be only playing the game of their enemy, and that the Florentines could not adopt any surer method of freeing their frontiers from an enemy, than by carrying on the war close to Milan.

Persuaded in part by these arguments, and in part by the promise of eight thousand ducats from the Venetians, Sforza, with the permission of the Florentines, consented to remain in Lombardy. It was some time, however, before he would resume active operations for the relief of Brescia; when urged to do so, he pointed out the impossibility of effecting his object from the south, or of carrying on war during the severe weather of the early spring in the mountainous regions to the north. Whatever force there might have been in these arguments, it is more than probable that he was reluctant to lead his troops from a spot whence he might, on the first emergency, conduct them to the defence of his own territory in Ancona. Indeed, the

Venetians had frequently the utmost difficulty in preventing him from doing so. Intelligence, however, soon arrived which made the affairs of the Florentines wear a brighter aspect than heretofore, and freed him from all immediate apprehensions as to his own principality.

Eugenius IV, however jealous he might be of Sforza, had always been friendly disposed towards the Florentines and Venetians. The intrigues of Vitellius with Nicolo Piccinino, carried on as they were without his knowledge, were in direct opposition to the party whom he had always sought to maintain. Part of their correspondence was intercepted by the spies whom the Florentines had posted on their frontiers, and immediately despatched to him. The general purport of the letter, though written in cipher, was understood by the pontiff; and in addition to the proof furnished therein of Vitellius treating with Piccinino without the consent of his master, it might possibly have contained some allusion to a conspiracy for assassinating the pope and placing himself on the pontifical chair, in which he was suspected to have been engaged. Be this as it may, Eugenius determined that he should no longer have an opportunity of injuring him, and gave secret orders to Antonio da Redi, the commander of the guard at St Angelo, to arrest him. This, though a matter of some difficulty, was effected one morning by drawing up the bridge of the fortress immediately after he had passed it on horseback. After this he was thrown into prison, and in less than a month put to death. The pope then intrusted the command of his armies to Louis the patriarch of Aquila, and promised to assist the Florentines with four thousand horse and two thousand foot. This occurrence alone effected a considerable change in the prospects of the Florentines : in addition to which, Sforza received intelligence that Malatesta had joined Nicolo Piccinino entirely out of fear, and was ready to desert him at the earliest opportunity. Thus he now had little reason to be solicitous either on account of his allies or of his own kingdom of Ancona; and after having despatched Neri Capponi with one thousand men to the assistance of the former, he consented to resume his offensive operations in Lombardy.

The experience of the campaign of 1439 having shown him how important the command of the lake of Garda was for the successful carrying on of operations in the disputed territory around, he determined to commence his campaign by striking a blow for that purpose. He therefore directed the fleet, which the Venetians had equipped in obedience to his orders, to be brought on its waters. On the 18th April 1440 they attacked the Milanese ships, and gained a complete victory. Almost all the strongholds in the vicinity of the lake having, in consequence, fallen into his hands, he made a simultaneous advance upon Brescia from the north and the south. One or two ineffectual attempts were made to stop his progress on the north; on the south his troops were allowed to pass the Mincio without any opposition from the marquiss of Mantua, who had been stationed at Peschiera. The Milanese generals, Taliano and Ludovico del Verme, who had invested Brescia, being thus threatened on all sides, evacuated the surrounding territory; and on the 10th June that town was at length freed from the blockade which, during the three years that it lasted, had often reduced it to the utmost extremity. But Sforza was not now content with this single triumph : he was resolved that Philip should for once experience what he could do, and followed up his success with a vigour worthy of the greatest masters of war. Without halting at Brescia, or even entering the city, he immediately went in pursuit of the Milanese generals. He found them occupying a position near Soncino, commanding a bridge over the Oglio, a river separating the territory of Bergamo from that of Brescia. To obtain possession of this place, which might be reckoned the key of the former territory, he ordered one of his generals to make a false attack upon the bridge, and to lure his enemies to his side by a semblance of retreat. The artifice succeeded according to his most sanguine expectations : the Milanese, thinking that they had gained a victory, pursued their enemies with great precipitancy across the bridge, and arrived in considerable numbers and some disorder on the other side. When their army was sufficiently divided, Sforza fell upon them with an unbroken force, and having routed or captured the majority, he again led his men across the bridge, of which he retained possession till his whole forces had arrived on the western bank of the river. The Milanese army, already broken and discouraged, fled in great confusion; one of their generals was taken, the other only escaped capture by throwing himself off his horse and remaining concealed in the mud ; all their baggage and camp-equipage fell into the hands of the conquerors.

This important victory put Sforza in possession of nearly all the castles in the territory of Bergamo. Before the end of June he succeeded in taking Caravaggio, almost the only place in the country that offered

him any resistance; and in the following month he continued ravaging the territories of the Gheradda, Cremona, and Mantua. In the words of Muratori, when the autumnal rains set in, his soldiers took up their quarters in the adjoining territories, flushed with victory and laden with booty; and Filippo Maria had ample cause to rue his having abandoned and deceived the man who, if he had chosen to make use of him, would have been as his right arm.

While these events were going on in Lombardy, Nicolo Piccinino had been engaged in conducting his expedition against Florence. After a vain attempt to enter Tuscany by the pass of San Benedict, he was allowed to cross the mountains by the passes of Marrodi and San Lorenzo, in consequence of the treachery of one to whom the defence of the fortress adjoining the former place had been intrusted; and having entered the rich vale beneath, he ravaged all the country up to the mountains of Fiesole. He then crossed the Arno, and extended his depredations to within three miles of Florence. He hoped that the injuries he was inflicting upon the inhabitants would render them discontented with the government, and lead them to communicate with the exiles who were then in his camp. But the Florentine people, however contentious among themselves, were always united against an enemy; and on the present occasion, acting with a firmness equal to that of the Romans when Hannibal occupied the Forum, they determined to submit to their losses till the arrival of the promised reinforcements should enable them to repel the invaders. Their heroic conduct was in no small degree owing to the popularity of Cosmo de' Medici, and the firmness of the chief magistrates. It was not long before their hopes were revived by the arrival of Neri Capponi with a thousand of Sforza's best soldiers from Lombardy. Neri, though not strong enough to risk a general engagement, was enabled, by retaking some of the fortresses in the neighbourhood, to restrain the depredations of Piccinino. The latter, finding that he made no impression on the citizens, determined to retire, partly under the expectation that the enemy would follow him, and give him an opportunity of attacking to advantage. Having quitted the vicinity of the city, he directed his march along the valley of the Arno, and engaged himself in the capture of the fortresses situated on the heights between it and the valley of the Tiber. But the Florentines, perceiving that their true policy was to throw every delay in the way of their adversary, till they could join their own forces with those of Eugenius, or until the successes of Sforza should compel Philip to recall him, made no attempt to pursue, but encouraged the garrisons of all the fortresses to hold out to the last. At length Piccinino, perceiving that he was wasting much valuable time to very little purpose, and weary of remaining in a country where, according to his own expression, his horses had nothing but rocks to feed on, determined on trying his fortune in his native city of Perugia. The inhabitants of that place received him with all the civility due to an illustrious countryman, and presented him with eight thousand ducats, but gave no encouragement to his favourite project of re-establishing the kingdom of Braccio. He then made an ineffectual attempt to get possession of Cortona; but here also, in Time, which tries all things, now showed the wisdom of the measures adopted by the Florentines. While Piccinino was wasting the season in an almost fruitless campaign in the Apennines, they had joined all their own forces with those of the pope, and taken up a position at Anghiari, at the foot of the mountain, to the north-west of the valley of the Tiber. Moreover, as Philip, being reduced to the last extremity of distress by Sforza, had, in accordance with their anticipation, sent to recall Piccinino in all haste, they now began to anticipate a bloodless termination to the campaign, which at first had seemed fraught with danger to their very existence. But the latter, anxious to redeem his want of success by some brilliant feat, determined, before leaving Tuscany, on risking a general action, in which he felt almost confident of success. The situation of the combined forces at that moment gave him every advantage; for the Florentines, not desiring to retain a hostile army in their territory, had sent word that no attempt should be made to intercept his retreat; while their generals, being aware that the orders of the duke were most urgent, had no expectation of being attacked. In consequence of this ill-timed security, their soldiers were scattered through the country while Piccinino was bearing down upon them with the whole of his force. The number of the troops on each side, if they had all been concentrated together, must have been nearly equal: the army of six thousand, which Piccinino had originally brought with him from Lombardy, had been augmented by the force of Malatesta, the Count Poppi, and a considerable number of Florentine exiles; on the other side were the troops of Eugenius, amounting to six thousand men, which, together with the thousand that Neri had brought from the army of Sforza, and those commanded by Michael Attendolo and Piero Giam Paolo, must have formed a force not inferior to the former; but, from the dispersed and unprepared state of the latter, Piccinino anticipated an

easy victory. He was already within two miles of the enemy, when Michael Attendolo, perceiving a great cloud of dust in the distance, gave orders to take up arms. Fortunately, the nature of the ground was such as permitted him to make a stand while his troops were being collected together. In front of their position was a branch of the Upper Tiber, passable only by a bridge, the road to which, on each side, was fenced off by ditches of sufficient magnitude to present a formidable obstacle to the passage of the heavy-armed troops of the day. The Florentine generals lost no time in having the ditches on their side of the river filled up, so that they might bring a large number of men simultaneously to the approach of the bridge, to which Piccinino could conduct his troops on the other side only by the high-road. By availing themselves of this advantage, they were able to prevent the enemy crossing the river till they had collected their forces in the rear. When at length they were driven across the bridge, and forced to retire to the mountains of Anghiari, they were able to give battle with tolerably equal numbers. The engagement lasted for several hours, in the course of which the bridge was often taken and retaken, the Florentines each time having a considerable advantage from being able to bring all their forces to bear against the enemy whenever they attempted to pass to their side, while they could only be opposed by the troops on the road. At length fortune declared in their favour; the Milanese troops were driven back in considerable confusion, and, being hemmed in by ditches on each side, were unable to rally : a great number were taken prisoners on the spot many lost their horses in attempting to effect their escape into the surrounding country. Of the whole army of Nicolo, which could not have been less than eight thousand, only one thousand horsemen arrived in safety at Borgo San Sepolcro.

This battle affords an admirable specimen of the mode in which wars were carried on by the mercenary troops of that period. If we may credit Machiavelli, though it lasted four hours, only one man lost his life; and even he was not killed by the hand of an enemy, but expired from having been trodden on and ridden over after a fall from his horse : and though this circumstance is not mentioned by other historians of the time, and its literal truth is discredited by M. Sismondi and other modern writers, it may nevertheless be inferred therefrom that the soldiers did not display much zeal in risking their lives for those whose pay they were receiving. Nor did the conquerors turn it to any good account for their employers. The Florentine commissioners were particularly anxious to follow it up by marching to Borgo San Sepolcro, and there besieging the defeated generals; but both the condottieri and the common soldiers, declaring that they must collect together their booty and look to their wounds, refused to obey them. The day following the battle, without even asking permission, they went to Arezzo for the purpose of depositing their spoil, and then returned to Anghiari; and though the commissioners were particularly anxious to cripple the future operations of the duke of Milan and his generals, by retaining all their prisoners, the soldiers let them go as soon as they got out of them all that they had to give. Thus the Florentines were in no better position than if they had never gained their victory, as Piccinino had even then received orders from Philip to evacuate Tuscany ; and that general was able to effect his retreat to Romagna, and afterwards enter Lombardy, with a force but little diminished by his disaster. The real sufferers in each case were the unfortunate subjects, from whom was to be wrung the tribute sufficient to pay the price of the victory, or to repair the damage of a defeat.

When Piccinino arrived in Lombardy, the whole of the territory between Verona and the Adda, with the exception of Mantua and Cremona, had fallen into the hands of the Venetians. Sforza was anxious to reduce the last-named places before prosecuting his conquests west of the Adda, and making an attempt on the city of Milan. The Venetians had promised to him the sovereignty of the former of these principalities should he succeed in reducing it on condition, however, that he should resign it for that of Cremona, if both places should fall into his hands; and that he was to give up both of them, should he ever become possessed of Milan. While he had been engaged in the territory of Gheradda, Gonzaga had garrisoned Peschiera, which he considered the key of his own dominions; but when this place had been retaken after a bombardment of eight days by Sforza, the fate of Mantua seemed no longer doubtful. These continued successes of Sforza still further frightened the duke : he well knew that, though Piccinino might retard his progress, he had not in general shown himself a match for him, and it now seemed advisable to combat him with other weapons besides those of war. Philip, perfectly understanding the man with whom he had to deal, sent his daughter to Ferrara, and spread about a report that he had destined her hand and the reversion

of his duchy to Lionel, the son of the marquis of Ferrara; but in the mean time he authorised Nicholas, the father of Lionel, to reopen negotiations with Sforza about the long-promised marriage. By so doing he hoped, even if he failed in detaching the latter from his present engagements, to arouse the suspicions of the Venetians, and so make them lukewarm in support of their general, or possibly to subject him to the fate of Carmagnola.

The marquis, much as he might have desired the heiress of Milan for his own son, undertook the commission. He requested Francesco to meet him at Marmidolo, a villa that he possessed in the territory of Mantua, to treat of matrimony and peace. This, however, Sforza refused to do without the consent of the senate of Venice. But Nicholas well knew that, however coy he might be about opening the negotiations on such a delicate subject, he would not be in reality averse to them, and accordingly he proceeded himself to his camp at Peschiera. Having been received there with all due honour by his ancient friend and client, he proceeded to paint in the most glowing colours the advantages of the course he proposed. He represented to him that, as his own career had been one of uninterrupted success, and that as he had reconquered all, and more than all, that the Venetians had any claim to, he had done everything that was necessary to maintain his own glory as a general, or that could in justice be required by his employers, and that he might now, without any breach of honour, retire to the south of the Po; that Philip, he knew, was desirous of peace, and was willing to concede all that could equitably be demanded by the Florentines or the Venetians; and that, if he were agreeable, he would give him his daughter without further delay. He backed all these representations by reminding Sforza of a circumstance of which nobody was better aware than himself, and which had evidently weighed with him in his former dealings, viz., that no man could be more interested in preserving the integrity of the Milanese dominions than one most likely to succeed to them.

However reasonable these arguments, and however tempting the accompanying offers might have appeared to Sforza, he had so often been deceived by Philip that he could put no faith in his promises; so, having replied to the marquis that he would lay his proposals before the Venetians, he continued his operation. Having taken several places on the confines of the territories of Verona and Mantua, he took up his winter-quarters in the former. The Venetians, in addition to the conquests that he had made for them, received a further accession of territory in the town of Ravenna, the inhabitants of which had revolted to them.

In the meantime the duke, having failed in his negotiations with Sforza, endeavoured to retrieve his affairs by means of Piccinino. That general, though no match for Sforza in a general engagement, had not the same scruple as Alexander about stealing a victory; so, after having spent some time in levying contributions from the subjects and allies of Philip, and reorganising his forces, he marched upon the Brescian territory in the middle of winter. The troops that had been left there by Sforza, being taken by surprise, fled into the neighbouring castles. In a short time the majority of them, amounting to two thousand horse, either through fear or through treachery, surrendered themselves to Piccinino. Having thus weakened the effective force of his adversary, Piccinino availed himself of the opportunity to recover much of what had been lost during his absence, and in a very short space of time made himself master of all the territory to the west of the lake of Garda, besides the strongholds in the territory of Mantua that had fallen into the hands of the Venetians.

News of these events being brought to Venice when Sforza was there arranging a plan of operations for the approaching season, he immediately repaired to the headquarters of his army at Verona. The Venetians also were naturally anxious to recover their lost ground; but either because they dissented among themselves, or because Philip had succeeded in making them jealous of Sforza, they did not put their general in the way of commencing operations till the middle of June. He, too, did not show the same vigour and prudence in the conduct of this campaign that he had done in the preceding one. His first step was to march into the territory of Brescia, and take up a position within five miles of Piccinino. Following his usual tactics, he determined on attacking his enemy at once, and addressed his soldiers in a speech full of boastful anticipations of success. His wary adversary, however, did not choose to be brought to a general engagement, and defended his position by continually skirmishing in front of his camp. By this means the

victory which Sforza promised his soldiers was converted into a disastrous repulse. After he had drawn off his troops, he discovered a vulnerable point in the position of the enemy, which had been strangely overlooked by one of his generals during the course of the engagement, and determined on attacking in that direction on the following day. But Piccinino anticipated his plans, and, content with the damage he had done him already, retired in the course of the night.

The tactics followed by both parties during the rest of the campaign are admirably described by the annalist of Italy, who also divined their true cause. After this, says he, "they went making evolutions, and as it were playing at tournaments, without displaying any wish to try their fortune". The real reason was, that negotiations for peace were being carried on in secret, and Sforza, who with a great sense of honour communicated to the Venetian commissioners all the propositions that were made to him, was the principal person in conducting them. He, of course, was enticed by the prospect of immediately obtaining the hand of Bianca Maria; and Philip, being much annoyed by the insolence of the condottieri then in his service, who were already speculating on apportioning among themselves his dominions, in the same manner as their predecessors had divided those of Galeazzo Visconte, was more willing than heretofore to accede to the fulfillment of his wishes. The fact that letters to this effect were passing, during the whole of this campaign, between Philip and Sforza, will serve to throw light upon much of the conduct of the latter, which would otherwise be difficult of explanation.

After the retreat of Piccinino almost all the strongholds in the vicinity of Brescia came again into the hands of the Venetians. The next step for their general to take was naturally to pass the river Oglio, into the territory of Bergamo; but he did not set about this in the dashing manner by which, in the preceding year, he had gained so much reputation. After a considerable delay, he made a vain attempt to pass the bridge near Soncino; but finding it strongly guarded, he did not try to carry it by force. He then turned his army towards the south, to the bridge of Pontoglio, on the high-road between Bergamo and Cremona. This bridge was commanded by a fortress, of which he possessed himself by stratagem, and so crossed the river before Piccinino was aware of his designs. He then halted for a couple of days, while Piccinino, having left a sufficient force to blockade Bergamos, took up a position to defend the territory of Gheradda. Sforza, acting as if he had the relief of the former of these places in view, began the siege of the castle of Martinengo, which commanded one of the principal approaches. Whatever might have been his real object in setting about it, it was admirably fitted to consume a great deal of time to little purpose. Before commencing operations, he deemed it necessary to fortify his camp, a work which it took thirty days to complete. He then began the siege of the fortress. But Piccinino had garrisoned the place with twelve hundred men, commanded by two of his most skillful generals, and had it amply provided with all the materials of defence. The besieged were thus enabled during the night to repair all the destruction of the fortifications made by the besiegers during the day. The strength of these fortifications and the valour of the defendants were such that the assailants were always driven back with loss. Ere long, other dangers of a formidable nature began to environ Sforza. The army encamped before Martinengo amounted to thirty thousand men, and required the range of a considerable extent of country to supply them with provisions. Piccinino, encamped in an impregnable situation within two miles of his rear, ravaged all the surrounding country, and managed to cut off the foraging parties that were sent to a distance. The situation of Sforza, deprived of his supplies, and hemmed in by the fortress on one side, and the army of his enemy on the other, seemed critical in the extreme; the famine was already felt in his camp; to all appearance nothing awaited him but an ignominious surrender of one of the largest armies he had ever commanded, or an almost hopeless attack upon his enemy.

Piccinino now anticipated a triumph sufficient to avenge himself on his adversary for many defeats, and to entitle him to ask any favour from his employer. He had already informed the latter of the situation of the enemy, and became more insolent in his demands than before. But he little knew the extent of the negotiations that had been carried on between Philip and Sforza. The intelligence which he now sent to the former, and the insolence with which he persevered in his demands, only served to bring matters to a crisis. Philip, seeing that he had now got all he could out of Piccinino, deemed it a proper time for getting quit of him, and making an advantageous peace with Sforza and the Venetians. For this purpose he despatched

Antonio Guidobono to the camp of the enemy. On the night of the 10th of August, while Piccinino was possibly enjoying the “fairest boding dreams”, he arrived at his destination, and delivered to Sforza a message to the following effect, “Philip, who has sent me hither, knows well that one so clever and clear-sighted as you must be fully aware of the difficulties in which your affairs, as well as those of the Florentines and Venetians, are involved, inasmuch as, on account of the want of food for your men, and of forage for your horses, you are unable to continue the siege of Martinengo; and, as from the situation of your army you cannot depart hence without the most imminent danger, he feels confidently assured of victory. Nevertheless he himself is angry that, as master, he should be expected to accede to the demands of his servants, as if he were in their power”. He here mentioned in detail the unreasonable demands of his different condottieri, which have been already referred to, and proceeded to say : “He does not see what severer conditions his enemies, should they come off victorious, could impose upon him than those which these men, in the midst of his prosperity, are trying to extort from him. Having due regard for your honour and advantage, as also for the well-doing of the Florentines and Venetians, he wishes to put an end to this war. He therefore appoints you the umpire of peace between him and your friends, and puts at your disposal all the conquests that Nicholas has made in the territory of Bergamo, beginning with Martinengo. Moreover, he now gives to you your affianced wife, Bianca Maria, and requests you to accept as her dowry the city of Cremona, along with the adjoining territory on this side of the Po, (with the exception of the city of Pizzighetone, which commands the road to Lodi and Castiglio, which he has promised to Taliano, instead of which you shall have Pontremoli). If you are willing to agree to these preliminaries, he will send another ambassador to lay the matter before you and your allies in a more formal manner”.

It is needless to say how glad Sforza was, in the then situation of his affairs, to promise his concurrence in the terms which had been mooted between him and Philip during the whole of the campaign. Shortly afterwards a duly authorized ambassador arrived from Milan, making formal offers of peace, and investing Sforza with full power to act as mediator on the occasion. As the Florentines and Venetians were heartily sick of a war which, for the third year, was consuming their resources without the prospect of any further advantage, their delegates were willing enough to agree to the armistice on the conditions proposed. To Piccinino alone of the combatants the messengers of peace were harbingers of grief. He knew nothing of what was going on in the opposite camp till, the preliminaries having been arranged, he received formal orders from Philip to desist from hostilities. For a time he could set no bounds to his indignation : he saw himself suddenly deprived of the fruits of a well-devised plan of operations; he complained bitterly that the duke had left everything to the commander-in-chief of the enemy, without deigning to consult his own general; that after he had spent so much of his time, and exhausted so much of his energy, in the defence of the Milanese, Philip, rather than assign to him a single city, had given over the fairest provinces in his dominions to one who, for the last three years, had been his bitterest enemy. He even refused to obey orders till the duke threatened to attack him with his own soldiers, in conjunction with those of the Florentines and Venetians. He then withdrew from the field of operations with much the same feelings that an exile quits his country, and entered the camp of his opponent. Here, for a time, all present disappointment as well as former rivalry was forgotten; the two generals met on the same easy terms as their two great preceptors in the art of war had done eighteen years before : they each declared that they had never felt any personal enmity towards the other, and each expressed admiration for the ability and confidence in the honour of his opponent.

The circumstance that Sforza, the first Italian general of the day, should have brought his army into such a perilous situation at Martinengo could not fail to excite suspicion among the Venetians. His enemies openly declared that he deserved the punishment of Carmagnola. The best vindication of his conduct is, that on hearing of their insinuations he immediately went to Venice, and succeeded in clearing himself to the satisfaction of that jealous and crafty republic. Nevertheless it cannot be supposed that, if he had not been more intent upon treating than upon fighting, he would have been so completely outgeneraled by a man whom he had so often beaten before. But it must be allowed that, if he made favourable terms for himself, he equally consulted the advantage of his employers, and that they gained more by his negotiations on this occasion than they might have done after the most decisive victory. Thus, though a stern moralist

might censure, certainly no Italian government could condemn, the course that he had taken. Of this the Venetians must have been aware, when they allowed him to depart in peace to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

It was natural that Sforza should insist on Philip fulfilling his engagement with him before the final ratification of the peace. Accordingly, after his return from Venice, he was allowed to take the entire possession of Cremona, to station his troops in the surrounding territory, and to establish himself in the citadel. Shortly afterwards Bianca Maria, then only in her sixteenth year, entered into the same city for the purpose of being duly installed as its mistress, and of celebrating her nuptials with the first captain of the age. It was finally arranged that the wedding, which was to bring a duchy to the son of a peasant of Cotignola, should be solemnized on the 22d of October. On that day the young heiress, accompanied by a magnificent retinue of the chief men both of Milan and Cremona, went in state to the church of St Sigismond, a little distance from the city. Francesco Sforza also repaired thither, escorted by the first captains of his army, and ten troops of cavalry mounted on the most magnificent horses, and equipped in armour resplendent with the finest gold and silver ornaments of the day. For the purpose of giving further effect to the spectacle, and possibly also of guarding against any surprise, he had sent on a body of infantry to mount guard at the gates, and to occupy the strong posts of the city. After the conclusion of the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom repaired, amidst the plaudits of the assembled citizens, to the fortress of Santa Croce, where the most suitable preparations for their reception had been made.

Holidays were observed for several days after in Cremona; the shops were shut, all public business was suspended, there was no sound but that of festivity and merriment. Thus, at the age of forty, had the son of a peasant of Cotignola become possessor of a fair province in the centre of the peninsula, several fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, and one of the best principalities in Lombardy, and was married to the heiress of the most powerful of Italian sovereigns.

Sforza, having thus obtained the long-promised rewards from Philip, did not fail to perform his part of the agreement. On the 20th November, not quite a month after the wedding, a treaty was signed putting an end to the war which, for three years, had devastated all the country between the Alps and the Po. The marquis of Mantua, who had forsaken the Venetians in the time of their distress, paid the penalty of his desertion by being obliged to leave in the hands of his former allies all the places he had lost during the two last years of the war.

BOOK FOURTH.

LIFE OF FRANCESCO SFORZA FROM HIS MARRIAGE WITH BIANCA MARIA TILL
THE DEATH OF FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI, 1441-1447.

CHAPTER XIV.

VIEWS OF THE OTHER ITALIAN POTENTATES TOWARDS SFORZA.— DEATH AND CHARACTER OF NICOLO PICCININO.

THE six years that followed the marriage of Sforza were the least interesting, as they were also the least fortunate, of the whole of his career. To many it might appear that the alliance, offensive and defensive, which he had formed with the Florentines and Venetians, his connection with the house of the Visconti, and the leisure afforded him by the cessation of hostilities, would have enabled him to establish the foundations of a kingdom as durable as any in Italy. But his origin, his position, and his reputation, all combined to raise him enemies, whom, with all his talents, he was unable to withstand. The princes and potentates of the peninsula could not bear to see the son of a peasant of Cotignola raised to a level with themselves; the minor sovereigns and descendants of feudatory lords, who, like himself, had embraced the profession of arms for the sake of regaining or extending their dominions, were particularly piqued at his rapid elevation. His almost uniform success had excited the envy of the other captains of the day, both those who had learned their profession in the camp of his father, and those who had been trained in the school of Braccio : the latter were his most unrelenting enemies; the former frequently carried on intrigues with his opponents, and often, when fortune seemed to frown on him, openly deserted him. The provinces which he sought to erect into a kingdom were those to which an ambitious sovereign of Italy always directed his attention. The kings of Naples occasionally wished to extend their dominions as far as Bologna. The dukes of Milan coveted all the provinces between the Adriatic and the Apennines, as far as the Abruzzes. Nor was the present incumbent of the Holy See one likely to forego his claim to any part of his dominions because, in the hour of his distress, he had assigned them to an adventurer. The Venetians, indeed, were nominally his allies; but many of them still retained the sentiments which they had expressed to the Florentines when he refused to go north of the Po. Cosmo de' Medici, the ruling man at Florence, was more favourably disposed towards him than others, and he, with many of the wisest of his countrymen, regarded the establishment of his kingdom at Ancona as a useful check upon the dukes of Milan and the sovereigns of Naples; but he, though extremely popular, was not omnipotent in the republic, and the citizens were not likely to risk much in assisting a man whom they regarded as an upstart adventurer. Had Sforza possessed less talents, he might perhaps have been allowed to rule his territories in peace; but it was well known that he would not consent to be a sovereign in name without being one in reality; and that, if he were once established in his present position, he might extend his dominions over the neighbouring states. These considerations will suffice to explain the inveteracy of his foes, and the lukewarmness of those who called themselves his friends. For some time we shall see him vainly endeavouring to maintain an unequal struggle against the former, almost always victorious in the field, but gradually obliged to give way to their superior numbers, and to their comparatively inexhaustible resources.

The first enemy that he had to contend with, after his marriage, was Alphonso of Aragon, one of the claimants for the kingdom of Naples. For a long time, Elizabeth, the wife of René of Anjou, had maintained an unequal contest against Alphonso in that kingdom. Though she was inferior to him in resources, and though she had no generals capable of opposing him in the field, a feeling of chivalry caused all the old partisans of her house to continue supporting her. But the chivalrous feelings which a woman only can inspire had been extinguished by the arrival of her husband, in the year 1438. That monarch, having exhausted his treasure in paying the ransom required for his liberation, was destitute of the sinews of war; and though he was popular in his manner, and by no means deficient in talent, those who had risked much in support of his wife were not inclined to continue the contest for him at their own expense. The principal towns and castles throughout the land had gradually fallen into the hands of the Aragonese; and in the year 1440 René possessed little in the coveted territory beyond the city of Naples.

Up to this period, Alphonso had shown no wish to attack the fiefs that had been granted by his predecessors to the elder Sforza. But he was not unmindful of the demonstration that Francesco had made in favour of René; he knew that his military talents were at least equal to those of his father, of which he had already had experience; and now it appeared to him that his adversary's only chance lay in the assistance that the possession of those fiefs might then, or at some future time, allow that captain to render him. At the same time, the city of Naples, to which he was then laying siege, derived no inconsiderable supplies from one of the principal of his cities, Benevento. Determined to take away all remaining ground of hope from his rival, he had, in the year 1440, made himself master of it, and several other places belonging to Sforza. There can be no doubt but that the duke of Milan, who was at that time sore pressed by Sforza, and anxious by any means to draw him out of his own territories, had prompted him to this course. But Sforza was then occupied with the war in Lombardy, and was too much intent upon reducing Philip's own dominions, to bestow much attention on the defence of the isolated fiefs that had been granted to his father. When Alphonso pursued the same course in the following year, he sent a small force against him, under the command of his brother, Alexander, and of Caesar Martinengo; and they, though defeated in some quarters, succeeded in regaining some places in the Abruzzes. After the peace, and his marriage with the daughter of Philip, he was probably of opinion that his father-in-law would have settled all differences between Alphonso and himself; for he remained some time without taking any steps to defend his Neapolitan possessions, and turned a deaf ear to René's solicitations for assistance. It is not unlikely that he might have considered these aggressions of Alphonso as a mere diversion in favour of Philip, and that he therefore expected they would be discontinued, and all that had been taken from him would be restored on his coming to terms with the latter. Everything seemed likely to answer his expectations during the life of the marquis of Este. There is no certain record of the extent to which that excellent prince may have guided Philip, either in opening the negotiations or after the peace; but if we may judge by subsequent events, his influence must have been great. After he departed this life, on the 26th of December 1441, a sudden change took place in the mutual behaviour of the father and husband of Bianca Maria. Early in the following month, the latter set out to fight for his fiefs, and to render assistance to Rene in the kingdom of Naples. At the same time, the former, with the view of assisting Alphonso, wrote word to Eugenius that the time was now come for recovering the March of Ancona, and offered to place the services of Nicolo Piccinino at his disposal for that purpose. And though it was but a very short time since Sforza had commanded the troops of a coalition which was supported by the pope—though he had been recognised by that same pontiff as arbiter of the peace of Italy—though he was at that very instant marching to the assistance of his ally, Rene, Eugenius at once disregarded every obligation of gratitude and consistency, and closed with the offer of Philip. Nicolo Piccinino, having been appointed gonfalonier of the church, lost no time in invading the territories of one of whom he had never ceased to be jealous, and began the campaign by taking the city of Todi by surprise.

This attack of Piccinino produced the much-desired effect of preventing Sforza from entering the kingdom of Naples, and of allowing Alphonso to continue the siege of the city. The inhabitants had already begun to suffer from the scarcity of provisions; but being animated by the presence of their beloved René, they continued to hold out with the greatest fortitude, and murmured not at the privations which their sovereign shared with them. At last the fortune of war declared in favour of the besiegers. Two master-masons of the Neapolitans, having been made prisoners by the Aragonese, pointed out to their captors the aqueduct by which, nearly one thousand years before, Belisarius had effected an entrance into the city. King René, being aware of its existence, had blocked it up in every possible manner, and had ordered it to be continually watched by a guard; but the apparent impossibility of any one going through a passage so narrow had made his officers neglect this latter precaution. On the night of Saturday the 2d of June, forty, or, according to others, three hundred soldiers of Alphonso made their way through it into the city, and lay hid in a house adjoining its entrance till the morning. At daybreak, Alphonso ordered a vigorous assault to be made on the part of the walls that was most distant from the aqueduct. When the attention of the besieged was drawn thither, the Aragonese soldiers, having issued from their hiding-place, possessed themselves of the nearest gate and hoisted their flag on the tower above it. The capture of the city soon followed, and King René, after having performed prodigies of valour, was obliged to retire to the fortress of Castel Nuovo. When a fresh supply of provisions had been introduced there, the unfortunate monarch betook himself to

Florence, where he met Pope Eugenius, whom he bitterly reproached for having prevented Sforza from coming to his assistance. The pope consoled him by formally investing him with the crown he had caused him to lose. Rene, having received this second experience of the inconstancy of fortune, retired to Provence, to solace himself with his singers and players; and being unwilling any longer to risk the safety of his friends in a contest which he now deemed to be hopeless, he made a formal resignation of his claims to the kingdom of Naples.

In the meantime, the pope and his gonfalonier were annoying Sforza in every manner that their malice could suggest or their treachery effect. As soon as the latter had become aware of their intentions, he established his headquarters at Jesi along with his wife. Though he had not sufficient force to risk a general engagement, he continued to watch, to retard, and to embarrass the movements of his enemies. For this reason he allowed several places to fall into their hands, till on one occasion he managed, by cutting off their supplies and hemming in their army, to place them in the same difficulties that he himself had been in at Martinengo. There was nothing left for Piccinino but to attack to disadvantage, or to submit; and as he was not the man to do the former, it was arranged by the mediation of Bernardo de' Medici, the Florentine commissioner in the opposite camp, that he should be allowed to bring his army out of the dominions of Sforza, and abstain from making any attack on them for the future. Sforza then started a second time to recover his lost fiefs in the kingdom of Naples; but as soon as he had set out on his expedition, Piccinino made a treacherous attack on Tolentino, and was again glad to purchase peace on the same conditions. Sforza then once more led his troops in the direction of Tronto; but he had not proceeded far before Piccinino made a third attack upon his provinces, in which, after having acquired possession of several of the strong places, he took and pillaged Assisi, one of the most important cities in the March of Ancona. When gravely upbraided for these frequent breaches of faith, which come under the class of those which are condemned by Machiavelli, in his Discourses on Livy, he replied that he did not consider himself bound to respect any oath or treaty which was inimical to the interests of the church—a strange excuse to come from one who, for about eight years, had given Eugenius more annoyance than any other condottiere in Italy.

While Sforza was thus retained in the province of Ancona, Alphonso profited by the occasion to make himself master of the fiefs that still remained to him in the territory of Naples. As none of them contained a force sufficient to make any effectual opposition, they all fell into his hands; and before the end of the year many of the best generals of the count, beholding the number of those that were against him, and seeing his dominions gradually pass from him, deserted to his enemies. Thus, in little more than twelve months after he had been the arbiter of Italy, and had crowned his fortune by a marriage which opened such splendid views to his ambition, he beheld himself stripped of his patrimony, deserted by a large portion of his troops, and surrounded by enemies determined to deprive him of the remainder of his possessions.

The winter of 1442 and 1443 afforded to all parties an opportunity of reviewing their positions and taking measures for the future. René's formal resignation of the crown of Naples rendered Sforza's prospects more gloomy than before. Eugenius, no longer fettered by his engagements with the king of Anjou, was now able openly to enter into an alliance with Alphonso; he acknowledged him as the lawful sovereign of Naples; confirmed him in the possession of the fiefs that had been given to the elder Sforza, and legitimised his natural son Ferdinand, whom he wished to be his heir. On the other hand, he received from him promises of assistance to expel the man whom he most hated from the March of Ancona. Sforza having neither money nor troops of his own sufficient to resist this formidable coalition, sent to demand both from the Venetians and the Florentines, reminding them of their engagement to assist him to repel any attack that might be made on his dominions, and representing to them the dangers they must incur if Alphonso, by conquering the whole of his territory, should extend his frontiers to those of the duke of Milan. He does not appear, however, to have received any considerable assistance; for he was able to muster only eight thousand men to oppose the twenty-four thousand which the pope and Alphonso were bringing against him. Being, therefore, obliged to confine himself to defensive operations, he placed in each of the towns, and the fortresses which commanded the passes of the Apennines, garrisons under the command of those whom he thought least likely to desert him. He took up his own headquarters at Fano, a town

belonging to Sigismund Malatesta, who had lately married his daughter, and which, from being situated on the shores of the Adriatic, and being remarkable for the strength of its fortifications, would enable him to continue his communications with the Venetians during a siege of almost any duration. He also took the greatest pains about the fortifying of Firmo, another town in a commanding position in the March of Ancona. Having made these preparations, he determined to defend every mountain-pass, every stronghold, and every city to the last, hoping that in the mean time he might receive some assistance from his friends, or that something would occur to distract the councils of his enemies.

The wisdom of his plans was soon made manifest by their success. His father-in-law, however jealous he might have been of the high position which he had held at the beginning of the year, did not wish to see him utterly prostrated before his enemies, and determined to interpose in his favour. The immediate occasion of his doing so was his hearing from the ambassadors whom he had sent to the camp of Alphonso, of the intended defection of one of his generals, Troilus, whom Sforza had left in the command of the garrison of Jesi. To enable his son-in-law to make head against his present adversities, he warned him of his impending danger. Sforza, knowing the dislike with which Philip had always regarded Troilus, was at first reluctant to credit these intimations; nevertheless he accepted them as indications of a less hostile inclination on the part of his father-in-law, and sent ambassadors, praying him to interpose in his favour. These requests were also backed by the Venetians and the Florentines, who were less grudging of their mediation than of their money. The result was, that Philip sent to Alphonso, requesting him, as he had already done enough for his honour, and for the security of his dominions, to desist from further hostilities against his son-in-law. Much as Alphonso must have been by this time accustomed to the wayward and eccentric disposition of Philip, he could not refrain from expressing his surprise at this message. He professed himself unable to understand why Philip, who had been the first to suggest to Eugenius that he should make an effort to recover the territory that he had assigned to Sforza, should wish him to desist, now that he had almost effected his purpose—still less could he comprehend why he should have complied with the wishes of the Florentines and Venetians, without having first communicated with him: he further alleged that the duke ought at least to have stipulated that Sforza should have given up the towns to which he himself laid claim, and concluded by refusing to desist from his enterprise. Though several communications passed between them, Alphonso continued to take the cities that belonged to Sforza, and at last threatened him in his headquarters at Fano. Hereupon Sigismund, to save his own city, entered into negotiations with Alphonso to give up his father-in-law into his hands; but his designs were happily frustrated by the vigilance of the latter.

In the mean time Troilus, as had been predicted by Philip, accompanied by one Brunoro, deserted to the king of Naples. Thus reinforced by upwards of two thousand horse besides infantry, that monarch marched to Firmo, and tried in vain to persuade its inhabitants to return to the allegiance of the pope, after which, being unwilling to undertake the siege of a place so strongly fortified by nature and art, he retired to some strongholds in the vicinity. Sforza then made use of the following stratagem to avenge himself on Troilus and Brunoro. He ordered his brother, Alexander, to whom he had intrusted the defence of Firmo, to address letters to them, containing allusions to their intention to desert Alphonso, which he was to allow to fall into the hands of the enemy. The stratagem produced the desired effect. The Neapolitan king, on receiving the letters, could not be persuaded that Troilus and Brunoro were not acting a double part; he therefore had them sent to Naples, where they were detained prisoners in a fortress, and had their possessions divided among his soldiers. He himself, shortly afterwards, was persuaded by Philip to retire to Naples, leaving Nicolo Piccinino to finish the campaign.

In the meantime, friendly messages continued to pass between Philip and Sforza; and events had occurred which left the allies of the latter more at liberty than they had been to render him the assistance he needed so much. In the early part of the year, Bologna had been disturbed by a contention, caused by an endeavour of Annibal Bentivoglio to displace Francesco, the son of Nicolo Piccinino, in the government of the city. Both the Venetians and Florentines took part with the former, and they thought it not improbable that their interference might provoke the resentment of the duke, and possibly lead to a renewal of the war. They were, for this reason, unwilling to exhaust their resources in rendering assistance to Sforza. But the

complete success of Bentivoglio, and the indifference of Philip as to the result of the contest, quieted their apprehensions on this score, and left them more masters of their resources than before. Moreover, Cosmo de' Medici was daily becoming more powerful at Florence. Though extremely popular with the lower orders of the citizens, his rise had not been regarded without jealousy by many of those who still remained at Florence; among others, by Neri di Geni Caponi, who had commanded at the battle of Anghiari, and Balduccio d' Anghiari, a condottiere of no small eminence. In the present year, the latter had made himself so odious to Bartolomeo, the gonfalonier of justice, and to other members of the government, that they determined upon getting rid of him. To effect this, the gonfalonier sent and requested Balduccio to attend him at the palace. When he had come thither, he entered into conversation with him, and led him, suspecting nothing, through a suite of corridors, till he had arrived at the door of his private apartments, upon which a number of armed men, who had been placed there for the purpose, rushed out and despatched him. His body was then thrown from the palace, and the head was cut off and exhibited, to warn others of the fate they must expect if they gave any trouble to the ruling men of the state.

Thus the ascendancy of Cosmo de' Medici was more completely established than before; and he, as well as the chief men at Venice, began now to see the impolicy of allowing Sforza to fall a sacrifice to the ambition of Alphonso. After they had persuaded the Duke of Milan to interfere in his favour, they sent a body of four thousand horse to his assistance. The approach of these reinforcements, after the departure of Alphonso for Naples, determined Sforza once more to act on the offensive. As the autumn rain had already set in, Piccinino did not much apprehend an attack; but when he heard that the allied forces had arrived at Rimini, he took up a position at Monte Loreto, to prevent them forming a junction with Sforza at Fano. On the fifth of November, the count started with all the troops he could collect; he easily drove before him a small force that Piccinino had sent to defend the pass of the Foglia at Monte Abbate, and proceeded to pitch his camp between the river and Monte Loreto. But as his advanced-guard under Sigismund was immediately attacked and driven in by Piccinino, he brought up all his army, and determined upon risking a general action. At the same time he sent word to the Venetian and Florentine commanders to attack the enemy in the rear, while he was engaged with him in front.

Neither the strength of their position on Monte Loreto, nor the confidence with which a series of successes had inspired them, enabled the soldiers of Piccinino to withstand this united onset; they were driven from their heights, and fled in the greatest confusion. The castle on Monte Abbate, with all its stores, fell into the hands of the victors. After the battle, the rain flowed in torrents, and the defeated troops, who in the morning had been flushed with the triumphs of a whole campaign, and anticipated an easy victory on that day, were obliged to wander all night exposed to the inclemency of the weather, or to seek some slight shelter in the woods which covered the sides of the mountain.

If Sforza had been fighting the battles of others, it is probable that he would have been content with the mere acquisition of this victory, and brought his army to winter-quarters at that advanced period of the season. But, as he was now warring on his own account, he was anxious, ere Piccinino had time to rally the discomfited forces, to march into the province of Ancona, to recover the cities that had revolted from him at the beginning of the year. He was doomed, however, in his turn, to experience the disadvantage of fighting with the soldiers of others : a great part of his army was composed of the troops of his son-in-law, Sigismund Malatesta, who refused to allow them to advance farther till he had conquered Pesaro, and one or two other places between Rimini and Fano. This conduct on the part of his son-in-law was extremely vexatious to Sforza; but not being now in a position to dictate to his allies, he was obliged to champ the bit, galling as it was, and to obey. Having, before the end of November, put Sigismund in possession of the country surrounding Pesaro, with several of the cities that he principally coveted, he immediately marched into the territory of Ancona, thinking that it might not yet be too late to profit by the victory of Monte Loreto. But there was no one particular in which the military genius of Piccinino was more conspicuous than in the facility with which he rallied a defeated army, and often retarded the advance of a victorious enemy. On the present occasion, he turned these qualities to account. Having placed in all the principal cities and castles garrisons of picked men, commanded by officers on whom he had the greatest reliance, he himself took up a very strong position at Montecchio. In consequence of these dispositions, Sforza could

make but little impression on the territory of Ancona; so, after a few places of minor importance had fallen into his hands, he was obliged to retire for the winter to Firino. His Florentine and Venetian allies took up their quarters in the adjoining cities of Tuscany and Ravenna respectively. Thus ended the season, in which Francesco Sforza completed the forty-second year of his own life, and the twentieth that had elapsed since the death of his father—a season which began with disaster, and was only redeemed by the most partial success, and the events of which threatened to put an end to the magnificent hopes which he had never ceased to entertain, and which, two years before, he had every prospect of realising.

The subsequent year opened with an event which augured well not only for his domestic happiness, but also for his political success. His wife, Bianca Maria, having received a pass from Piccinino, had been allowed to go through the theatre of the war to Firmo, and there, on the 30th day of January 1444, she presented her husband with a son and heir, just twenty-six months after her marriage. Sforza was not actually at Firmo at the time; but on the news being brought to him by a confidential attendant, he was unable to contain himself with joy. But though overpowered by his tenderer feelings, he lost no time in turning to the best account an event which formed such a strong bond of union between one of the most powerful princes of Italy and himself. He therefore ordered Gaspar of Pesaro, the physician under whose auspices the event had taken place, to hasten with the intelligence to the father of Bianca. At the same time, he requested Philip to send word what name he should wish to be given to his grandson. Even Philip, though intent on intrigue of all sorts, and profound master of dissimulation, could not altogether conceal his feelings; and, in accordance with the wishes of the parents, he expressed a wish that the child should be named Galeazzo Maria. Eugenius, when he heard of the event, is reported to have said that another Lucifer had come into the world. And, indeed, one cannot wonder at an incumbent of the Holy See, still less at Eugenius, applying this term to the family of Sforza. The first of that name had made himself so odious to John XXIII that he gratified his spleen by exhibiting caricatures of him in the most public places in Rome; and the present pontiff had beheld himself stripped of half his dominions by his son, and had not hitherto, though aided by the most powerful of the princes, and the most skilful of the captains of Italy, been able to expel him thence. The child that called forth this remark was duly baptised on the 17th of the following March, just before the commencement of the season in which Italian condottieri began their business.

The prospects of Francesco at the opening of the year were almost as gloomy as they had been in the preceding one. His opponent was well supplied with money and troops by Alphonso as well as by Eugenius, while his own resources were utterly exhausted. The Venetians, in compliance with his earnest entreaties, had sent him a small sum of money by his son-in-law Sigismund; but he, after having distributed a part of what he had received among the soldiers at Firmo, retained the rest, under various pretences, for himself. Nicolo Piccinino opened the campaign by making excursions in the vicinity of the last-named city. A considerable body of troops were also advancing against this place from the south under the command of Caesar Martinengo. Under these circumstances Sforza confined himself to the defence of the strip of territory along the coast of the Adriatic, and with the assistance of Ciarpellio, one of the ablest condottieri of the time, managed to make tolerable head, and even sometimes to gain no inconsiderable advantages over his enemies. But the Florentines and Venetians still delayed sending him the succours that were so necessary to enable him to meet his adversaries on any terms of equality; and his son-in-law Sigismund, though he had during the last year been put in possession of almost all the territory he desired by the assistance of his father-in-law, retired with his troops to Fano. To add to his discomfitures, Alphonso, at the solicitation of Piccinino and Eugenius, had sent into the Adriatic a fleet of eighteen galleys, by which he effectually cut off all hopes of his receiving supplies from the Venetians.

All circumstances seemed now to combine in promising to Piccinino as effectual a triumph over his rival in arms as he had expected at Martinengo; but he was frustrated by interference from the same quarter as on that occasion. Even in the preceding year Philip had shown himself more anxious for the humiliation than for the total ruin of Sforza, and he might now possibly have been moved by some feelings of affection for the father of his grandchild, like those by which Sophocles represented the stern resolve of Ajax to be shaken. Accordingly he sent a message to Piccinino, earnestly entreating him to make terms with his son-in-law, and to come to Milan to speak with him on matters of importance, which could not be

satisfactorily explained in writing. With the first of these requests Piccinino positively refused to comply; but, not knowing what good things might be in store for him at Milan, he went thither, to the great discomfiture of Eugenius, who dreaded what Sforza, despite the great inferiority of his force, might do in his absence.

Subsequent events showed that the pope's apprehensions were well founded. Francesco Piccinino, to whom Nicolo had intrusted the command of his army during his absence, took one or two places of minor importance which lay between him and Firmo, and then marched in the direction of that place with a view of forming a junction with the troops of the king of Naples. This Sforza determined, if possible, to prevent; and having collected all his disposable forces, with what stock of provisions he could muster, amounting only to what was sufficient for eight days, he advanced to meet the papal troops under the command of Francesco Piccinino. Happily for him, that general, relying probably on the superiority of his numbers, had brought them down from the heights where they had encamped to the low country in the vicinity of Monte Olmo, so that he was able to attack them before his provisions were exhausted.

Sforza had now at least one advantage that Machiavelli recommends every general to seek—as his supplies were almost at an end, and retreat or defeat would have ruined him alike, he was compelled to fight for his very existence. But his enemies were under no such necessity; they might decline battle if they wished, or, if worsted, they might rally without any extraordinary loss. He made the most skilful preparations for the attack, and delivered to his soldiers a speech full of his usual confidence, which he concluded by reminding them that they were about to fight with those whom, only a few months before, they had totally routed at Monte Loreto. Some recollections of this defeat seem also to have been revived in the opposite camp, for it was debated among the Piccininos and their generals whether they should send to offer Sforza the terms that had been suggested by Filippo Maria. But the legate of the pope would not allow any peace to be talked of so long as Sforza retained the smallest portion of the territory of Ancona, and his influence was so great that they were obliged to give battle. At the same time he promised rewards in heaven to those who should suffer in the cause of the church, and denounced eternal damnation against those who were fighting against it. But European soldiers have seldom been fanatics; and as the Italians, who saw the popes thinking, feeling, and acting in the same manner, and subject to the same reverses as other men, were least so of all, the soldiers of Eugenius were not much moved by language of this sort. On the other hand, those of the opposite camp were excited by the brilliant earthly prospects of booty and riches held out to them by their leader.

The result of the engagement was a complete victory gained by Sforza, which was in no small degree brought about by the great confidence that they all felt in him, and the terror with which his very name inspired his adversaries. The whole of the camp, with the baggage, military stores, and a large number of prisoners, including Francesco Piccinino and many of the principal officers, fell into the hands of the victors. Among the captives were a body of men who, having in the course of the engagement come upon Sforza at a time that he had taken off his helmet, and was at some distance from his attendants, had him in their power; but, in the words of his biographer, the dignity of his appearance was so great, and his name was so popular, that they made no attempt to injure him. As a reward for their generosity, the victorious general restored them to liberty without ransom.

Happily for the conqueror, he was able to turn this victory to better account than that which he had in the previous year gained at Monte Loreto. Having reduced all the strong places between Firmo and Ascoli, he marched to the neighbourhood of Ancona. He was there, however, informed that the Venetians, the Florentines, and the duke of Milan, had arranged the terms of a peace between Eugenius and himself, in which it was stipulated that he was to retain all the cities he could conquer before October 18, and that the rest were to be subject to Eugenius, but to pay tribute to him. He made such good use of his time that before the appointed day the whole of the disputed territory, with the exception of the city of Ancona and three others, had fallen into his hands.

As it has never transpired what the matters were which Philip was so anxious to communicate verbally with Piccinino, there is no reason to suppose that he had any motive in sending for him except to give Sforza a chance of retrieving his affairs. Nothing, at all events, happened of a nature to console Piccinino for the loss of his army and the captivity of his son, for shortly after his arrival in Lombardy he was seized with a lingering illness, from which he never recovered. Indeed, his position was not such as to suggest the most agreeable reflections. In the words of M. Sismondi, “though he had seen so many victories, and was sixty-four years of age, he had not where to lay his head. All the other great generals of his age had been elevated to the rank of sovereigns; he seemed to have had, at least, as good a claim as any other to this distinction, because the principality as well as the army of Braccio ought by right to have devolved on him; and withal he was not more rich or more powerful at the end of his career than he had been at its commencement. He had lost Bologna, which he had hoped to make the capital of a kingdom for himself; two defeats following one another so rapidly had exhausted his resources and scattered his soldiers; one of his sons was a prisoner, another a fugitive; and he had no dependence except on the generosity of a prince accused throughout all Italy of inconsistency, and occasionally of perfidy”; and this prince had ruined him by deceiving him. Moreover, Visconti was already advanced in years, and he seemed to have arranged that Piccinino’s bitterest enemy should succeed him. On two successive occasions, just when he thought his greatness was ripening, the duke’s conduct had, like a “killing frost, nipped his root” and caused him to fall. “Weary and old with service”, he fell a victim to chagrin and disease on the 15th of October 1444.

If Piccinino was inferior to Sforza in the field, he made up for it by the rapidity of his movements and his fertility in devising expedients; and though often worsted in battle, he generally retrieved his disasters by the celerity with which he rallied his troops. It is impossible to defend his jealousy of Sforza, and the many acts of treachery to which he was prompted thereby; but, in comparing the conduct of the two generals in this respect, it must be recollected that the more frequent victories and the more prosperous career of the latter, rendered him less amenable to the feelings which must have been experienced by his older and less fortunate rival. His fidelity to his employers, and his constancy in executing the tasks committed to him, have never been questioned. The greatest proof both of his talents and character is afforded by the eagerness with which he was sought after by the opponents of Sforza, and the rapid success of that general whenever he was not kept in check by him.

In the same year also expired another of Philip’s ablest allies, Francesco Gonzaga, the marquis of Mantua. By the loss of these two men the duke was bereft of his staunchest supporters, and Sforza was apparently left without any one capable of opposing him in the field.

CHAPTER XV.

AFFAIRS OF BOLOGNA.—DEATH AND CHARACTER OF FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI

AFTER the satisfactory conclusion of the war with the pope, Sforza retired to Firmo, there to enjoy the society of his wife and his infant. To all appearance his domestic happiness was likely to be some little time without interruption. His position was no longer such as to excite the jealousy of the ruling powers of Italy : his territories in the March of Ancona had been curtailed by Piccinino; Alphonso was in possession of all the fiefs he had once held in the kingdom of Naples; the birth of his son might make Philip less inconstant in his conduct towards him than heretofore; and Eugenius, having already recovered the greater part of his territories in the March of Ancona, might be reluctant to provoke the hostility of one who, since Piccinino was dead, had no one capable of opposing him in the field. But the elements of peace did not exist in Italy. Every province contained towns subject to petty tyrants, and the majority of these towns were divided into parties. Neither the tyrants nor their subjects were ever at rest; and Philip's passion for intrigue was so great that he was generally concerned in their disputes. Even his affection for his grandson could not make him constant in one line of conduct. Hence the sword, though sheathed in Italy, was ere long drawn out of its scabbard by the same parties who had wielded it before.

Though Philip had but inadequately rewarded the services of Piccinino, he bitterly mourned his death. The memory of the departed general stirred him not to let the hopeful services of his son perish likewise, and he availed himself of the claims which his relationship, as well as his friendly mediation of the preceding year, had given him over Sforza, to obtain the liberty of the one that was still in captivity. His intention, doubtless, was to retain at his disposal the sons' services, in the same manner as he availed himself of those of their father. But further acquaintance seemed to have generated in him some mistrust in their capacity to fill his place, for he soon made overtures to Ciarpellio, the ablest of Sforza's generals, and, according to Machiavelli, even put him in possession of some castles in the Milanese. These negotiations did not escape the penetration of the latter; he dreaded to see the best captain in Italy employed by one on whose friendship he had so little reliance; and he knew that Ciarpellio, should he ever become his enemy, would have it in his power to reveal many of his secrets. The practice of the times, as had not long before been shown in the case of Carmagnola, was already in accordance with the maxims published in the next century by Machiavelli. Sforza could no longer hope to conquer by means of Ciarpellio, because his fidelity was doubtful; it would not answer his purpose to discharge him, lest he should be used against him by others. He therefore deemed himself under the cruel necessity of putting an end to him. He intrusted the accomplishment of this deed to his brother Alexander, who had always shown a dislike to Ciarpellio. The victim was seized, and cast into prison at Firmo, where, after the semblance of a trial, he confessed he had carried on a correspondence with the duke of Milan, and was hung on the 29th of November 1444.

To justify himself in the eyes of the Italians, Sforza publicly declared that he had ascertained that his victim was engaged in a conspiracy against his life. Whether he really possessed any proof, or even any well-grounded suspicion of this fact, cannot now be discovered; but if this was not the case, it is difficult to see in

what respect Ciarpellio was more deserving of death than was Sforza himself, when he passed over to the Florentines, after the capture of Lucca, in the year 1427—a proceeding on his part which seems scarcely to have called forth any animadversion from others. But in these times even men who, like Sforza, stood high with their contemporaries, often allowed their notions of expediency to impel them to deeds of the most ruthless tyranny. However, the commission of this act of severity gave the greatest offence to the duke of Milan, who declared that Ciarpellio had been unjustly put to death, and vowed that he would be revenged on his murderers; and on their part the Florentines and Venetians were not displeased to see the growing seeds of discord between the father-in-law and son-in-law, whose intimate union they dreaded so much.

Ere long other events concurred in developing these seeds. Though the territory of Pesaro had been conquered and given to Sigismund Malatesta after the battle of Monte Loreto, the town still remained in the possession of his uncle, Galeazzo. Sigismund had failed in an attempt to take it by force; but he still hoped, as its present owner had no children, that it might eventually come into his possession. But after the peace of the past year, Francesco Sforza bought the signory of the city from Galeazzo, and presented it to his brother Alexander. At the same time Fossembrune, another city much coveted by Sigismund, was bought by Frederic, count of Urbino and Montefeltro, the representative, and most probably the descendant, of Dante's Guido di Montefeltro. Sigismund had never been well disposed towards his father-in-law; he was now irritated beyond measure at these transactions; and as he ascribed them chiefly to him, he did all in his power to excite his former enemies against him. This he found to be no difficult task. Philip, irritated on account of the death of Ciarpellio, persuaded Eugenius to take Sigismund into his pay, representing the advantages that the situation of his dominions would give him in making another effort for the recovery of the March of Ancona, or the city of Bologna. Alphonso, also, as several cities on the confines of the territory of Naples had lately revolted from him to Sforza, lent a ready ear to the suggestions of Sigismund.

A fresh source of contention also appeared in Bologna. Since the expulsion of Francesco Piccinino from that city, Annibal Bentivoglio had been the chief man in the government, and had been honoured as the liberator of his country. His position soon roused the jealousy of one Baldassar, a leading man of the powerful family of Canedoli. These two citizens were connected by marriage, but, in the words of Machiavelli, "relationship forms but a slender bond of union among those who aspire to the same honours". The jealousy of the latter had reached such a length that he determined on the murder of Bentivoglio, and accomplished his purpose on the festival of St John the Baptist, just as his victim was going out of church. A tumult soon followed, in which the adherents of Bentivoglio gained the upper hand; Baptista, the head of the family of Canedoli, escaped into his house, and for a time lay concealed in a vessel of corn; but being delivered up by his servant to the threats of the victors, he was torn in pieces, and his carcass was dragged through the city. As soon as the duke of Milan received intelligence of this transaction, he sent Taliano with fifteen hundred horse and five hundred foot to support the party of the Canedoli; but when that general found that his friends had been driven out of the city, he did not attempt to attack it, but began laying waste the territory, and taking the castles in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, the Florentines and Venetians sent a small force to the assistance of the opposite party. The troops of the different states continued to keep a diligent watch on each other's movements without actually coming to any collision.

The sequel of this revolution, though unconnected with the career of Sforza, is worthy of notice. The popularity of the house of Bentivoglio was so great that the inhabitants wished, if possible, to be ruled by one of the family; but the only one of its members remaining was a boy six years old, a son of the prince who had just been murdered. It was deemed impossible that he should be elected to a post, the maintenance of which required prompt vigour and action. While they were in this dilemma the count of Poppi, who happened then to be at Bologna, called their attention to a young man of the name of Santi, then resident at Florence. He declared him to be the son of a young woman from the neighbourhood of Poppi, with whom he knew that Hercules Bentivoglio had had intercourse previous to his birth; that Hercules had frequently said that he was his son, and

that the resemblance between them was so great that he believed it to be the case. The Bolognese thereon sent to Florence to inquire after the youth. His reputed father, Agnolo da Cascese, being dead, he lived with an uncle, who, when the matter was put before him, referred it to Cosmo de' Medici. All parties were anxious that he should accept the proffered honours; he himself, however, was hesitating about benefiting himself by a report which cast a stain on the memory of his parents, when Cosmo called him aside and said to him, "You have no better counsellor in this matter than yourself, for you have only to take the part that you wish; but you should bear in mind that, if you choose to be the son of Hercules Bentivoglio, you will enter on a career worthy of the name by which you are to be called; but if you choose to be the son of Agnolo da Cascese, you will remain all your life a carver of wood". By these words the youth was sufficiently convinced that for the sake of a sovereignty he might allow aspersions to be cast on the memory of his parents; and having declared his intentions, he was shortly furnished with royal apparel and a retinue of servants and horses. He then accompanied the ambassadors on their return to Bologna, and was received with the greatest acclamations by the inhabitants.

The peace of Italy having been broken, all Sforza's enemies once more united themselves against him. The first appearance of hostilities had rekindled the ambition of Alphonso as well as the hatred of Eugenius. The latter was fully of Machiavelli's opinion, that a prudent ruler should not observe a treaty when the doing so was to his own disadvantage, and after the circumstances which made him assent to it had ceased to exist; and so, as soon as he saw the turn that affairs were taking, he took up arms against his former gonfaloniere. Sforza's father-in-law and son-in-law united their forces against him, the former being irritated on account of the execution of Ciarpello, the latter on account of the sale of Pesaro. The situation of the dominions of Sigismund afforded him every opportunity of annoying Sforza both by open hostilities and by intrigue, while the Milanese forces under Taliano, the pope's forces commanded by Louis, the Patriarch of Aquileia, and those of Alphonso under Ventimiglia, simultaneously directed their steps against him.

To make head against this formidable coalition, Sforza received a tolerable supply of money from his friend, Cosmo de' Medici. Having posted strong garrisons in Jesi and Firmo, places which he looked upon as the keys of the rest of his dominions, and in either of which he might make a considerable stand, if reduced to extremities, he determined to strike a blow at Sigismund before the other enemies whom the malice of that prince had raised up against him could render him assistance. His first step was to take Pergola, and one or two other places in the neighbourhood of Jesi, by which he acquired no small quantity of booty for his soldiers, and considerably weakened the position of his enemy. But after he had done this, the simultaneous approach of the hostile armies from different directions prevented his proceeding further against his son-in-law. It now required his utmost skill and attention to hinder his adversaries forming a junction. If the nature of the country had been the same as that of Lombardy, the immense superiority of their forces must have annihilated him; but abounding as it did with mountains, rivers, and fortresses, it gave him every facility for compensating with his skill for the inferiority of his numbers. Owing to this circumstance, he managed to keep his enemies apart during the whole of the season; he retook several towns, and on one occasion gained very considerable advantage over the Milanese general Taliano. If skill and bravery alone could have maintained his position, there is very little doubt but that he would have succeeded; but his resources were rapidly becoming exhausted, and ere long he had difficulties of a fresh nature to embarrass him.

The Wise Man has said, that "for the transgression of a people its rulers are multiplied"; and never were any people destined to experience the misery of a multiplicity of rulers more than the inhabitants of the province which was now the theatre of war. They almost all lived in towns; the towns were invariably in situations of military importance, and they were constantly taken and retaken by the military adventurers who, either on their own account or for that of their employers, were contending for the possession of the province. A famous simile of Goethe's may, with great justice, be applied to them; their rulers or their generals might be compared to the smith with his hammer, their land might be compared to the anvil, while they were in the situation of the tin

that was between the hammer and the anvil. Woe to them if they continued to receive nothing but blows, according to the caprice of the smith who might be at any time beating them with the hammer! It cannot be matter of surprise that a people so situated should be described by an Italian historian as being unstable by nature! And Sforza was now doomed to lose as much by this circumstance as he had formerly gained by it. When his fortunes were rising, many of these cities had, of their own accord, opened their gates to him; now, whether it was that they thought his luck was declining, or that they were more likely to be allowed to live in peace under a prelate than a condottiere, they all took the earliest opportunity of revolting from him. In the beginning of the season, the inhabitants of Ascoli had gone over to the pope, after having murdered his brother, Rinaldo Fogliano. And now he was sorely embarrassed by a similar act on the part of those of Rocca Contrada. This city commanded his communication with Tuscany; its possession had enabled him to prevent the junction of his enemy's armies, and the loss of it seemed so serious in a military light that he afterwards deemed it advisable to contract the plan of his operations. He therefore determined for the present to confine himself to the defence of Firmo and Jesi, thinking that by holding them he might be enabled at some future day to regain his lost possessions. In the former of these places he left his brother Alexander with five hundred foot, and the same number of horse, and put strong garrisons in two fortresses which were on each side of the town. Having provided in the same manner for the defence of Jesi, he concluded the campaign by taking and demolishing several strongholds in the territory of his traitorous son-in-law, and then stationed his forces for the winter both in the neighbourhood of the above-mentioned towns, and in Tuscany. But he was still annoyed by the inconstancy of his subjects : the inhabitants of Firmo resolved to follow the example of their neighbours; and on the 29th November they made a vigorous attack on Alexander, and compelled him to retire to the fortress inside their walls for safety; at the same time they made themselves masters of the two fortresses in the vicinity of their city. Taliano, on hearing of these events, brought his army to the assistance of the insurgents, and blockaded the castle in which Alexander had taken refuge. It could not be taken except by famine; but as its occupants were not furnished with provisions to hold out, their leader agreed with the enemy that they should be allowed to evacuate it, taking thence their arms, equipments, and baggage.

In this untoward position of his affairs Sforza betook himself to Florence, where he solicited the assistance and received the advice of Cosmo de' Medici. The state of his circumstances was so desperate that it appeared that nothing short of the unlooked-for success, which occasionally attends strokes that in ordinary circumstances would be deemed rash and hazardous, could possibly retrieve them. He, therefore, in accordance with the suggestions of his friend, hesitated not to leave his own dominions defenceless, in order to strike a home-blow at the person who had hitherto shown himself the most persevering and the most inveterate of his enemies. For this purpose he brought together the remnants of his former forces, and determined, as soon as the season would permit, to march direct upon Rome. He was further encouraged to persevere in this plan by the reported disaffection both of the cities of Todi, Orvieto, and Narni, and of several of the principal cardinals and barons of the Holy See.

Against the approach of so formidable an enemy Eugenius defended himself by the arras he knew so well how to wield—excommunication and intrigue. Sforza, whether it was that his spirits were broken, or that his supplies were exhausted, did not execute this plan with the vigour and promptness for which he was generally distinguished. When he had arrived in the neighbourhood of Orvieto and Viterbo, he found that neither the inhabitants of these cities nor the chief of the men of Rome were disposed to act in accordance with his expectations; so he was obliged to retrace his steps, to the no small disappointment of Cosmo de' Medici and others, who would not have been grieved to have seen the pride of Eugenius humbled in his own capital.

In the meantime Alphonso had collected sufficient force either to strip Sforza of what still remained to him of his dominions, or, if it seemed expedient, to invade the territory of the Florentines. His first measure was to march upon Ancona, the inhabitants of which had refused to act in accordance with the stipulations made at the peace of the year 1444. Having reduced this city, he threatened Sforza at Fossembrune. At the same time,

the forces of the duke and the pope, under Taliano and Louis of Aquileia, hemmed in Alexander Sforza in his own town of Pesaro. The latter then found himself surrounded on all sides by enemies. The morality of that age did not require that any man should run the risk of sacrificing himself for the sake of a friend, and Alexander did not think himself bound by ties of either relationship or gratitude to continue a hopeless contest against the enemies of his brother. Acting in obedience to the instinct of self-preservation, on the 18th July he entered into treaty with the legate of the pope, and placed at his disposal the city of Pesaro, with the whole of his troops. By way of making some compensation for this act of treachery, he sent Bianca Maria with her children in safety to Urbino, and wrote a letter to Francesco pleading the dire necessity of his case; and Francesco, unable any longer to stop the torrent that was directed solely against him, retired to Urbino, there, perhaps, to stave off for a time the ruin which nothing now seemed likely to avert.

In no one thing, perhaps, had Philip ever been so constant as in the hatred which, for the last two years, he had displayed towards the husband of his daughter. Not content with seeing him almost stripped of his dominions on the shores of the Adriatic, he was so goaded on by his passion that he began to take measures to deprive him of the cities which he had given him as a dowry. This proceeding was directly contrary to the terms which he had made with the Florentines and the Venetians, and might possibly provoke their opposition; but the hatred which seemed to have taken possession of his ill-regulated mind, entirely overweighed all other considerations. For the purpose above mentioned he despatched to Cremona an army of five thousand horse and one thousand foot, under the command of Francesco Piccinino and Luigi dal Verme, and at the same time he endeavoured, by means of a leading citizen of that place, Orlando Pallavicino, to carry on intrigues with its inhabitants. He also sent a force against Sforza's other city of Pontremoli.

The duke's violent and insensate conduct soon brought its own retribution, and was the means of saving the man whom he wished to destroy. The Venetians and Florentines, indignant at his want of faith, were determined not to allow the complete ruin of the captain whom they had frequently found so useful in opposing him. The former, after having despatched a small force to keep Piccinino in check in the Cremonese, tried what they could do by negotiation; but finding this quite ineffectual, they sent Michael Attendolo of Cotignola with a considerable army to defend Cremona. At the same time the Florentines successfully opposed the attack on the city of Pontremoli. Thus Philip, in his eagerness to gratify his hatred or jealousy, found himself once more engaged in a formidable war. But so utterly regardless had he now become of all the ordinary maxims of prudence, that he did not scruple to raise new enemies to himself, by making a fresh attempt against the city of Bologna.

These unlooked-for occurrences seemed likely to open to Sforza a way of escape out of his present difficulties; and it was not long before his hopes were still farther raised, by events which occurred in the enemy's camp. A quarrel on the score of precedence arose between William, the brother of Gian, marquis of Montferrat, and Charles Gonzaga, two of Philip's generals, at Bologna. The former seemed so disgusted at the preference shown to his rival that he lent a ready ear to the offers of the Venetians and Bolognese, and on the night of the 5th of July he passed over to their service, with four hundred horse and one hundred foot. His first act, after so doing, was to attack the forces of his former rival, over whom, scattered as they were through the country, and most likely taken by surprise, he gained an easy victory. At the same time the Florentines offered Taliano, the duke's general against Sforza, the chief command of all their forces. Either by accident, or through a malicious design of the Florentines, the duke got wind of these intrigues. What the actual intentions of Taliano were does not appear; but the grounds of suspicion, such as they were, were sufficient for Philip; so he had him immediately arrested, and conducted to Rocca Contrada, where he was not long afterwards beheaded. Indeed, Philip seemed now grown so mistrustful, that, like the last English sovereign of the house of York, he was constantly playing the eavesdropper under the tents of his generals, to know if any man meant to shrink from him. Not long afterwards he had another of his captains, Bartolomeo Collio, whom he began to suspect of carrying on intrigues with the Venetians, seized and cast into prison at Monza.

The Venetians were not slow to avail themselves of the weakness caused by actual desertion and by suspicion in the camp of their enemy. Their general, Michael Attendolo, after having received considerable reinforcements, attacked Francesco Piccinino in a strong position that he had taken near Casale, in an island in the Po, and routed or made prisoners the greater part of his army. The number of horsemen taken on this occasion is estimated by Muratori at four thousand. This disaster in some measure brought Philip to his senses, and on the 5th of October he expressed a wish to treat with the Venetians. But the latter thought that he desired only to gain time, and having, in the words of Muratori, the wind from their stern, they sent word to their general to continue his course. Michael first availed himself of his victory to take all the strong places in the Cremonese, after which he passed the river Adda, and carried everything before him up to the walls of Milan.

While these things were going on in Lombardy, the Florentines had sent to Sforza a reinforcement sufficient to allow him to resume the offensive. His first act was to endeavour to bring Louis of Aquileia, the commander of the pope's forces, to battle; but not being able to attack him to advantage, he laid siege to Gradara, a town in the territory of Pesaro, at present in the possession of his faithless son-in-law Sigismund. At the same time he was rejoined by his brother Alexander, who seemed only to have quitted him with the greatest reluctance; and Eugenius and Alphonso, being pressed by Philip for succour, were glad to conclude a truce with him. Shortly afterwards, finding that he had not sufficient power to make himself master of Gradara, he retired to winter quarters at Pesaro, there to consider how he might best avail himself of the respite that was now given to him for the retrieving of his affairs.

To all appearance the situation of Filippo Maria was desperate. The Venetians were cantoned for the winter in all the strong places of the territory of Milan, and were awaiting only the return of the season to make themselves masters of the city. They had been so often deceived by him that they had made up their minds not to treat with him except in his capital. The withdrawal of Alphonso's forces from the March of Ancona would leave the Florentines and Sforza at liberty to invade him. The latter could not be supposed to be friendly disposed towards him; he was bound by treaty to the Florentines and Venetians; there was no captain in Italy capable of opposing him; even of those that remained, the best had gone over to his adversaries. His only chance was now in the acts of diplomacy, whereby he might hope to gain new friends, or to cajole some of his enemies. With this view he endeavoured to impress all the neighbouring states with a sense of the danger they might incur from the overgrown power of the Venetians. He sought to gain the assistance of the king of France, by promising the cession of the frontier towns; and, in order to avert the danger that now threatened his capital, he persuaded Alphonso to send all his disposable forces to Lombardy. But he reposed his chief hope of salvation in his oft-betrayed son-in-law. He tried him once more by working both on his natural feelings and his ambition; he entreated him not to desert his father-in-law when weighed down with years, deprived of sight, and pressed by the adverse fortune of war; and reminded him how much better it would be for him to devote his energies to the preservation of the inheritance of Lombardy for himself and his descendants, than to waste them in the defence of a province of second-rate importance.

To these overtures Sforza replied coldly, that, deeply as he regretted Philip's misfortunes, he could not violate the treaty he had made with the Florentines and Venetians. But though he thus turned a deaf ear to the entreaties, he was by no means without solicitude as to the ultimate fate, of his father-in-law. Much as he was rejoiced at the result of the battle of Casale, as having first opened a door of salvation to himself, and inflicted a well-merited chastisement on the duke, he did not view without anxiety the events which seemed likely to blot out from the map of Italy the duchy of Milan. On the other hand, he valued the friendship of Cosmo de' Medici beyond that of any man in Italy; and he well knew that it would be folly in him, in his present state of weakness, to break the terms of his treaty with the powerful republic of Venice. But Cosmo soon began to see what line of conduct would be most beneficial to the real interests of his friend; and neither he nor his countrymen wished all the northern provinces of Italy, from the Adriatic to the Ligurian Alps, to fall into the hands of the Venetians. After he had been applied to several times for the long-promised supplies, he suggested

to Sforza the satisfying his soldiers with the plunder of Pesaro, recommending to him, at the same time, not to depend too much on the alliance of free states, to whom the profession of arms was an abomination. With the first piece of advice Francesco refused to comply; the significance, however, of the last hint was not lost upon him, but he resolved to bide his time.

An event took place early in the following year, which seemed likely to portend still further changes in the fortunes of Sforza. Pope Eugenius IV expired on the 14th February 1447. He has received no small praise from Muratori and other historians for his having united several sects of Christians to the Roman Catholic Church, and for his having been utterly untainted with the vice of nepotism, which disgraced so many of his order. His great aim through life was to maintain the supremacy of the pontifical authority over that of general councils, and to preserve the integrity of the Dominions of the Church against the rapacity of ambitious sovereigns and aspiring adventurers. Those who are inclined to censure him for being little scrupulous as to the means by which he sought his end, should recollect that he lived in an age when whatever was expedient was thought to be right, and in which the clergy might deceive themselves as to the degree of sanctity attached to their temporal possessions, and think, as Machiavelli ironically expresses it, that the States of the Church were really ruled by superior orders, and saved and maintained by the Almighty. M. Sismondi relates an anecdote of him, which shows how his characteristic trait of self-confidence developed itself in the hour of death. When the archbishop of Florence approached to administer to him the extreme unction, he repulsed him briskly, saying, “that he still retained his strength, and that he would send for him when he found himself going”. When this circumstance was related to the king of Naples, he observed, “No wonder that the man who dared to fight against death, and was even then scarcely vanquished, should be willing to engage in hostilities against the Colonna, against Sforza, against me, and in short against all Italy”. Thomas of Sarzana, bishop of Bologna, was chosen to succeed him under the title of Nicholas V. Though he was not endued with the restless activity of his predecessor, he was remarkable for his learning and piety—qualifications so much more fitted for a Christian bishop.

In the meantime Philip had been backing his entreaties to Sforza with the promises of the most splendid rewards. Among other things, he stipulated to put him in the immediate possession of Brescia, and the remaining cities that had fallen into the hands of the Venetians, should he succeed in retaking them. The latter were not blind to the signs of the times. They had observed, with no small suspicion, the frequent communications that were going on between their enemy and the first captain of the age; they well knew that Sforza’s cooperation would, if possible, render more secure, while nothing but his opposition could prevent, their capture of Milan. They therefore sent to remind him of the terms of his treaty with them, and tried to induce him to render them active assistance by equally glittering offers. They even promised, should they succeed in their designs, to put him in immediate possession of Milan. To all these solicitations, however, he made but a cold reply : he upbraided them with the indifferent performance of their former obligations while he was in distress; adding, that he would, nevertheless, do for them all that he was bound by treaty to do, but no more. Shortly after this, by making a treacherous, though an unsuccessful, attempt on the city Cremona, they afforded to him the long-wished pretence of openly taking his part. When news of this was brought to him, he threw aside all disguise, and promised to assist his father-in-law on the following conditions. The first was, that he should give him pay sufficient to maintain the whole of his army, which he estimated at two hundred and forty thousand florins of gold. The second was, that, on his arrival in his duchy, he should be also allowed to rule all his territories in his name, under the title of commander of the forces. Both these conditions were complied with, and the first was immediately fulfilled. Sforza received a considerable part of the one year’s stipend direct from Milan, and the remainder from the hands of Alphonso. He therefore prepared to enter Lombardy, to act in concert with Alphonso and Philip. Such a strange change in the politics of Italy had been brought about in the course of one year: the most solemn treaties had been broken; the most inflexible minds had been moved; those that were then friends had become enemies; and the nearest friends that had fallen out were again loving one another.

Matters, however, did not continue in this state very long. There were still at Milan many old friends of Piccinino, and many who, for various reasons, were enemies to Sforza. They all endeavoured to render the duke more than ever suspicious of his son-in-law: they represented to him that, so far from remaining in his post as commander of the forces, he would not be satisfied with anything short of being absolute ruler of the duchy; and they produced letters to show that he had already made allotment of different fiefs in his dominions. So well did they work on the fears of the now tottering Duke, that he sent word to the only man by whose assistance his capital could be saved not to enter his dominions, but to march direct upon Padua or Verona. It was in vain that Sforza sent a friend to Milan to show the inadequacy of this plan of operations, and to counteract the calumnies which he knew were being circulated against him: the duke was immovable, and the condottiere refused to go on what appeared to him a fool's errand.

Thus, by the wavering policy of one man and the intrigues of a party, was sufficient time given to the Venetians to carry on their operations. They were not remiss in availing themselves of their opportunity. Having collected all their forces early in the spring, they passed the Adda at the bridge of Cassia, took up their position at Lambrato, within three miles of their enemy's capital, and more than once marched, with their standards unfurled, to the eastern gate of the city. They had not sufficient supplies to lay siege to it, but they hoped to take it by a *coup-de-main* before Sforza approached with his army and their leader was given reason to expect that, on his appearance, the Guelf or Republican party would rise and deliver it into his hands. But in this he was disappointed, through the loyalty of the majority of the citizens and the sagacity of the duke. Though the sight of an enemy caused, as usual, much tumult and confusion within the walls, yet men whose fidelity was undoubted were in charge of the gates; those who were known to be most disaffected had been put into custody, and the remainder did not dare to attempt a rising. So, after a sojourn of three days at Lambrato, Michael was obliged to recross the Adda, to make himself master of the strong places in his rear. After having taken all the fortresses on the river, he laid siege to Lecco, a town on the southern extremity of one of the branches of Lake Como. The inhabitants of this town were assisted by their neighbours of Como, with whom they communicated by the lake, and the place was held with a bravery well worthy of that displayed by the latter in the dawn of Italian liberty—a circumstance which shows that the errors of the present duke had not alienated his subjects from their attachment to his family. Neither the skill nor the discipline of the Venetians could make any impression on it; the inhabitants frequently sallied forth, and made great havoc in their ranks; and the besiegers were more than once obliged to retire to the territory of Cremona to repair their disasters. But the regular troops of Philip had not dared to face an enemy since the battle of Casale; and the duke, finding himself thus plagued for his foolishness, as before, cried out to Sforza in his distress.

Francesco having received supplies from the pope and the king of Naples, both of whom seemed glad to get rid of such a troublesome neighbour on any conditions, again moved northwards. By so doing he evacuated Jesi, the only city that remained to him in his ancient dominions; but he thought that the prospects now opened to him in Lombardy were more inviting than the chance that remained to him of recovering any part of what he had lost. Experience, too, had shown him that, unaided, he was no match for the combined forces of the king of Naples and the pope, and that, whoever might be the ruler of Milan, he alone could preserve it from the Lion of St Mark. And though the retired habits of the duke were such that his subjects in general knew but little of his state, it is not improbable that he at least might have received a hint that there were but little hopes of his recovering from a combined attack of fever and dysentery. It might possibly have been the knowledge of this circumstance that induced him and Bianca to send their children to Cremona to be seen by their grandfather. But natural affection seemed no longer to have a place in Philip's heart; though he was aware of their arrival, he expressed no wish to have them brought into his presence. Shortly afterwards he departed this life, on the 13th of August 1447, at the fortress of Zobbia. Sforza had set out on his expedition with four thousand horse and two thousand foot, and had arrived at his father's native city of Cotignola, when he received intelligence of the event.

The part which the deceased prince played in the drama of Italian politics has been so frequently referred to, that it would be needless to say much with regard to his character. There is no record of his having, like his predecessors, committed any wanton acts of cruelty on his subjects, and the attachment which they displayed to him on several occasions forbids us to think so; but it is probable that he abstained from these more from policy than from principle. Little else remains to be said in his favour. In person he was tall, extremely thin in his youth, but in latter years inclined to corpulency. Like the English king who boasted that he had neither pity, love, nor fear, the aspect of his face corresponded with the perverse bent of his mind, and the defects of nature were aggravated by his exceeding negligence of his person. He was as fearful of every clap of thunder and flash of lightning as if they had been ministers of an offended Deity to punish those who were conscious of crimes, and he dreaded visits of furies and ghosts in the dead hour of the night. Like many who are destitute of every principle of religion, he was extremely particular in all its outward observances; he never passed a day without going through all the forms of devotion, and generally said a prayer whenever he set out on a walk or mounted his horse. In his latter years he so firmly believed in astrology that he collected around him, and on all occasions consulted, the chief professors of the art. To all, even those of his own order and kin, he was difficult of access. Though he hesitated not to have Alphonso of Aragon brought to him when a prisoner, he mortally offended the Emperor Sigismund by refusing to receive him when he visited Italy. So little had he been seen by his subjects, that, when his corpse was brought to Milan, many crowded around it, anxious to behold what manner of man he had been.

BOOK FIFTH.

FROM THE DEATH OF FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI TILL THE ACCESSION OF
FRANCESCO SFORZA TO THE DUKEDOM OF MILAN, 1447-1450.

CHAPTER XVI.

POSITION AND PLANS OF FRANCESCO SFORZA.— STORMING OF PIACENZA

THE death of Philip, following so closely upon that of Eugenius, seemed likely to be the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Italy. During the twenty-two years that had elapsed since Sforza had taken the command of his father's troops, the peninsula had presented a strange spectacle. Wars had been undertaken without motive, pursued without vigour, abandoned without any advantage being secured by peace. Alliances had been a thousand times contracted, broken, renewed, and again violated. Treachery had become the moral of the day. Though the military art was no longer ennobled by the desire of saving one's country, every day beheld new captains elevated to independent positions, treating with princes on terms of equality, and not unfrequently ending their career on the scaffold. This state of things, to which the tortuous policy of Filippo Maria had in part given rise, had assumed a more decided appearance after the accession of Eugenius. It may be recollected that one of the first acts of the latter was to unite the republics of Florence and Venice in a coalition against Philip, which had been continued in various phases till the time of his death. But there was no one now on the throne of the Visconti, and the successor of Eugenius was a man of peace. Even had he been otherwise inclined, the great object for which the former pontiff had fought—the restoration to the church of the territories of Ancona—had been accomplished. A new scene was thus opened to one who proved himself the most skilful of adventurers. And in forming a judgment of the means by which he managed to place himself on the throne of the Visconti, it must be recollected that he lived in an age in which Machiavelli says that in it men were more ashamed of losing in any manner, than of gaining by deceit.

After his marriage with the daughter of Philip, the tide of his affairs had begun to go out. Though it might now appear to be about to take a turn, it was at this instant at a very low ebb. He had lost all the Neapolitan fiefs that had been left to him by his father. He had just relinquished the city of Jesi, the only spot that remained to him of the extensive territory which he had once possessed in the March of Ancona. The town of Cremona, which had been given to him with his wife, was now surrounded by his enemies. Though he was at the head of an army, he had no money; the man who had promised to supply him was dead; and if the Milanese were to take this opportunity of regaining their liberty, they could hardly be expected to fulfil the pecuniary engagements of their duke. The Venetians were much exasperated at his recent conduct; and it seemed not unlikely that ere long they would be in possession of all Lombardy. Though he had a friend in Cosmo de' Medici, and though the Florentines themselves were as well disposed towards him as they could be to any of his trade, their alliance with the Venetians would prevent them from openly assisting him. Now that Philip was dead, he could expect nothing more from his old enemy Alphonso. However, in the words of Machiavelli, he determined to face his fortune, and let his course be guided by accidents, being well aware that many plans present themselves to a man engaged in active operations, which are not seen by him while he remains inert. He therefore made up his mind to proceed to Lombardy, to try there how men were disposed to receive him;

and he set forth on this, which may be termed the second trial of his fortunes, from Cotignola, the place whence, about seventy years ago, his father first started to embrace the possession of arms. Though Bianca Maria was much distressed at the loss of her parent, she accompanied him in all these movements.

On the fourth day of his march northward he halted in the vicinity of Parma, which had long since fallen under the rule of the Visconti, and in which city he knew he had a considerable party. From this place he sent to inform the Milanese of his approach, ordering his messenger, at the same time, to try the dispositions of the inhabitants of Piacenza, Lodi, and Pavia, on the way. In the meantime he himself began to sound the inclinations of the Parmese. While he was thus engaged, four ambassadors came to him from the city to inform him that the principal inhabitants had agreed to establish a republic, and to entreat him not to menace their liberties. To this he replied, that the Parmese were among the most attached of his friends, and that he would do nothing against them; but that he would be obliged to them if they would tell him in what manner they meant to maintain their independence, while all around them was raging with war. He assured them that he was halting there merely for the purpose of reposing his troops, and that he would take care that they should abstain from any offence against either the properties or the persons of the inhabitants.

In the meantime he received intelligence of the state of affairs at Milan. In that city, as he well knew, there was one party attached to his cause, and another, consisting principally of the old friends of Piccinino, and denominated “Braccian”, was bitterly opposed to him. Lionel of Este, and Charles of Orleans, the son of the late duke's sister, were talked of as successors to the duchy; but neither of them appeared to have many supporters in Milan. There were also great numbers anxious for the restoration of a republic. When it became evident that Philip's end was drawing nigh, all parties fancied that they saw a fair opportunity for carrying out their views. The republicans used all their endeavours to bring the populace to their side, and they were joined by many who, though they would not have taken part in an insurrection against Philip, or perhaps, indeed, against any Visconti, were anxious to secure themselves against such acts of tyranny as had been practised by some of his predecessors. Others were continually urging the enfeebled duke to appoint a successor. The partisans of one side represented to him that Sforza was not qualified, either by birth or his present position, to succeed to the splendid heritage of the Visconti; that though he had undoubtedly talent, he had not at present either money or allies, and would be unable to maintain its independence against the Venetians; that the king of Naples, being of royal descent, abundantly possessed of all the sinews of war, and the qualifications of a prince, was in every way better fitted to be his successor than an upstart adventurer. By the others it was urged that Alphonso was a barbarian, and consequently unfit to rule over Italians; that Sforza's great talents and popular manners would in themselves be a bulwark of strength, and that he would have no difficulty in finding both men and money for the defence of Milan. Philip, inconstant to the last, could not make up his mind about anything, and is said, with his dying breath, to have expressed a wish that, after his departure from the land of the living, everything should be involved in confusion. The Braccian party, however, who, from their hostility to Sforza, were all in favour of Alphonso, were determined to take advantage of the presence of a Neapolitan force, under the command of one Raymond Boilius. They spread a report that the duke had in his last moments declared his preference for Alphonso; they managed to introduce his general, along with a body of soldiers, into the citadel, and got some of his partisans to shout out his name in the streets. But this trick failed of the desired effect; the citizens would not join in the cry; they—“Like dumb statues or breathless stones, Stared at each other, and looked deadly pale”.

Fear and trepidation seemed everywhere. The shops were all shut. For a time everybody was uncertain what course to take. But it was not long before the republican party showed themselves sufficiently strong to assume the direction of affairs, and appointed a provisional government consisting of twenty-four of the best men of the city. Raymond and his associates, finding themselves unsupported, and being assured that Sforza was not to be chosen in place of their king, were happy to be allowed to evacuate the citadel with a small

quantity of treasure and booty. After their departure the inhabitants lost no time in levelling with the ground a building whence any one might threaten their liberties.

One of the first acts of the provisional government was to send ambassadors to the Venetians, informing them of their new constitution, seeking their friendship and alliance, and entreating them to join them in persuading the places that had been under the dominion of Philip to remain subject to them. But the other cities of Lombardy, many of which had ill brooked the destruction of their independence by the duke, preferred following their example to complying with their request. A frantic desire of liberty seemed to spread like an epidemic through all. Some of them placed in the citadels those on whom they could most depend; others insisted on seeing those buildings entirely demolished.

The whole of Lombardy became a scene of tumult and sedition; and, as is usual on such occasions, rebels, exiles, and vagabonds from all quarters endeavoured to turn to their own account a movement made by those who were desirous of improvement. In the words of Simoneta, all respect for persons, or fear of the Almighty, seemed to have departed. The inhabitants of Como, Novara, and Alessandria, alone consented to obey the Milanese; those of Lodi joined the Venetians. In the midst of this confusion, the two sons of Piccinino, and Charles Gonzaga, the brother of the Signor of Mantua, all of whom had been in the service of Philip, brought their forces out of the city, hoping to get something for themselves in the scramble.

While these things were going on in Milan and the other cities of Lombardy, Michael Attendolo and the Venetian army remained in the country adjoining the town of Cremona. Here they were able to maintain themselves without difficulty, both on account of the fertility of the country and the communication which the Po allowed them to maintain with their metropolis. They had not since the winter made any attempt on the town itself; and it is not improbable that, in the new fusion of parties, they abstained from doing so until they saw in what relation they were likely to stand with its owner. Nevertheless, as the place was one of the principal of the fiefs of Milan, and was important, as commanding both the passage and the navigation of the Po, they for some time held themselves ready, should circumstances require, to take immediate possession of it.

At length, however, Michael Attendolo was induced to relinquish these quarters, by the arrival of an embassy from the Guelf party, whom he had in the previous year expected to put him in possession of Milan, and who now informed him of the present state of the city, and urged him to march forward and to seize it. On the receipt of this intelligence, his first step was to take possession of San Columbano, a fortress in a commanding position between Lodi and Pavia. The inhabitants of the former of these cities voluntarily surrendered to him; and not long afterwards the Guelf party at Piacenza, who had for some time past disliked the yoke of the Milanese, managed to gain the ascendancy, and made over the city to Thaddeus of Este, a general in the service of the Venetians.

For some time the Milanese had hoped that their independence might be secured by a peace which Pope Nicholas had, ever since his accession, been attempting to negotiate. But his endeavours had failed, and the Venetians, encouraged, as we have seen, by the promised support of the Guelfs, and the accounts that they had received of the disunion of the citizens, had haughtily rejected their offers. They, however, were now doomed to experience the truth of Machiavelli's observation about keeping citizens in disunion, in the same manner as Visconti had done when he had hoped to take advantage of the disorders at Florence. At their approach the different factions at Milan, instead of continuing to quarrel, agreed to retain the services of the most successful general of the day. They had hitherto, indeed, avoided employing mercenary captains; for they well knew, and they were destined to experience, that the most skilful of these generals always looked to raise themselves, and were not scrupulous about doing so at the expense of their employers. Many, too, had witnessed, and others had heard of, the cruelties perpetrated by the condottieri, who had constituted themselves

the guardians of the children of Gian Galeazzo Visconti. But they knew, on the other hand, they could derive but little assistance from those from whose talents they had nothing to dread. Sforza belonged to the first of these two orders of captains, and the two Piccinini were then included in the latter. Having to make up their choice between the two, they preferred to encounter the distant peril resulting from the dangerous talents of the former, to the risk of immediately losing their liberty through the incapacity of the latter. They therefore sent to Sforza, requesting him to act for them in the same manner, and on the same conditions, as he had promised their late duke.

Sforza for some time might have entertained expectations that his own party would gain the upper hand at Milan, and that he might thus appear to have acquired the ducal crown rather by the free choice of the people, than in right of the somewhat doubtful title of his wife, or the will of a fickle old man. It must therefore have been a sore disappointment to him to find that those whom he had expected to rule were determined on governing themselves. But, at the present moment, he had not the means of maintaining his own rights; and he well knew that, when a man wishes to get the rule of a city or state, he cannot forward his designs better than by commanding an army in their defence. After receiving this message, his first step was to advance to Cremona, where he might join his own forces with those that had been left by the duke, and afterwards act as appeared most expedient. When he started from his position adjoining Parma, the inhabitants of that city refused to let him pass through, but at the same time sent him ambassadors to declare their willingness to remain the allies of the Milanese. However much he might have coveted the possession of the city, he was thus deprived of any pretext of taking it by force; and as he was not yet in a situation to act without disguise for himself, he left them unmolested, and, making a circuit of their walls, passed on to Cremona. By his timely arrival there he secured the allegiance of many who had appeared to be wavering. He was first met by Orlando Palavicino, a man whose fidelity had on several previous occasions appeared more than doubtful, but who now received him with every mark of friendship, and promised him his assistance. The Piccinini too, who had been coquetting with the various contending parties, seeing what they could get for themselves, were seized with a most salutary terror at his presence; and though they had had the foolhardiness to promise to take Crema and Cremona for the Venetians, he hesitated not to take them into his service. And the army of the latter, who, since their victory at Casale, had committed depredations all through the country without the fear of opposition, now confined themselves almost entirely within the precincts of their camp.

In all his preceding campaigns in Lombardy, Sforza had been fighting the battles of others. He was, therefore, more anxious to obtain glory and spoil, the usual fruit of a victory in those days, than to adhere to a well-devised plan of operations, so as to secure the object of his employers. In his wars in the March of Ancona, he had generally to contend against great superiority of numbers, and was obliged patiently to watch the movements of his enemies to take advantage of any oversight. This may account for the fact that hitherto, at least, he was more deserving of praise for his conduct on the field than for any great skill in the plan of a campaign. But now, though he was nominally commanding the armies of others, he considered himself in some measure fighting for himself. We shall henceforward behold him exhibiting great skill in selecting the plan of operations, and great steadiness in adhering to one that he had once chosen; never deviating therefrom under the hopes of gaining an ephemeral advantage; never attacking, except for some definite purpose; and never gaining a victory that he did not turn to the best possible account.

The cities that commanded the bridges over the Po and its tributaries, he justly considered as the most important positions in Lombardy. Their possession would not only secure him against the approach of any enemy from the south, but would, as before observed, cut off one great channel of communication between the Venetian army and their home. It was therefore of the greatest importance to him to be master of the whole line of the Po, for effecting which he was able to make Cremona the basis of his operations. Before setting about this, however, he advanced to the vicinity of Lodi, to reconnoitre the position of his enemy, and shortly afterwards laid siege to San Columbano, which had so lately fallen into their hands. But here he received

intelligence of events that, to him at least, were of the greatest consequence. The city of Pavia, most important from its situation near the junction of the Ticino and the Po, was nominally subject to, or allied with, the Milanese; but a considerable diversity of opinion existed among the citizens as to who should be their rulers : they still retained some of their ancient jealousy of the latter, and there now seemed too much reason to fear that, following the example of their neighbours at Piacenza, they would revolt to the Venetians. There were two persons who endeavoured to turn the state of things to Sforza's advantage : the first was one Sceva Curtes, a man of much boldness and ability, who had formerly been in his service in the March of Ancona; the other was Agnes Mayna, the mother of Bianca Maria. The first was not long in furnishing his former master with the intelligence of what was going on, and endeavoured to plead his cause with the citizens; while the latter began making offers to Bolognino, the commander of the citadel. This person had always been attached to the party of Braccio; but as they were now without a head, he seemed to have no objection to make a friend to himself of the opposite chief. He therefore promised to comply with the requests of the lady, on the following conditions : first, that he should be fairly adopted into the party of Sforza, and be treated as if he had borne with him the brunt of his fortunes; and, secondly, that he should receive with the title of count the sovereignty of the castle of San Angelo, the place where he had been born.

Sforza at first hesitated about taking immediate possession of the city. On the one hand, he was fearful of incurring the displeasure of the Milanese. On the other hand, he recollected that there were several other candidates for it; that if he made any long delay in closing with the offers that were now made to him, it would probably fall into the hands of either the Venetians or the duke of Savoy; and that in either case it would be a sore thorn in the side of the future possessors of Lombardy. The Milanese, having received information of these offers, sent ambassadors to his camp, reminding him of his engagements with them, and representing to him that it should be his object to bring under their rule all the cities and states that had been subject to the duke. To this message, Francesco, who was as well skilled in the arts of diplomacy as in those of war, replied that for his part he would do all that lay in his power; that, at the same time, he thought it proper to inform them that the Pavians, divided among themselves in most respects, were agreed only in one thing—that they would not be subject to them, and that they might very possibly choose a foreigner, or even an enemy, for their ruler; that it surely was better for them that Pavia should fall into his hands than into those of one who might employ it to their injury; that, besides being important in a military view from its situation, it contained all the stores and camp equipments that had belonged to Philip, and would afford him no small assistance in his attempts to deliver them from their enemies. These answers appeared far from satisfactory to the ambassadors; but, such as they were, they promised to report them to the Milanese. And Sforza, having thus explained and defended his motives, thought that the present opportunity was not to be lost ; and after the departure of the ambassadors, he received in his camp a deputation of eight citizens from Pavia, to treat about the surrender of the city.

In the meantime, his relation and opponent, Michael Attendolo, was not ignorant of what was going on, and hoped to divert him from his present enterprise by bringing him to battle. But it was in vain that he made many manoeuvres and counter-manoevres in his presence: the possession of a city was now of much greater importance to Sforza than the gaining a victory; and though he seemed fully prepared for any attempt of the enemy, he refused to be drawn from his position. The deputation, after having remained with him one day, returned to Pavia, accompanied by two of his officers, who were received with great acclamations by the citizens, and formally put into possession both of the town and of the territory. But Bolognino, the commandant, refused to deliver the citadel to anyone except to the count himself. It is not likely that the latter would, under any circumstances, have allowed any considerations of the interests of his employers to stand in the way of his own fortunes; but as he had just concluded a treaty with the garrison of St Columbano, in which they promised to surrender if within eight days they were not relieved, he was now able to repair to Pavia without any detriment to them. His first act, after his arrival thither, was to go in public to the cathedral and to return thanks to the Almighty for his fortune. He then repaired to the citadel, which was given up to him by Bolognino; and having found there, besides the military stores, a considerable treasure, he rewarded the commandant with a handsome

present from the latter. On the following day he was formally proclaimed sovereign of the town and the surrounding territory, under the title of count. Like a good captain, he lost no time in making the best military use of his new acquisition. He first despatched soldiers to some of the outlying fortresses in the neighbourhood of the Milanese and of the territory of the duke of Savoy, and then sent eight galleys down the river to intercept all communication between the Venetian army and the town of Piacenza. Having thus secured to himself the possession of this most important place, and taken measures for the future, he returned to his camp on the third day after his departure.

The Milanese, though they must have been in some degree prepared for this step on the part of their general, when they heard that he had actually taken it, could not conceal their indignation. They even went so far as to send messengers to his camp, saying that they would make peace on any terms with their avowed enemies, rather than have their armies managed by men in whom they could place no reliance. As if to show that they were in earnest, they despatched an ambassador to treat with the Venetians. But several events soon occurred, which made them think better of the resolutions adopted in a moment of passion. Their anger had been in some degree appeased by receiving possession of the castle of San Columbano from their general. The Venetians refused to treat with them, except on terms which they deemed it impossible to accept. Their neighbours, as well as the descendants of those who had been subjected by Galeazzo or Philip Visconti, began to take advantage of their present distress to make encroachments on their frontiers, or to assert their independence. Lionel, the son of Nicholas the marquis of Ferrara, got possession of two castles in his neighbourhood, and began to threaten Parma. Two of the minor barons in the neighbourhood of that town had taken other strong places in the vicinity. The Genoese had crossed their natural boundary of the Apennines, and, having taken the fortresses on the frontiers of Lombardy, were menacing Tortona and Alessandria. The duke of Savoy also had sent troops to occupy the latter place as well as Novara, and would probably have taken Pavia if he had not been anticipated by Sforza. The inhabitants of several important places, allured by his promise of exempting them from all tribute, had revolted to him. The marquis of Montferrat began to take measures to recover his position as an independent sovereign of Italy. They were also pressed by a more formidable rival, who might, on a future occasion, bring to bear against them the whole power of France. The possession of the cities, which had been given to the king of France in the preceding year, whetted the appetite of that monarch for extending his dominions in the country in which he had obtained a footing; and he now claimed the duchy of Milan for his nephew, Charles duke of Orleans, the son of Valentina, the sister of Filippo Maria. And his general, Rinaldo, began to assert his claims with the force which he had some time before brought to Asti, originally destined for the assistance of Philip.

This last-mentioned enemy appeared to the Milanese the most formidable of all. The party that was still termed Guelf in the cities of Lombardy retained a sort of traditionary dislike to the supremacy of Milan. They were all much attached to the French, from their connection with the monarchs of Anjou, who had so long been the leaders of their party, and they were sufficiently strong to afford considerable aid to any of their enemies. As in any country except Italy the illegitimacy of Bianca Maria would have been a fatal barrier to her claims, those of Charles, according to the laws of succession, which are usually respected north of the Alps, would have been the most valid of all the aspirants. The Milanese might, indeed, assert their rights to self-government, and say that the Visconti had reigned only with their consent; but such reasoning would have weighed but little with the monarch of a country in which the rights of man had not as yet been discussed; and though they might affect to despise the French as barbarians, they feared that they were as superior in fighting as they were inferior to them in civilisation. Many of the places between Asti and Alessandria, either from attachment or fear, had gone over to them; and several, who dreaded the yoke of a foreigner, sent to Sforza to beg for assistance. The Milanese then accosted him in a very different tone from that in which they addressed him some time before, and requested him to advise them in their dilemma. To the former he sent word not to be afraid of the French; for that, though they might appear more than men at the first onset, yet, if they met them with a stout resistance, they would find them more easily vanquished than women.

The latter he recommended to send what forces they could into the territory of Alessandria, to defend the places that still remained faithful to them; and added, that he had no doubt but that many of those that had revolted from them would return to their allegiance in the winter. He himself sent ambassadors to Rinaldo of Dresnay, the French general, requesting him to abstain from making any attempt on the towns that either belonged to him, or were in any manner under his protection. He reminded him of the claims he had on the king of France, from the circumstance of his father and himself having been the principal supporters of the kings of Anjou in their contests for the crown of Naples, and of his having lost all his fiefs in that kingdom from his attachment to their cause. And he concluded by saying that if, nevertheless, Rinaldo, unmindful of all the services he had rendered to his monarch, in any way molested him, he would bring the whole of his forces to bear against him. These arguments weighed with the French commander, who, influenced either by his friendship for, or his fear of, Sforza, made no attempt to annoy him.

In the meantime, the inhabitants of the town of Tortona, seeing how all parties respected the possessions of Sforza, sent to make offers of their sovereignty to him. But as that place was at some distance from the spot which was to be the scene of his operations, he did not deem its possession of sufficient importance to risk another breach with his employers. He therefore wisely made a show of declining it; but he sent thither a person whom he knew to be most attached to himself to receive it for the Milanese. He also requested Rinaldo to respect it as being one of the places protected by him. And as the Milanese had, in accordance with his advice, sent a force of two thousand men to watch the movements of the French between Asti and Alessandria, he was now able to turn his undivided attention to following up his operations on the river, the command of which would be of such consequence to whomsoever might be destined to be ruler of Lombardy.

He was already in possession of two most important places in the vicinity of the king of rivers—namely, Pavia and Cremona. But the occupation of Piacenza by the Venetians not only entirely prevented any water-communications being carried on between these two places, and endangered those that might be attempted by land, but, what was a most important circumstance in these days when no body of men could be depended upon, it gave his enemies every opportunity of carrying on intrigues in each of these cities. It was obvious, then, that its reduction was of the utmost consequence to him, and he already had his army at no very great distance from it in the vicinity of San Columbano. The Milanese were of course more desirous that he should relieve them of the presence of an enemy at Lodi, and the Venetian commander seemed anxious to engage his attention in that quarter to divert him from Piacenza. But he pursued his plans with a steadiness that contrasts strangely with his conduct in former campaigns. On one occasion, indeed, he was wellnigh foiled, either by the incapacity or the treachery of his generals. Hints having been made to him of some meditated treachery at Cremona, he deemed it advisable to repair thither, leaving the Piccinini in the command of his army. After his departure a report was spread among his troops that the Venetian general, having been informed of his absence, was about to attack them, whereon the Piccinini, either through incapacity or cowardice, retired in some disorder to Pizzighettone. When intelligence of this was brought to him, he was in no small degree annoyed; not so much, perhaps, on account of any actual damage that it was likely to cause, as from the loss of the prestige of the invincibility of his troops. This prestige, which was of such powerful aid to him both in battle and in diplomacy, he determined to redeem. Accordingly, he lost no time in rallying his army, and bringing them to the vicinity of the enemy, who had all this time remained quietly encamped near Lodi. Both armies were drawn up on opposite hills, within a mile of one another. But though frequent challenges passed on each side, neither would descend to the intervening valley to allow the other to attack to advantage; and after sunset they both retired to their quarters. Sforza now thought that he had done enough for his honour; and as it was already the beginning of October, he well knew that, if he meant to take Piacenza that year, he had no time to lose; so he brought his army there, and began the siege in right earnest.

His desire to get possession of that city was in no small degree enhanced by the great difficulties in his way, the overcoming of which, he thought, would in no small degree add to his already well-established

reputation. The city is situated in a plain about half a mile south of the Po. It was then divided into four quarters, in each of which there was a gate. The circuit of its walls was not much less than that of Milan : they were remarkable for their strength; they were surrounded by a deep ditch, and contained many towers at short distances from each other. It was garrisoned by a force of two thousand horse, and the same number of foot. It contained a great abundance of forage, provisions, and military stores of every description. Among the inhabitants were six thousand men of arms, almost all determined enemies of Sforza; and as they knew that they had little mercy to expect from the Milanese, they were all resolved to fight to the last. Their hopes were considerably elated by the setting in of the autumn rains, which would of course retard the operations of the besiegers. Sforza found that the number of those whom he could bring to attack the place was not greater than that of its defendants—a circumstance which, considering the great disadvantages at which besiegers always fight, might seem to render his success almost hopeless. But he was determined that before the end of the year Piacenza should be his. His first object, of course, was to prevent all communication between the besieged and their allies, more especially as he had heard that the Venetian general, who was as well aware as himself of the importance of the place, had meditated sending thither reinforcements. For this purpose he made four divisions of his army, and assigned to each the custody of one of the gates of the city. He made level the surface of the intervening country, so that nothing should prevent their immediate junction, should it at any time seem necessary. In making these arrangements he was careful to assign to the treacherous Piccinini the command of the southern gate of the city, the quarter from which he least expected an attack.

Michael Attendolo had four galleons on the Po, by which he meant to have sent the promised reinforcements. But this was now rendered impossible by the strength of the blockading force. There remained but two ways by which he could do anything for the besieged, either by sending a fleet up the Po from Venice, or by pressing the Milanese in a manner so vigorous as to compel their general to relinquish his present design, and to come to their relief. The advanced season of the year would of course much retard any assistance that could be rendered to them in the first mode; and even if his fleet were in the river, the bridge of Cremona presented an obstacle which would at least require time to surmount; so he determined on vigorously following up his operations in the vicinity of his enemy's capital. He therefore again laid siege to San Columbano, which he had already taken and lost in the course of the year; and having established his headquarters there, he scoured the whole of the country between the cities of Pavia and Milan. He was not without hopes that the former city would have revolted to him; but the inhabitants, influenced, it is said, more by the fear than the love of their present ruler, remained faithful to their engagements.

Sforza, however, was not so easily to be moved from his position; but, with a view of keeping the enemy in check without raising the siege of the city, he began to build a bridge over the Po, immediately above the headquarters of his army. The Milanese sent messengers to him, urging him, in the strongest manner, to come to their relief; but to all their solicitations he replied, he could do nothing until he had completed the bridge—a work which not only was necessary for the present, but would also be of the greatest use to them in the subsequent conduct of the war. He requested them to send him money and materials, of which he knew they had abundance at Lago Maggiore; and promised that, if he had all things at hand, he would be able to finish the bridge in six days—a shorter space of time than it would require to bring his troops to their assistance by any other route. There was much truth in all this; but free states seldom act with vigour and promptitude in war; and the Milanese, having for a century and a half been accustomed to obey others, had even less unity of action than most republics. However much they might have desired the possession of Piacenza, there were not a few who dreaded to see it fall into the hands of Sforza. They therefore sent to him to state that they knew from experience that it was utterly impossible that the bridge could be completed within the time that he had stated; that he must come to their relief without farther loss of time; and that they could not think of furnishing him with assistance for the prosecution of a work which he must immediately relinquish. But he well knew the instability of the popular governments at Milan; that they had nobody but him to whom they could cry in their distress; and that

if they saw no chance of relief until he had finished his undertaking, they must give in to his wishes. He therefore continued his operations, and sent a fresh embassy to his employers to urge his former requests.

These measures produced the desired effect. He still had many partisans at Milan, and experience taught the others that there was nothing for it but to give in to him. As soon as he had got all that he required, he prosecuted his work with such assiduity that, contrary to the general expectation, he had it finished within the time he had mentioned. While he was thus engaged, he artfully gave out that he intended, without loss of time, to bring the whole of his forces against the Venetians, leaving merely a few galleons on the river to prevent reinforcements being sent to the besieged. These reports so completely deceived the Venetian general that, recalling his troops from their predatory incursions, he concentrated them on the far side of the Lambro, and ordered different bodies of infantry to cross the Po by night to reinforce the garrison at Piacenza. In the latter attempt, however, he was completely frustrated by the vigilance of his adversaries. Thus had the very fear of Sforza's name done for the Milanese all that they had desired his presence to effect. The Venetian army was expecting him with fear and trembling at Lodi; the Piacenzans were disappointed of assistance; and he himself was able to prosecute the siege with all necessary vigour.

After the besiegers had made one or two ineffectual attempts against the city walls, an event occurred in their camp which considerably assisted their general in his future operations. An uncouth-looking fellow, dressed in rags, and to all appearance a simple-minded countryman, was caught while endeavouring by stealth to make his way across the wall of the city. When brought before the commander-in-chief, he was condemned to the fate of all spies. But he, like the one found by Ulysses and Diomede, was willing to purchase his life on any conditions. Though he had not in his family residence brass, gold, and highly wrought iron, to give to his captors, he had it in his power to render them the most effectual service. He acknowledged that he was carrying letters from the Venetians to the commandants of the garrison, and he proposed that he should continue to be the bearer of these communications, and place them all at the disposal of the besiegers. Those that he had about his person he immediately delivered. After considerable difficulty in deciphering them, (in which, among others, Simoneta, the biographer of Sforza, was employed,) it was discovered therefrom that the Venetian general encouraged the besieged to hold out to the last, informing them that a fleet was shortly about to come to their assistance; and that, lest they should be delayed in their ascent of the river by the bridge of Cremona, he intended to make a sudden descent upon it and destroy it. The general of the Milanese and their allies, more humane than the Grecian heroes, not only spared the spy's life when he got all this information from him, but even rewarded his services with money; and having promised to pay him hereafter, on the condition of his fulfilling his stipulations, he resealed the letters in the best manner he could, and allowed him to make his way with them into the city. The spy soon returned therefrom, bearing the answers of the besieged, in which they declared that they were by no means hard pressed, and would have no difficulty in holding out till the arrival of the fleet; and further suggesting to Michael the expediency of making another diversion in their favour, by attacking Sepri, the only part of the Milanese territory that yet remained undevastated. Sforza was so terribly afraid of their complying with this last piece of advice that he retained the letters in which allusion was made to it, but sent the spy forward with the others. When he arrived at the headquarters of the Venetians with the letters from the Piacenzans, he was asked how he had made his way through the enemy's camp. To this question he replied that he had met there an officer of Sforza's who had formerly been his master, and now passed him off as his servant, and promised to do so on all future occasions on the condition of receiving a reward from the Venetians. They gave perfect credence to his tale, and intrusted him to bring two hundred florins of gold to his supposed benefactor. And as the same man continued to be employed in the same service, Sforza had the most perfect knowledge of all that was going on both in the city of the besieged and in the camp of his enemies.

An opportunity soon occurred, in which he was able to turn the information thus received to the most beneficial account. One of Michael's letters apprised him that he had just passed the Adda by the bridge at Cassano, (which had been of signal service to him during the whole of the campaign,) and was marching direct

to Cremona. As the garrison left in the town was not sufficient to resist this force, he immediately despatched thither a considerable body of cavalry and infantry under two of his ablest officers, and he himself descended the river in a galleon. He arrived at the post of danger just in the nick of time. The Venetians were already seen by the people in the citadel of Cremona to approach the bridge with all the implements required for its destruction; but on their arrival there, they found a body of infantry, sufficiently strong to guard its approach, placed in front of it, and beheld themselves threatened by an attack of cavalry in their flank and rear. A battle soon commenced in the plain between the city and the bridge, in which the Venetian commander found all his attempts to take possession of the latter ineffectual. After fighting for some time, he beheld the lofty cockade of Sforza, and recognised the sonorous tone of his kinsman's voice issuing the commands to his men, whereon he retired in some confusion upon Crema, marvelling much at the wonderful tact and good fortune of the man who always managed to be at the post of danger the very moment he was wanted.

While these events were taking place on the Po, others occurred in Piedmont, singularly illustrative both of the intriguing spirit of the times, and of the tact of the man whose history has been chosen to illustrate them. It has been already stated that the Milanese had, in accordance with his advice, sent two thousand horse to keep in check the French army in the territory of Alessandria. In the meantime, the French general, Rinaldo of Dresnay, was engaged in the siege of Bosco, a town a little to the south of Alessandria, and sent to Sforza to beg that, as a token of his amity to his countrymen, he would give him assistance. In his reply to this request, he made no allusion either to his engagements with the Milanese, or to the advice he had given to them; but he endeavoured to represent to him the folly of attempting to reduce such a strongly fortified place with a comparatively small body of men, and urged him to retreat upon Asti, lest Bosco should prove a scene of as great disaster to the French as Alessandria had formerly been to the Germans. Much about this time the Milanese determined to relieve Bosco, and sent orders to Sforza to send them part of his forces to assist in their attack upon the man with whom he had just been carrying on these negotiations. It need hardly be said that he, intent as he was upon the reduction of Piacenza, and anxious to maintain appearances with Rinaldo, declined to do this. The Milanese troops were, however, soon joined by a considerable body of volunteers from Alessandria and the neighbouring cities, under an old man of the name of Gian Trotto, and they were preparing to attack the camp of Rinaldo with force. Before the action commenced, the Alessandrian volunteers began crying out, "Carne, carne!". On Rinaldo, who happened to be in the part of the French army that was immediately contiguous to them, asking what this word meant, he was given to understand that it was a war-cry of the Italians, denoting blood and murder. When this became known among his soldiers it was impossible to restrain them, and they immediately attacked and routed that part of the army opposite to them. They followed the fugitives as far as Tortona; and, to the great terror and surprise of the Italians, who had not been accustomed to see much blood shed in their wars, and who valued victories not as a means of destroying their enemy's forces, but of enriching themselves with booty and ransom, they gave no quarter during the pursuit or afterwards. On the other side of the army, however, the regular troops of the Milanese, under Bartolomeo Collio, were successful, and they were unable to prevent the citizens of Alessandria from avenging the slaughter of their countrymen by a cruel massacre of the prisoners. Rinaldo himself was taken, but he escaped the fate of his less fortunate soldiers. Collio's next step was to attack the town of Tortona, because it was known to be well affected towards, and supposed to be actually in possession of Sforza. A strange epoch, in which one general, certainly with the connivance, and possibly at the instigation of his employers, made use of his soldiers to injure the man who was actually at that time at the head of their armies! The city, either because it was unprovided with means of resistance, or because Sforza did not wish actually to avow himself its owner, surrendered at once. Its loss was unimportant, but it gave Sforza an insight into the real disposition of the Milanese towards him, and showed him how little he could expect from them, if they were once freed from their enemies.

Francesco, while thus watching all that was passing around him, continued the siege of Piacenza without intermission. By the middle of December a considerable breach was effected in the walls by means of the artillery, which appears then, for the first time in Italian warfare, to have been effectually employed for that

purpose. He then determined upon storming it. On the 15th of the month he called a council of war, and represented to his chief captains that, as the season was far advanced, Piacenza must be taken on the following day. His words were amply responded to. A universal enthusiasm spread through the army. Many who had deserted, or who had been absent on pillaging excursions, returned. Several of the country people joined them. The appetites of all were whetted by the expectation of the booty they were to get in the city.

The dispositions for the attack were most skilfully made. A small fleet was sent, under the command of Charles of Gonzaga, up the Trebbia, a river which flows from the direction of Piacenza, and which was then so swollen that it afforded water for the vessels up to the very city. The men were ordered to scale the walls, and make themselves masters of the turrets from the masts of the vessels. Sforza directed another attack to be made on the turrets adjoining the southern gate, while he selected the troops on whom he had most reliance for the assault on the breach, which he determined to command in person. The two first attacks were designed as feints, to divert the attention of the defenders from the breach; and though those to whom they were intrusted performed their part as they were ordered, and the soldiers fought with great bravery, neither made any impression at first. But the third attack, though resisted with the most desperate courage, was completely successful. For a moment the commandants of the place were astounded at the suddenness of the assault, and scarcely knew from which quarter their real danger proceeded; but they soon organised both the soldiers and the citizens for the defence of the breach, and prepared to contest every inch of ground with the aggressors. The latter, however, pushed on till they found an unexpected obstacle in a new trench, which had just been constructed around the walls. As soon as Sforza perceived this, he ordered each soldier to take with him a faggot for the purpose of filling it up; but this so much retarded their movements that they were unable to face the javelins and balls of the besieged. Fortunately for them there still remained a palisade, which had been constructed for the defence of the men employed in digging it, and which was strong enough to admit of their passing over. But here again they were repulsed by the missiles which were showered upon them from behind the fragment of the wall; and it is not probable that they would ever have arrived at the breach, if Sforza had not adopted the bold, and then entirely novel, proceeding of ordering his men to lie down, and discharging his cannon over their heads at the wall which afforded shelter to the defenders. The wall fell with a terrible crash upon those who were posted behind it. Most of those who escaped destruction were confounded; and the few whose nerves were unshaken were unable to resist the soldiers, who now marched in an unbroken line across the bridge. For a short time, indeed, the tide of the victors was arrested by Sforza having his horse killed under him; but on his appearing remounted and unhurt, their energy was restored. When, however, they had passed the breach, a formidable difficulty seemed still to await them. There was in the city a considerable body of cavalry, against whom, as they could not enter it in any sort of order, it would be impossible to make a stand. On beholding this they halted by the walls, and cried out for horses as lustily as King Richard. But this danger soon disappeared. Thaddeus of Este, despairing of ultimately saving the city, retreated with a small body of soldiers to the citadel. The walls were scaled from the river; the city gates were opened, and Sforza galloped in at the head of a considerable body of horse. Shortly afterwards the garrison surrendered, and the citizens were abandoned to the mercy of the victors.

On no one occasion was Sforza more unmindful of the advice of his father, to treat the vanquished with mercy. All accounts agree as to the extent of the injuries inflicted on the unfortunate citizens. Even Sforza's secretary and biographer, who in general is partial to his character, allows that he made no attempt to save them from the cupidity or the revenge of the soldiers. It would be difficult, he says, to give any idea of the nature and extent of the devastation that took place on the following night; to describe how the soldiers quarrelled and fought among themselves for the booty; to say what murders were committed among the many thousand friends and foes who were in the city. The victors, as well as the vanquished, were murdered and robbed. Churches and houses alike were ransacked; virgins and matrons were violated indiscriminately. The annalist of Italy makes use of the words, "that the people who committed these iniquities appeared more like Turks than Christians"—a strong expression, when we consider the dread which, in his time, the former inspired throughout

Christendom. After a time, though it does not exactly appear when, Sforza expressed some wish to protect the property of the churches and monasteries, and the persons of the nuns. Thus, however much his reputation as a general gained by the siege, his character as a man, weighed even by the standard of that age, was considerably damaged by the use that he made of his victory.

Of the pillage that followed the capture of Piacenza, M. Sismondi remarks, that it showed in an odious light the then system of war, on the humanity of which the Italians of that day so much prided themselves, inasmuch as the peaceful inhabitants were liable to the most frightful sufferings, while the mercenary soldier could scarcely be said to be exposed to any hazard. But in a siege, which occurred in the memory of many men now living, in which success was attained by an extraordinary expedient, similar to that employed at Piacenza, by soldiers who have been less sparing of their lives than almost any recorded in history, who have stood to be mowed down like grass, or advanced with fixed bayonets to the mouth of the cannon, the capture of the city was followed by excesses of a not less heinous nature than those committed by the Italian soldiers on the occasion commemorated. The comparison of the two events may, in the words made use of by Mr Alison with reference to the more recent one, suggest the mournful doubt, whether all mankind are not at bottom the same, in point of tendency to crime, when exposed to the influence of the same temptations; and whether many evils do not lie beneath the boasted glories of modern civilisation.

CHAPTER XVII.

INVASION OF TUSCANY BY ALPHONSO.—DESTRUCTION OF THE VENETIAN FLEET

It was fortunate for Sforza that, while the events just narrated were taking place, his old enemy, Alphonso, had sufficient on hand to detain him elsewhere. He had never been friendly with the Florentines; he had long desired an opportunity to carry out the project of subjecting them, entertained by Ladislaus at the end of the last century; and he determined to take advantage of the present time, when the Venetians and Milanese had too much to do to interfere in his projects. It was not difficult for him to find an excuse to justify his conduct. The Florentines were the allies of the Venetians, with whom his ally, the duke of Milan, had been at war; and

though the latter was now dead, he affected to consider his treaties with him binding. Under pretence of fulfilling his engagements, he marched into Tuscany. His first step was to take the fortress of Cennina, whence he proceeded to lay waste the territory of Sienna. The Florentines, though surprised, were by no means confounded by the suddenness of the attack. They created a council of ten for the management of the war : they provided themselves with an army, and retook Cennina. The king of Naples having lost this place, and finding that its inhabitants and those of all the surrounding places remained faithful to his enemies, invaded the territory of Volterra. Thence he passed into the neighbourhood of Pisa, several of the strongholds of which were allowed by the leading men of the state to fall into his hands. He then made an attempt to reduce Campighlio, but relinquished the siege just about the time that Sforza succeeded in taking Piacenza. After having left what he considered a sufficient force in all the places that had fallen into his hands, he retired to winter quarters in the vicinity of Sienna.

Meanwhile the Florentines engaged the services of two additional captains, Frederick, the lord of Urbino, and Sforza's son-in-law, Sigismund Malatesta. By compelling them to carry on their operations in the winter, they retook several of the places they had lost. The king of Naples resumed his operations in spring. After the hostile armies had manoeuvred in the presence of one another, not far from Campighlio, Alphonso directed his steps to Piombino. As that town is situated on the sea at the extremity of a promontory, it was evident that, if once master of it, he could have supplies sent thither from Aragon or Naples, and make it the basis of his future operations against Tuscany. With this view he invested it strongly by land and by sea. The Florentines attempted to send four galleys to its relief from Leghorn, which were unfortunately captured by a superior fleet of the enemy's. But the inhabitants were resolved to hold out to the last, and Alphonso saw the necessity of collecting the whole of his force to reduce it. He was followed thither by the army of the Florentines, who determined to watch his operations, and to seek an opportunity of forcing him, if possible, to raise the siege. Thus had both parties sufficient on hands to prevent their appearing for another year at least in Lombardy.

This campaign died, as it were, a natural death. It was not long before the insalubrity of the marshy shores of Tuscany, always developed by the heats of the summer and autumn, and the difficulty of procuring supplies, produced their due effects upon the health and spirits of both armies. The Florentines were the first to retire from their position; but having done this, they cheered their troops by leading them to the capture of many places that still remained in the hands of the enemy. Alphonso sent to Florence to make propositions of peace, and offered to leave Tuscany on the condition of receiving fifty thousand florins of gold, and the town of Piombino. But these offers were, through the instrumentality of Neri Capponi, rejected with indignation. Upon this the king, finding that the malaria fever had already carried off ten thousand of his soldiers, and had rendered many others almost unfit for service, retired to his own dominions, vowing vengeance against the citizens who had refused either to surrender or to pay for their liberty.

In Lombardy, Piacenza continued to be pillaged for forty days. The Po afforded such a facility for carrying off the booty on rafts, that the citizens were stripped not only of their treasure and ornaments, but even of the commonest articles of furniture. Many of them were sold as slaves; and a body of two thousand infantry, who had marched thither before they were aware of the catastrophe, shared the same fate. Never after that time did the city regain its former position in Italy. The victors frequently fought among themselves about the booty, and their general had no small difficulty in preventing his army sustaining a severer loss from these internal quarrels than it had from the valour of the defenders. At last he restored order by appointing the captive commandant, Thaddeus of Este, a judge to whom all such matters of dispute were to be referred. He afterwards treated him with commendable generosity in restoring him to liberty.

Meantime the Venetian army took up its winter quarters in the country north of the Po, between the Oglio, the Mincio, and the Adige. An armament, which had been destined for the relief of Piacenza, had arrived

at Casale. Thus the whole of the territory around Cremona was occupied by Sforza's enemies. His own troops were cantoned to the south of the Po, and he had not the inclination, even if he had the power, to resume operations before the return of the season. But he took the precaution of fortifying the bridge of Cremona, by the erection of a battery and other means. His subjects thus continued to receive their supplies from the side of the river without any molestation.

The Milanese celebrated the capture of Piacenza by a triumphal procession, which lasted for three days. The place, indeed, was so important, its fortifications so strong, the mode of taking it had been so novel, and the subsequent sufferings of its inhabitants had been so great, that the event caused no small sensation throughout the peninsula. While none could fail to admire the talents, many were envious of the success, and fearful of the ambition, of the man who had taken it. After the first exultation was over, feelings of the nature of those last mentioned became predominant among the Milanese. They beheld the man who had once openly aspired to be their ruler, in possession of the city of Pavia, which had, in the days of yore, been their rival; so that, even if he did not at present wish to menace their independence, he might at any time become a formidable neighbour. They now saw that he had succeeded in taking a city which, before its capture, was not deemed much inferior, either in population or in the strength of its fortifications, to their own; and they could not but contrast his success in that quarter with the little progress he had made in clearing the country about the Adda of their enemies. These feelings were artfully inflamed by the Piccinini and others, who never ceased to represent to them that, in supplying him with the means of carrying on the war, they were but nourishing a serpent who would one day destroy them. Being duly impressed with a sense of these dangers, they sent, on three different occasions, to treat with the Venetians. But in none of these were they able to come at once to any satisfactory conclusion; and, pending the negotiations, Sforza's agents were actively employed in stirring up the passions of the anti-Venetian party at Milan. So well did they do their work, that, when it was proposed in the city that each of the belligerent states should be allowed to retain the places of which they were then in possession, some of the leading men shouted out "War!" and the populace seized the person of the principal abettor of these pacific negotiations, and forced him to join in the cry. Thus were they compelled to continue their existing engagements with Sforza. But the Braccian party was sufficiently strong to cripple him in all his operations; and though the government was submissive enough to him in their hour of need, they constantly sought to deprive him of the fruit of his victories. Sometimes, indeed, they did not hesitate to treat with the enemy while he was actually engaged with them. But they were dealing with one who was perfectly acquainted with all their arts of intrigue, and who, as we shall see, anticipated them by committing what would, at other times, have been deemed an inexcusable act of treachery, just at the time that they were meditating one of a similar nature.

The Milanese, in compliance with often-repeated requests of their general, equipped a considerable fleet for the defence of Cremona, and sent him reinforcements to prosecute his operations by land. Thus, though he was deserted by Charles of Gonzaga and others, who alleged that the term of their service had expired, he was able, by the beginning of May, to take the field with a force not inferior to that of the preceding year. In order to remove one cause of suspicion, his first step was to make an attempt to dislodge the enemy from their position on the Adda. His success there was all that could have been desired : he took several of the castles; the inhabitants of many of the towns, having before their eyes the fate of the unfortunate Piacenzans, surrendered to him at once; and, after a sharp contest of ten days, he made himself master of the bridge at Cassano. Of all the important places the Venetians had taken in this territory, Lodi and Caravaggio alone remained in their hands; and it is probable that these towns would soon have surrendered to the man whom it was thought almost vain to resist, had he continued in that quarter. But the enemies who had tried in vain, in the preceding year, to take him from the siege of Piacenza by a diversion on the Adda, found no difficulty in taking him from the Adda by threatening his possessions on the Po. The Venetian fleet, under the command of Andreas Quirinus, advanced from Casale, where it had been stationed during the winter, and made a most formidable attack on the bridge of Cremona. They fastened several of the galleons to stakes in the water beneath, and posted a

considerable body of infantry in a species of island or sand-bank that had been formed in the river. After they had cleared the bridge by their artillery, they attempted to scale it. Some of the men actually mounted thereon, and hoisted the standard of St Mark; and it seemed probable that, ere long, they would succeed either in taking possession of, or at least in destroying it, and capturing the galleons of the Milanese, which were lying there unmanned. The heroic conduct of Bianca Maria alone saved her husband from this great disaster. As soon as she heard of what was taking place, she repaired without delay to the post of danger, and sent orders to two of her husband's best generals, who were stationed at Pizzighettone, to come to the rescue. The guard on the bridge, animated by her presence, and, as it is said, even guided by her directions, managed to maintain it till their arrival; after which, they soon drove the enemy from the sand-bank whence so much damage was inflicted, and directed their own batteries with such effect against the fleet of the Venetians, that they were compelled to retire with loss. But the Venetians, though foiled in their attempt, continued to annoy the citizens by their incursions, and to keep the garrison in no small anxiety about the safety of the bridge.

Information of these events was duly conveyed to Sforza. If left to himself, he would immediately have repaired thither with the whole of his forces; but having already had experience how unstable was the favour of the Milanese, he was desirous, in his present position, to do nothing that could give his enemies cause to complain. With the view of appearing to act in compliance with the wishes of others, whom he hoped to bring over to his views by his eloquence, he immediately called a council of war. He there endeavoured to impress his generals with a due sense of the injury that would be inflicted on them if this bridge were once to fall into the hands of the enemy : he said that its loss would open to the Venetians the command of the Po as far as the Ticino; he reminded them of the inconveniences that Philip had formerly suffered from a similar event; he entreated them for once to lay aside all jealousy, and to put their confidence in him, and follow his advice, which was, that they should go with their whole force to Cremona, whence, having manned the galleons that were there lying empty, they should make a vigorous attack, both by land and by water, on the enemy above Casale. He added that, if he were once free from all apprehension in that quarter, he would be able to prosecute his campaign on the Adda and on the Oglio with the greatest vigour; but that, otherwise, he might possibly waste much time without effecting anything.

Against these plausible arguments nothing could be said; even the Piccinini at first pretended to give in to them. But that which they did not dare to say in the camp, they got others to say for them at Milan. Their friends in the city cautioned the government not to be deceived by the fine words and perfidious intentions of their general. They insinuated that he was only anxious to secure his own town of Cremona, and to march thence to Brescia, which had been promised to him; and said that, if they were wise, they would not allow him to leave his present position till he had put them in possession of Lodi. Orders to this effect were sent to the camp. It was in vain that he sent remonstrances to Milan. The Braccian party, though not powerful enough to procure his dismissal, were still able to thwart him in many of his plans, and the government were firm in adhering to their former demands. Vexatious as they were, he at first thought it prudent to obey. Nevertheless, as he received continual accounts of the danger with which the city and bridge of Cremona were threatened, he sent thither two of his ablest captains with a small body of men to assist in keeping the enemy in check.

The Milanese were, like the majority of mankind, very self-willed in the time of prosperity—very humble to those who could help them in the hour of adversity. Whenever their general found himself thwarted by them in his plans, he had merely to let them feel their need of him to make them give in to him as he wished. For this reason it maybe supposed, that, while he was detained contrary to his wishes on the Adda, he was not anxious to render them any signal service. Though he was obeying their commands to the letter, the Venetian general managed to cross the Oglio and to take Mozanica. This partial success rather startled the Milanese, and the count took advantage of the sensation caused thereby, to send a friend to them to ask for unlimited powers in the conduct of the war. However suspicious they might still have been of his ultimate intentions, they thought it politic to accede to his request. On the receipt of this permission, he prepared to bring all his forces to attack

the Venetian fleet near Cremona, and was ready to start on the third day after he had fixed on his plan of operations. The only danger he apprehended was from the treachery of the Piccinini; but as he did not think it prudent to come to an open rupture with them, he contented himself with placing in their camp and about their persons spies, who were to report their proceedings to him. A three days' march brought him to the vicinity of the place where the enemy had been; but on his arrival, he found they had retreated down the river to Casale Maggiore—the scene of the victory which had but two years before showed the first gleam of hope to him in the midst of his adversity.

This movement of the Venetians was a sore disappointment to Sforza, as the current immediately below Cremona would have enabled him to attack them to great advantage, whereas in their present position they were protected both by an island and an angle of the river. He had nevertheless made up his mind to attack, and to do so with all his might. But he was still thwarted at every step by the Piccinini. Though they dared not lift up their voices against him in council, they pretended that, as they had not money for their forces, and could not procure them the necessary supplies, they were unable to proceed any farther. But he well knew that the avarice of these men was even greater than their envy of him, so he induced them to remain with him by promising them the spoil of the town of Pontioni, which it would be necessary for him to take. The unfortunate inhabitants, having heard of his intentions, and warned by the fate of the Piacenzans, sent to beg that he would receive them as friends and allies; but it was in vain. The keeping together of his army required that their property should be sacrificed; and he, though by nature neither cruel nor revengeful, was not the man to allow his principle to stand in the way of his ambition. He therefore sent them word that the time for a compromise was now past; that if they had wished to escape the fate of the conquered, they ought to have surrendered to him long ago; and that now they could do nothing better than defend themselves to the best of their ability. The city was taken almost without any show of resistance. The property of the unfortunate inhabitants was given without compunction to the soldiers, but their persons were protected. The quantity of cattle and grain that fell into the hands of the Piccinini was so great that it ought to have removed all just cause of discontent. But as soon as they had got all that they could of the rewards of war, they began again to seek for excuses for avoiding its labours. Among other things, they complained that they had not obtained their full share of the spoil, and that they would still find it difficult to maintain their troops. But Sforza represented to them that they could get abundant supplies by means of the river; and that in the event of any success on his part, they would be still further enriched with booty. Overcome in some measure by his powers of persuasion, which Simoneta says were quite irresistible, and still more by their appetite for plunder, they consented to remain with him. And having thus managed to keep things together, for a time at least, he proceeded to act on the offensive.

His first step was to march to Casale with the whole of his army. The city was strongly fortified on the three sides which are accessible by land, and was guarded on the water by the Venetian fleet, under the command of Andreas Quirinus. Sforza lost no time in constructing batteries just where the walls adjoined the river, with which he managed to do much damage both to the fortifications and to the ships. The Milanese fleet, also, which was commanded by Blasius Asaretus, who in the year 1435 had taken Alphonso prisoner in the battle of Penzio, and which was manned by a force that had been sent from Parma for the purpose, had come from Pavia to the present scene of action. The Milanese admiral did not think himself strong enough to attack his enemies in their present position, but he stationed himself in a spot whence he might follow them to advantage, should the batteries of Sforza compel them to relinquish it.

In the meantime, it was ascertained that Michael Attendolo had taken up his quarters with the whole of the Venetian army, within eight miles of Casale. Many of the officers of Sforza thought that they would be no match for the combined forces of Michael and of the garrison and fighting men of Casale; and his secret enemies, the Piccinini, took advantage of the apprehensions to spread panic and disaffection in the camp. To such an extent did they succeed that many said at once, that, if he did move soon, they would go home rather than fall into the hands of the Venetians. Against these machinations Sforza had nothing to oppose except his

eloquence ; but, trusting to it, he called together his officers, and represented to them that he surely could not be thought so destitute of skill and prudence as to ask them to remain in their present position if they were really in the danger that was represented, seeing that his fame, his family, and his fortunes would be ruined by such an act of folly; that there was nobody present who would lose more by it than himself; that they surely could not think him such a fool as to involve himself in such certain destruction; that though he was far from wishing to undervalue the force or the bravery of the enemy, their own position could not be said to be one of danger; that they were strong enough to withstand a combined attack from the city and the country; but that, as the enemy, by so doing, would leave their fleet defenceless, he did not think that they would attempt it; that for his part he considered victory certain, and if they forced him to forego it, they would inflict a most irreparable injury, not only on themselves, but also on the cause of the Milanese; and that, if they would but remain with him two days longer, they would then see that he was not addressing them in this tone of confidence without reason.

The officers, yielding to the force of these arguments, consented to await the result; and it was not long before it convinced them of the sagacity of their general. The Venetian admiral still remained in front of the city, expecting aid from Michael Attendolo; but he was suffering more and more from the batteries that had been erected on land: the vessels themselves were almost all shattered; the men, deprived of all protection, were falling in great numbers; and it was evident that his position would soon be intolerable. Of this both Sforza and Blasius were aware; and the latter, at the instigation of his commander-in-chief, attacked the Venetian fleet one afternoon, and captured and carried off several of their galleons before evening. Quirinus saw that, if the battle were renewed on the following day, everything, both men and ships, must fall into the hands of the enemy. He endeavoured by means of signals to make the Venetian general aware of his distress; but receiving no response from him, he evacuated the fleet by night; and, setting fire to some of the ships, let them float down among the others, that all might be consumed before the enemy could get them.

A curious scene afterwards ensued, illustrative of the human appetite for plunder. The inhabitants of the city were the first to perceive what had taken place, and they soon made their way among the deserted ships of their allies, to lay hands on what they could find. It was not long before the Milanese fleet was deserted by its crews, all of whom appeared among the smouldering ruins of their adversaries' vessels, seeking what they could get. Sforza endeavoured to prevent the soldiers joining in the scramble. He had them all drawn up in lines, and forbade them to go out of the intrenchments of the camp, under penalty of death. But all attempts to preserve order were in vain. Exaggerated reports of the booty that was to be had elsewhere, spread among them; and it was not long before the camp was almost completely deserted. The disorder became so great that, if Michael had chanced to make an attack on them that day, nothing could have saved them. Sforza himself was much afraid of this, more particularly as he thought that the sight of the flames and the smoke in the distance might cause him to advance to see what was going on. With a view of bringing back his soldiers, he spread about a report that the enemy was actually coming down upon them with the whole of his force, and that, if they did not return to defend the camp, they would lose all that they had got. At the same time he sent others, who were as well aware as himself of the extent of their danger, to remove farther temptation, by continuing to set fire to the ships. It was not till the greater part of them were consumed that order was restored to the camp.

The Venetians on that day lost thirty-two galleys, a great number of transports laden with provisions, besides baggage, military stores, and equipments, to a prodigious extent. They vented their indignation on Andreas Quirinus, by condemning him to a three years' imprisonment in the dungeons. And Sforza, having thus destroyed the force by which his own town of Cremona was threatened, so far complied with the wishes of his generals as to raise the siege of Casale, and to retire thence in the direction of the former town. All this time Michael looked on, but did not dare to attack his apparently invincible kinsman.

As had happened on more important occasions, rumour, speaking truth from the first, had preceded the authenticated intelligence of this victory at Milan. The confirmation of the good news by the ambassadors of Sforza produced a mingled sensation of joy at the destruction of their enemies, and envy of the rising fortune of the great captain. Influenced as before by the latter passion, the chief council immediately assembled together, and abrogated the unlimited powers which, not many weeks before, they had intrusted to him. They ordered him to repair without loss of time to Caravaggio, and to use all his endeavours to reduce it. They naturally thought that, if they could once dislodge the enemy thence, Lodi would be given up to them almost without a straggle; and they made no secret of their intentions of reopening their negotiations with the Venetians as soon as they regained these two important places. Sforza's design had been to attack Brescia, both because the place had been promised to him, and because he well knew that, if his employers were freed from the presence of an enemy in the regions of the Adda, he himself would not be allowed to remain long in the most desirable position of commander of their armies. There might also have been much truth in his own allegations, that, by drawing the enemy into the territory of Brescia, in which he hoped to be able to attack him to advantage, he was taking a surer, and probably a more expeditious, mode of putting the Milanese in the possession of the places that they so much coveted, than by commencing the tedious and doubtful undertaking of a siege; and it is probable that he himself would have had no objection to have seen the Venetians dislodged from these cities after he had attained the objects he had immediately in view. But it was in vain that he represented many of these things to the ambassadors, and, at the same time, upbraided them with the inconsistency and short-sightedness of their employers. Being in the camp, he was not able to bring the power of his eloquence to bear upon the council at Milan, with whose wishes he was obliged to comply. The ambassadors also encouraged both the soldiers and the officers to go to Caravaggio, by promising them a most abundant supply, not only of provisions, but also of everything that would assist them in the prosecution of their enterprise.

Sforza, though constrained to act against his will, displayed great promptitude and talent in carrying out the wishes of the ruling powers at Milan. Five days' march brought him beneath the walls of Caravaggio, which, though they were more than one mile in circumference, he surrounded with his army. He then fortified his camp, so as to render it almost impregnable. Three days after his arrival, he was informed that Michael Attendolo, with the whole army of the Venetians, was about to take up an intrenched position within four miles of him. The circumstance of an enemy being so near him, engaged in a work in which it is impossible to preserve military order, seemed to Sforza to present an opportunity of attacking which was not to be lost. He immediately brought thither the main body of his army; and though he was met by a fair show of opposition, he would probably have gained most important advantages if he had not been deceived by a report that a large body of the enemy had taken a circuit to the right, with a view of making a flank attack on his camp, while he himself was engaged in front with the majority of his troops. Though he thought it almost incredible that a general of the experience of his kinsman would have weakened his line by extending it in this manner, he was well aware that the movement, if not checked in time, was fraught with peril to himself. He therefore repaired without delay to the spot whence the alarm had proceeded, intrusting the command of the battle to the two Piccinini. The elder of them evinced no desire to betray the confidence that was reposed in him; but not so the younger. Though Sforza was at this instant acting against his own wishes, in obedience to the orders of the government, and had no object of his own to secure by a victory, the younger Piccinino evidently showed that he was more afraid of conquering than of being conquered. At the time that both armies were wholly engaged, he made a signal to his own troops to retreat, and remained quite unmoved either by the remonstrances of his brother or the regrets of his own officers.

The victory expected by Sforza might thus have been turned into a defeat, had not he himself ascertained the falsity of the reports that had been brought to him, and made a speedy reappearance on the scene of action. He fortunately arrived in time to arrest the disaster; but the heat of the sun had become so intolerable that it was impossible to renew the attack. The accounts that he received of the state of the enemy showed him how great a victory he had lost. It was ascertained from the prisoners and deserters that their camp had been in

complete disorder; that all ranks were panic-stricken, and placed their only hopes of safety in flight; and that they were endeavouring to remove all that they could save to the other side of the Oglio. Though he had no doubt as to who had caused this disappointment, he nevertheless affected to continue on good terms with the traitor, being probably of opinion that he would do him less injury when present in his camp than he might when at a distance in Milan. Michael, in noways daunted by the danger of attempting to fortify a camp within four miles of a formidable adversary, retained his position; and Sforza, having the enemy so near him, deemed it advisable to increase the strength of his fortifications, before proceeding to take the city by storm.

For some time the rival armies remained in the presence of each other, neither daring to hazard a general attack. Both commanders, however, deemed it advisable to render their positions as secure as possible; and in process of time both camps became so strongly fortified that they assumed the appearance of two cities within a short distance of each other. Those who were within one camp used to bring their batteries and missiles to bear upon any of the enemy who ventured out of the other, and frequent skirmishes took place in the intervening space. In one of these the younger Piccinino received a wound, sufficient to afford him an excuse for absenting himself from the camp; in another, the Venetians suffered so severely that the republic was obliged in no small degree to tax its resources to repair the disasters, having to send to Dalmatia for bowmen, and to Germany for sharpshooters and cavalry. Each general, however, had his own motives for delay. Michael, being well aware both of the envy with which Sforza was regarded by the Piccinini and others, and of the uncertain state of the relation between him and the Milanese, hoped that some dissension might occur in the camp or in the council, which would compel him to desist from his enterprise. On the other hand, Sforza, although a considerable breach had already been effected in the walls, did not attempt to storm the city in the presence of a powerful enemy, fearing that, even should he succeed, his soldiers would be so intent upon pillage as to leave his camp without defence. At one time the expectations of his adversary seemed likely to be realised. The Milanese had already become very remiss in their supply of money and provisions to their general, and there were many who endeavoured to ascribe to him selfish and treacherous motives. It was generally insinuated that he might easily take the city any day that he liked, but that it suited his own designs better that the enemy should remain in the vicinity of Milan; and that, at all events, he wished for nothing so much as to make the Milanese exhaust their resources, so that they might hereafter fall an easy prey to his ambition. He, however, took little notice of these accusations; and, when remonstrated with for not proceeding faster with his work, he offered to resign the command to any successor they might think fit to appoint. It need hardly be said that they were too wise to take him at his word.

At last, on the thirty-fifth day after the commencement of the siege, a considerable breach had been made in the walls, and the camp was so well fortified that, in the opinion of most, a very few men would suffice to defend it against any attack that could be made on it. In the meantime, a certain Venetian officer, by name Tiberto Brandolino, managed, by the following device, to get into the Milanese camp, and to spy out, as he thought, its most vulnerable points. Having for some time hovered about a wood which lay on its confines, he fell in with a party of foragers, and having suspended two large clusters of grapes to the extremities of a stick which he put on his shoulders, he passed himself off as one of them, and made his way even to Sforza's own tent, and to the walls of the city. From the hasty view that he was able to take of the intrenchments, he came to the opinion that they might be attacked from the side of the wood whence he himself had entered them, as they were on that quarter defended only by a marsh, which he thought might easily be rendered passable for troops. On his return to the camp he reported accordingly, and strongly recommended them to make a vigorous attack in a quarter whence their enemies did not appear to apprehend any danger. Unfortunately for those to whom he gave the advice, a deep trench had been dug across the greater part of the marsh; but as the sides of it were level, it had escaped his observation.

All this time Sforza was in a great state of uncertainty as to what course he should take. The breach in the walls might be deemed easily practicable according to all the ordinary rules of war; and at one time he

meditated a plan of storming the city with one division of his army, and promising the other their full share of the spoil if they would remain steadily at their posts in the intrenchments, to resist any attack of the enemies ; but as his recent experience at Casale had taught him how little he could depend upon them when booty was to be had, he dreaded lest the taking of the city should cause the destruction of his army. On the other hand, he well knew that his enemies would persuade the ignorant multitude to ascribe his delay to any motives rather than those of patriotism. Fortune, however, seemed about to declare in his favour; the commandant of Caravaggio wished to save the citizens from the fate of the Piacenzans; and when he saw that the city could no longer be defended against any assault, and that the Venetian army was doing nothing to relieve him, he sent to make offers of surrender.

Information of this having been duly conveyed to the Venetian camp, a council of war was held, in which each captain was requested to give his opinion in writing, that it might be forwarded to the government at home. The commander-in-chief, Michael Attendolo, suggested that they should leave Caravaggio to its fate, retire to Martinengo, and thence make a rapid descent upon the enemy's army while they were intent upon booty, as he well knew they would be, after the capture of the city. Others were of opinion that the want of confidence between the Milanese and Sforza was so great, and that the dissensions in the camp had reached such an extent, that the army could not be kept together much longer, and that it would most certainly disperse, if they could by any means have the siege prolonged another month. Many thought that by falling back upon and threatening Cremona they might divert Sforza from his enterprise; but the plan that had been suggested by Tiberto Brandolino, who had, as he fancied, spied out the nakedness of the enemy's camp, was most acceptable to the majority, and it was referred, along with the others, to the senate at Venice.

To people at a distance from the scene of operations, nothing seems so easy as to carry out a plan which is represented to them as certain to be successful: their absence does not prevent them from apprehending its advantages, but generally renders them unwilling or unable to understand the countervailing obstacles. The Venetian government viewed the last of the above-mentioned schemes in this light. Its success would be the most complete of any : they could not see any reason why it should not be carried into practice, and their ordered it to be adopted forthwith. A general who acted contrary to the orders of the Venetian government had not unfrequently to answer with his head for the consequences; and Michael Attendolo, though he did not approve of the plan, was obliged to obey.

While Sforza, together with his secretary Simoneta, was engaged in arranging with the commandant the terms of the capitulation, intelligence was brought to him that the enemy were moving towards Mozanega, which lay on the same side of the camp as the wood and the marsh by which they intended to make their attack. It was at first suggested to him that, as they saw they could not save the city, they were about to shift their quarters; but he immediately repaired in person to see what they were about. As soon as he had arrived at the extremity of the camp, which looked in that direction, he found that the enemy had already emerged from the wood, and that many of the stragglers and detached bodies of his own soldiers were being driven in in some confusion to the camp. These, however, he rallied at the trench, which, as has been noticed already, had escaped the observation of the spy who planned the attack; and having ordered all the officers and soldiers who were in that part of his camp to the defence, he hoped to be able to maintain it till the arrival of reinforcements should give him the superiority.

A severe, and even bloody combat, for these times, took place in the trench. The assailants well knew that a repulse would be tantamount to a defeat; while the defenders were aware that, if the trench were taken before their fellow-soldiers could be marshalled in fighting array, everything they possessed would fall into the hands of the enemy. Jokes and repartees are said to have passed between the officers on both sides—the one anticipating an easy victory, and the others telling them that they would soon return in a very different plight

from that in which they advanced. At last, Alexander Sforza arrived with a body of four thousand cavalry and infantry; and after having driven back the enemy from that part of the trench that was immediately opposed to him, he passed over it, and attacked the others on their flank and rear. This movement obliged them to fall back, and their confusion was in no small degree aggravated by the wood in their rear. Sforza observing their state, cried out at once, "The day is ours!" and ordered the whole body of his troops to cross the trench and follow up their advantage. The retreat of the Venetians soon degenerated into a route. A great part of their army, including several officers who had dismounted under the hopes of being able to escape through the wood and the marsh, were taken before they could reach their own camp. In the midst of the pursuit, Sforza's sonorous voice was heard ordering them to give quarter whenever it was possible. The consequent necessity of leaving a large body behind, to guard the great number of prisoners that had fallen into his hands, had considerably diminished his forces before he arrived at the enemy's encampment. When there, he met Francesco Piccinino and his men, who had hitherto taken no part in the action. The former began making some excuses for the absence of his troops, when the victorious general (without the least appearance of anger) assured him that there was no need for apology; that everything, up to the present moment, had gone as well as possible, and that he had come just in the nick of time to assist him in passing the intrenchment. This, however, he declined doing, saying that enough had already been accomplished for one day. Sforza, however, whose mode of fighting was now very different from what it had been after the battle of Tenna, replied that a victory was a mere barren honour if it was not turned to account; and then began the attack, allowing the latter to retire unheeded. But after they had proceeded some little distance, he made them believe that his men were already within the trenches enriching themselves with spoil. This bait was too strong for Piccinino and his soldiers: they returned to follow in the wake of the victor; and the enemy, believing themselves overwhelmed by numbers, ceased to resist.

Nothing could have been more complete than the victory. The Milanese, in the words of their historian Corio, took the camp, with all the possessions of the enemy, and made a great number of prisoners. Michael Attendolo and Louis Gonzaga continued to fight to the last; but they, too, were obliged to seek safety in flight. Others preferred letting themselves, along with the standards committed to their care, fall into the hands of the enemy, to encountering the displeasure of the Venetians after such a disaster. The victors, of course, remained pillaging till the evening. Among other things, they took six pieces of heavy and thirty pieces of light artillery, several cars, and a great quantity of grain, gold, silver, and costly armour of all sorts. Every soldier, from the highest to the lowest, obtained an unprecedented share of spoil, enough, it was said, to make his fortune. The number of prisoners was three thousand foot and ten thousand five hundred cavalry. Many of the horses died in consequence of the fatigue they had undergone in such a protracted action, under a burning autumn sun. Most of the men, after having been stripped of everything they possessed, were set at liberty. Though the majority of the officers were retained as prisoners of war, Sforza, in return for favours that he had formerly received, granted some few of them their liberty. Among them was a certain Venetian commissary, who had at various times tried to do Sforza what injury he could by spreading false reports, and dwelling on his illegitimacy. In his present situation, the memory of his former misdeeds caused him to tremble, and, when brought into the presence of the victor, like other low-minded men, who are full of insolence in prosperity, but ready to lick the dust in adversity, he threw himself on his knees, and implored his captor's forgiveness. Sforza was never wantonly cruel, and, in the present state of his fortunes, he could well afford to despise the man who was then at his feet. So he told him to be of good cheer, and contented himself with mildly expostulating with him on account of his conduct, and cautioning him to be more circumspect for the future.

The day after the battle the triumph of the victors was completed by the surrender of Caravaggio.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SFORZA MARCHES AGAINST BRESCIA

As the victory of Caravaggio was perhaps the most complete that had been gained in Italy for a whole century, the news of it caused no small sensation at Milan. It came the more acceptable, as a contrary report had been spread by Charles Gonzaga, who, after having been wounded in the suddenness of the first encounter, had retired thither. A great display was made on the entrance of the most notable captains into the city, and a species of triumphal procession, somewhat resembling those of ancient Rome, was got up. The people could not fail to admire the abilities of a general who had gained a great victory, when placed in circumstances in which others could scarcely have avoided a defeat. All were loud in his praises, except the Piccinini, who secretly insinuated that, if they had not come up at a most critical moment, the battle could not have been won. But Sforza treated all the calumnies of his maligners with contemptuous indifference; and as everybody knew that they had not made their appearance on the field of battle till the fate of the day was decided, he might well afford to do so.

It was not long, however, before all feelings of exultation were, as after the capture of Piacenza and the victory at Casale, followed by envy and fear at the rising greatness of the general. As he was no longer

intrusted with supreme power in the conduct of the war, the government sent ambassadors to him, who, after a due consultation with the officers, were to give him directions about his subsequent operations. On the third day after the capture of the city, a council of war was held in the camp. The ruling powers, as well as the majority of the people at Milan, were desirous to see Lodi and Bergamo freed from their enemies. They naturally thought that this could be easily accomplished in the absence of any opposing force; and among them the only point in debate was, which of these two places they ought first to attack. It is probable, indeed, that many of them, who had begun to despair of seeing the dominions of the new republic extend over the cities and territories that had been subject to the two last of the Visconti, would have been content by the acquisition of these two places, which would have enabled them to establish a free state of about the same extent as that which had been at the head of the Lombard league in the days of Frederic I; and that, having done this, they might not be sorry to dispense with the services of such a dangerous man as Sforza. But he, on the other hand, was more anxious to take Brescia, which had been promised to him, than to put his employers in such a state of independence; and he was able to show many reasons why his plan was more likely to be effective in carrying out even the immediate wishes of the Milanese, than those which were suggested by their ambassadors. So, while others were divided in their opinion as to whether they ought to march first to Lodi or to Bergamo, or make a simultaneous attack on both places, he tried to bring them over to his wishes by the following arguments:—That, since they had gained a great victory, they ought to proceed in such a manner as to escape the imputation that had been frequently thrown out against them, of not knowing how to use their advantage; that they could not do so more effectually than by carrying the war to the other side of the Oglio; that by this step they would increase not only the moral impression that had already been produced, but even the actual-advantages that were to be reaped from their victory; that their forces would derive their supplies from an enemy's territory; that the remains of the opposite army would not have the courage to rally if they were vigorously pursued in that direction; that the garrisons in most of the strongholds would be so taken by surprise that they, would surrender at once; that they might then bring their whole forces to bear against the town of Brescia; that, if the people of Bergamo and Lodi beheld themselves cut off from all hopes of assistance, in consequence of the fall of that place, they would of their own accord surrender; but that if, instead of following his advice, they fell back upon Bergamo or Lodi, and wasted their time in the siege of these cities, the Venetians, possessed as they were of almost boundless resources, both in money and other things, would soon bring against them another army, strong as that which they had beaten, and that thus they would scarcely be in a better condition than they had been before.

The persuasive powers of Sforza were always omnipotent in the camp. The officers and soldiers, whom he had so often led to victory and plunder, were all in his favour. He was backed in his opinion by two or three independent condottieri, and only opposed by Piccinino, who was piqued at the idea of seeing him in possession of another city. But the opposition of the latter was overruled by the rest of the assembly, and it was finally determined that Sforza should proceed with the main body of his army to Brescia, and that Ventimiglia, a nobleman of some importance in the kingdom of Naples, who had lately adopted the profession of arms, and was now in the service of the Milanese, should betake himself with a small force to Lodi. The judgment of the council was further confirmed by the arrival of several messengers from the different towns in the territory he was about to invade, all of whom said that they were ready to surrender to him, and that they wondered much that he was not among them already. The delay, of course, had been involuntary on his part; and when he had obtained leave to follow out his own plans, he was not slow in making up for lost time. One day's march brought him from Caravaggio, within the confines of the Brescian territory. In four days more, he took, almost without opposition, all the strongholds therein; and then he encamped within two miles of the town of Brescia, with the intention of immediately commencing its siege.

Piccinino, finding that in the camp he could not prevail against the great rival of his family, obtained leave to go to Milan, under pretence of attending to some necessary business. There he endeavoured to stir up the republican party by representing to them how much they would have to fear from Sforza, if they allowed

him to add Brescia to his other possessions. Many concurred with him in this opinion; but they feared the people, who worshipped Sforza with all the homage that is generally rendered to a conqueror; and, warned by the experience of the past, they did not dare openly to take measures against him; but they tried to injure him in every under-hand manner that their malice could suggest. They sent messengers to the Venetians, to inform them that they would find a large party at Milan willing to listen to propositions of peace; and they obtained leave for Piccinino to withdraw his forces from the army of Sforza, to prosecute the war in the territory of Lodi.

Sforza soon became aware of these proceedings. Arasmus, the person who was formerly mentioned as having been seized by the mob for making propositions of peace, sent a letter to an officer in Sforza's army, exhorting him to arrange with the other captains, to divide the forces in such a manner that their general should not be able to bring together troops sufficient for the capture of Brescia. This letter having been dropped by accident, and brought to Sforza, served to remove from his mind all doubts, if any had formerly existed, as to what the Piccinini had been doing at Milan. He, nevertheless, persevered, hoping that he might take the city before his enemies could effect all the mischief they were plotting. He had already invested it on the two sides on which it was bounded by a plain, and had placed guards near the opposite gates, and at different stations in the mountains, to prevent any supplies being sent to it. The garrison, which consisted of one thousand horse and five hundred foot, taken from the army that had been defeated at Caravaggio, scarcely dared to attack him except under the cover of night; and as their spirits were considerably broken after their recent reverse, it did not seem probable that they would make a protracted resistance against one who was deemed invincible. Everything, indeed, appeared to promise him a speedy success, when his hopes were much damped by the discovery of a treachery which was almost unparalleled in the history of nations. While he was endeavouring, by all the means in his power, to take a city which was the most important that had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and which had been the first cause of the hostilities with which Lombardy had been desolated for nearly a quarter of a century, and while he was not without hopes that the inhabitants would of their own accord surrender, he ascertained, beyond all possibility of doubt, that the state whose army he was commanding was encouraging the besieged to hold out, by informing them that they had already proposed terms to the Venetians, which they hoped would lead to a speedy cessation of hostilities; that, even if these failed, they would order Sforza to go elsewhere with his army; and that, under any circumstances, he would soon be obliged to retire to his winter cantonments. A short time afterwards, he himself received orders not to waste any more time at Brescia, but to make himself master of the cities on the Mincio, and to proceed thence to Verona. The bearer of these mandates added that, if they were not obeyed at once, supplies should be withheld.

On the receipt of these orders, Sforza at first made a temperate reply. He reminded their bearer of the arrangements that had been made after the battle of Caravaggio, from which he distinctly understood that he was to retain, if not the whole of the forces he had at that time, at least those that were now with him for his present enterprise; that its difficulties were not such as they had represented; that, from the arrangements he had made, it was easy to see that, if the city did not ere long surrender, it might be taken by storm; that, with regard to the plan which they proposed, it would be contrary to all rules of military science to advance while their enemies held such a city as Brescia in their rear; that the force which was there would, after he had gone, at once regain possession of all the strongholds and towns in the neighbourhood which had already surrendered to him; that all their communications would in this manner be intercepted; that as to the cities on the Mincio, they could not be taken so easily as they seemed to think; that many of them belonged to the marquis of Mantua; and that, if he did not assist them and furnish them with supplies, their position would be untenable.

Though these arguments were just, Sforza well knew that they would avail nothing with men whose leading motive was jealousy of him. He saw too well that the time had come when he could no longer act under the Milanese, with either honour or advantage to himself. Their behaviour to him throughout the whole of the war, and more especially upon the present occasion, afforded him sufficiently specious excuses to justify, both to himself and to others, any step that he might deem it advisable to take. He therefore made up his mind, as

soon as he beheld a favourable occasion, to break from his present employers, and publicly to assert his pretensions to be Duke of Milan; and it was not long before the much-wished-for opportunity presented itself.

The government of Venice, however they might have been vexed, were by no means driven to despair by the result of the battle at Caravaggio. Though unable to bring together another army against their enemy, they made every preparation for retarding his progress. They put garrisons into all the cities and strongholds; and having learned from the previous wars how important it was to have the command of the lake of Garda, they equipped four galleys at Peschiera. And, as some suspected Michael Attendolo of collusion with his kinsman, and all agreed that he was incapable of opposing him, they appointed one Marcellus to the command of what forces they were able to collect. But they placed their chief reliance both in the assistance and the friendly mediation of the Florentines. They well knew the friendship of Cosmo de' Medici and Sforza; and the frequent overtures of the Milanese, as well as the private information which they continued to receive, had made them fully aware of the want of confidence between the latter and his employers. In accordance with their expectations, as Alphonso had at that time just raised the siege of Piombino, their republican allies sent a force of two thousand horse and one thousand foot to their assistance. At the same time, both republics made overtures of reconciliation and alliance to Sforza, by means of Angelo Simoneta, the uncle of the historian of that name. These overtures were seconded by Bianca Maria, who was also incessantly urging her husband to claim from the Milanese the succession that she believed to belong to her. In this state of his feelings and his circumstances, he did not hesitate to accept the terms now offered to him. By these terms, it was agreed upon that the Venetians were to assist him to make himself master of Milan, and allow him thirteen thousand florins per month for the support of his troops till he should succeed in so doing; but that he was to be content with the possession of those cities and territories that had belonged to Philip at the time of his death, and was to restore to them all those places of which he had since deprived them.

During the progress of these negotiations, but few of Sforza's officers had any notion of his real intentions. But when everything had been arranged, he called them together, for the purpose of declaring and justifying to them the part that he was now about to take. He begged them to call to mind the desperate position of the Milanese at the time of Philip's death; that they were deprived of almost everything they had formerly possessed; their so-called allies were all in revolt; their capital was surrounded by enemies' armies, and that, if he had not come to their succour, they must have been completely subjugated; that his first step was to secure them, by negotiation, the friendship of the Parmese; that he then took for them the citadel of San Columbano; that he then took Piacenza, with no inconsiderable sacrifice of his soldiers, and, as was evident from the fate of his horse having been killed under him, at no small danger to himself; that immediately after that the Milanese began intriguing against him; that he, nevertheless, brought his army into the neighbourhood of the Adda, and prevented the country from being pillaged by the Venetians; that by remaining there, as directed, he exposed his own possessions at Cremona to no inconsiderable danger; that he afterwards completely destroyed their fleet at Casale; that when, in obedience to their commands, he laid siege to Caravaggio, his power was so weakened by their intrigues that he might on many occasions have fallen an easy prey to the enemy; that he, nevertheless, continued to maintain the army principally at his own expense; that he ended by putting them in possession of the city, and enriching their soldiers with a quantity of booty almost unequalled in Italian warfare; that, in spite of all he had done for them, they grudged him his promised reward of the city of Brescia; that when he repaired thither, their first act was to weaken his army by ordering the Piccinini to bring their forces against Lodi; that when, notwithstanding this, they saw every probability of his taking the city, they endeavoured to prevent his attaining one of the stipulated rewards, by trying to make peace with the Venetians, and encouraging the citizens to hold out against him to the last. Thus a prudent regard for his own safety, for the possessions of his wife, and for the fortunes of his children, rendered the step he had taken quite unavoidable. He concluded by exhorting them all to remain with him, if they wished for rewards worthy of the labour they had undergone, and of the success they had attained.

The above arguments were so plausible in themselves, and had been so ably stated by the speaker, that none had ought to say against them in the council. Many, indeed, as their subsequent conduct proved, must have suspected his motives, and were inimical to him at heart; but he was personally popular with the great body of the army, most of whom, it is probable, were allured by the recollection of former, and the prospect of future plunder, and troubled themselves but little about the righteousness of his cause.

The news of Sforza's desertion caused a consternation at Milan, equal in intensity to the joy which had been produced by his success at Caravaggio. The great men, it was said, were grieved; the people indulged in reproaches; the women and children poured forth lamentations. The government themselves, indignant at being overreached in dishonesty, sent ambassadors to remonstrate with him. Some of them admitted, indeed, that he had cause for complaint, but entreated him not to set down the misdeeds of a few citizens as the acts of the republic; while others, though it must have been as unbecoming in them to make any taunts on this score, as it would have been in Clodius to censure the libertines, or in Catiline to accuse the Cethegi, without reserve reproached him with the grossest treachery and deceit. The speech made by the latter is curious, both as making a pretence of injured innocence on their part, and as setting forth his conduct in exactly a contrary light to that which he had endeavoured to represent it to his army. The following are the words of it as given by Machiavelli:—"Whenever a person wishes to obtain anything from another, he generally tries him with entreaties, with promises of rewards, or with threats, in order that he may be moved by pity, by hopes of advantage, or by fear, to do that which he desires. But in dealing with men who are cruel and avaricious, and who think themselves powerful, it is but lost labour to attempt to soften them with prayers, to bring them over by hopes of advantage, or to frighten them with threats. We, however, having (too lately it may be) acquired experience of your cruelty, your ambition, and your pride, are come, not indeed to ask any favour from you, but to remind you of the benefits you have received from the people of Milan, and to show you with what ingratitude you are treating them, that in the midst of our misfortunes we may have the melancholy pleasure of loading you with reproaches. You, indeed, may well recollect in what a state you were at the time of Philip's death; you were involved in hostilities with the king of Naples, and the pope; you had forsaken the Florentines and the Venetians; and as they were justly indignant at your conduct, and had no longer any need of you, you had almost become their enemy. You were exhausted by the war which you had waged with the church, you had but few soldiers, you were without allies or money, and could not have any hope of being able to retain either your states or your former reputation. These circumstances alone would have caused you to fall, but for our simplicity—for we alone gave you protection, being moved thereto by respect to the memory of the late duke; and we believed that you would show some friendship to his successors, and being willing to confer on you some favours in addition to those that you had received from him, we promised you Verona or Brescia besides your other fiefs: your attachment to us ought, therefore, to be firm and indissoluble. What more could we give you, or promise you? What more could you have, or even wish for? Thus you have received from us unlooked-for kindness, and we have received from you unlooked-for injury. Indeed, even before this you showed the iniquity of your intentions; for as soon as you were made commander-in-chief of our armies, you acted contrary to all justice in accepting the sovereignty of Pavia—a deed which should have forewarned us of the result we might have expected from your friendship. Alas!—for those who desire all, a part is not sufficient. You promised us, indeed, that we should have the benefit of every acquisition that you might make, as you well knew that anything you gave us you could in an instant take from us. This you did after the victory of Caravaggio, which, though obtained by our blood and money, has been the cause of our ruin. Unhappy indeed are the states which have to defend their liberty against those that wish to oppress them; but much more unhappy are those which have to defend themselves with faithless and mercenary arms like yours. May posterity take warning from our case more than we have done from that of Thebes and Philip of Macedon, who, after he had obtained a victory over their enemies, changed from being their captain to be their enemy, and finally became their ruler. We, however, cannot be accused of any fault, except that of having placed much confidence in one in whom we ought to have placed but little; for the whole of your past life, and your boundless spirit, not content with any degree of dignity, or any possession, ought to have put us on our guard, and we ought not to have placed any reliance in one who

had betrayed the signor of Lucca, deceived the Florentines and Venetians, thought little of our duke, showed no respect to the king of Naples, and, worst of all, inflicted many injuries on God and the church. And we ought never to have thought that Francesco Sforza would have shown more respect to the people of Milan than he did to so many sovereigns; and that, after having so often violated his engagements with others, he would keep them with us. But this, though it may show our imprudence, cannot either palliate your treachery or clear you from the infamous character which our just complaints will be the means of procuring you throughout the world; nor will it save you from the sting of your own conscience when those arms, which we prepared to attack and to frighten others, are brought to wound and to injure ourselves; for you yourself will think that you deserve the punishment of parricides. And even if you are entirely blinded by ambition, yet the whole world, who are the witnesses of your iniquity, will make you open your eyes. God too will make you open them, if perjury, breach of promise, and betrayal are displeasing to Him, and if, judging from the way in which He has hitherto always ruled by His unseen goodness, He does not wish for ever to be the friend of the wicked. Do not now flatter yourself with the hopes of a certain victory, for, in the first place, you will be prevented by the just displeasure of the Almighty; and, in the next place, we all prefer death to the loss of liberty. Even if we cannot defend our liberty, we should surrender to any one rather than to you; and if, for our sins, we should ever come into your power, be well assured that your reign, which will have been begun with fraud and infamy, will end either in your person, or in that of your sons, with blame and loss”.

When men have made up their minds how to act, they are seldom induced to change their course by reproaches or taunts; and it will easily be credited that Sforza was unmoved by aught that the ambassadors could say. Whatever might have been his feelings, he did not either in word or in gesture betray the slightest symptom of irritation, and very quietly replied, that he was happy to be able to give them the satisfaction of venting their anger in words so destitute of sense; that he would answer the charges that were brought against him, if they were in the presence of any one who could be an impartial judge of their differences; that he himself was quite conscious that he had in no way injured the Milanese, but merely taken precautions against being injured by them; that they had no reason to feel aggrieved at his having taken a step that they themselves had already endeavoured to take; and that if he had not acted as he had done, he would, ere long, have had reason to upbraid them with reproaches of the same nature as those that they were now casting against him. He concluded by appealing to the same God upon whom they had called to avenge them of their adversaries, and expressed a wish that He would so order events that the result of the war might show which of the two parties had most justice on his side, and was acting most in consonance with His will. Shortly after this the ambassadors returned to Milan, and Sforza set about the measures that were most advisable in his new situation.

Such were the chief circumstances of a transaction which has been represented by the enemies of Sforza as a most unparalleled piece of treachery on his part. He himself endeavoured to make out, as has been shown, that, considering the behaviour of others, he could not have acted in a different manner; and it must be allowed that he was not more deserving of blame either than those whom he betrayed, or those into whose service he entered. The former were frequently intriguing against him during the time that he was in the command of their army, and they could not have been surprised at his having done unto them as they had sought to do unto him; the latter were entertaining Sforza’s enemies with the semblance of listening to their negotiations, at the time that they were endeavouring to deprive them of their general. But although the practice of the times, and the behaviour of other parties, will in a great measure palliate this act, it is impossible not to concur in the opinion of M. Sismondi, “that Sforza’s conduct throughout was so skilful, and directed so uniformly towards the same end, that it is difficult to believe that he had not foreseen and premeditated everything, from the time that he engaged in the service of the Milanese”.

CHAPTER XIX

AFFAIRS OF PARMA

THE extremities to which the Milanese had been reduced before they retained Sforza showed that, unassisted, they were no match for the Venetians. The man by whose aid alone they had maintained themselves was now about to pass over to the enemy. If, before hiring him, they had trembled for their fate, it might now be thought that nothing could save them. There was, however, one important difference between their present and their past circumstances. On a former occasion, if the Venetians had taken their city, they would have added it to their own empire; now, they had promised it to their new ally. Judging of the policy of their republican neighbours by their own, they thought that they would not be particularly anxious to continue the war for the sake of their condottiere, after they had got all they wanted for themselves. They therefore determined to use all the arts of diplomacy and intrigue, to maintain themselves for the present. The result will show how well they played their game; for though they did not ultimately succeed, it required all the talents, the perseverance, and the generalship of Sforza to beat them.

It was not long before an event happened that made many people think that Sforza's success was not likely to be so rapid as had at first been anticipated. Piccinino succeeded in regaining possession of Lodi; Charles Gonzaga, with a force of about one thousand two hundred horse, and five hundred foot, deserted him by night; and many feared lest the other captains and soldiers who had been engaged by the Milanese should follow their example. These events made such an impression in the camp, that it required all his address to prevent his soldiers from losing that self-confidence which is one of the principal requisites for military success. He himself, nothing daunted, shortly began to take the measures which his altered circumstances required. He lost no time in restoring to the Venetians, both their captives that still remained in his hands, and the cities that he had taken in the territory of Brescia. As the former bridge across the Adda had been broken down, he constructed a new one, and passed over it into the territory of Lodi, giving out that he appeared there as an ally, not as an enemy. He had spies to report to him the actions and sayings of the Milanese generals that still remained in his camp; a fleet was equipped at Pavia, which served both to guard the passage of the Po and to supply his army with abundance of provisions. The legate of the Milanese, who at first said that he could not leave his army until he received orders from home, was politely dismissed, and requested to assure the Milanese, that, if they would at once receive him as their duke, they had nothing to fear; but that, if they persevered in their foolish attempt to govern themselves, he could not answer for the consequences. He also sent to the Parmese, exhorting them to quit the Milanese, and to put themselves under his protection; and at the same time admonished them, if they did not wish to do this, to abstain from rendering any assistance to his enemies. After this, he endeavoured to sound the dispositions of the inhabitants of Piacenza. For money, he applied as usual to Cosmo de' Medici, to Lionel of Este, as also to Jacobo Fregoso, the leading man at Genoa, who had in the preceding year married his natural daughter; finally, he requested the legates of the Venetians to return home, and endeavour to procure him an augmentation of forces according to their previous arrangements.

In the meantime Jacobo Piccinino moved towards Piacenza, where he hoped to reconcile the contending factions to the rule of the Milanese, and to place his army in cantonments for the winter. The inhabitants, however, whether it was that they disliked the yoke of their present rulers, or that they foresaw the success and dreaded the displeasure of Sforza, refused to admit him. On hearing of this, the latter, heedless of the admonitions of his friends, who feared lest some should try to avenge themselves on him for the losses they had sustained in the preceding year, went thither himself to receive their allegiance. On his arrival, he found that the citizens, so far from making any attempt against him, welcomed him with acclamations, and submitted to him at once. With their permission, he placed a garrison of six hundred horse in the citadel, under the command of Salernitano and Thomas Theobaldus, from Bologna. He then took up a position between Pavia

and Milan; so that, while the rear of his army was guarded by the former of these cities, he appeared to threaten the latter.

While he was in this position, the three brothers of the family of San Severino, notable captains of their time, came to him from Milan, bringing with them a force of about eight hundred horse, and acknowledged him as their duke. Soon afterwards he engaged the services of William, brother of the marquis of Montferrat, and of Vermio, a condottiere of some note—the former of whom joined him under the hopes of some future day getting the city of Alessandria, and the latter for the sake of preserving the towns that he held in the vicinity of Piacenza. Vermio also obtained a promise from him that his eldest son by his first wife should, in the course of time, be married to his only daughter. Even at that time it was deemed advisable to seek the alliance of one who bade fair to be one of the most powerful sovereigns in Italy.

The approach of winter did not cause Sforza to cease from active operations. But in order to protect his soldiers from the rains that usually set in about that season of the year, he generally managed to find shelter for them in the cottages and farm-houses, with which that highly-cultivated region abounded. Indeed, though his ambition was at all times great, it seems at this time to have been particularly whetted by the great beauty and fertility of the territory for which he was then contending, for he is reported then to have said, that though he had been in every part of Italy from the Straits of Messina to the Alps, both in war and in peace, he had seen no part of it to be compared to that which lay between Pavia, Lodi, and Milan. Thus the gift of beauty made Italy suffer, as well by stirring up the passions of her own sons as by exciting the cupidity of barbarians.

Having posted his troops in the manner described, he managed to occupy so considerable a portion of the territory of Milan as to prevent the unfortunate inhabitants of the city from deriving their customary supplies from the country. The three neighbouring towns of Rosato, Sachiarella, and Binasco, soon came into his hands. Some little show of resistance was made to him before the citadel of the last-named place surrendered; but here, like Napoleon at Ulm, he overbore all opposition, as well by the terror of his name as by the adroitness with which he was able to turn it to account. The citadel itself was on a lofty eminence with its walls in excellent order, and surrounded by a trench which was filled with water; it had been well garrisoned and well provisioned by the Milanese, and seemed capable of offering a protracted resistance. The light troops of Sforza, being the first to approach it, were considerably annoyed by the discharge of missiles therefrom. But when the commandant saw the great forces of his enemy in the surrounding country, he lost all heart, and ordered his men to desist from offering them any active resistance. Sforza, taking advantage of this respite, approached the edge of the trench, and shouted out, “O commandant! if this citadel is not this instant delivered up to me, I will forthwith substitute cannon for these light arms; and, secure as you now think yourself, you will soon find it battered about your ears. And you shall soon be as much below as you are now above us; and those that are with you shall be sent headlong into the trench beneath”. The terrified commandant entreated that he might be allowed to save his reputation, by postponing his answer till the following day, before which time he might receive directions from Milan. But Sforza knew well how to take advantage both of his present position and of the consternation of his adversary, and he immediately replied, “What do I care about time, or the wishes of the Milanese? If you do not at this moment surrender, nothing short of an extraordinary interposition of the Almighty shall save you from my hands”. These words produced the desired effect, and he was forthwith put in possession of the citadel.

For some time the Milanese had continued to hope that, whatever might have been the intentions of Sforza, he would not have had the power to proceed to extremities against them. They well knew that he had not the means to carry on a war at his own expense; they did not think that the Venetians would supply him with money or troops to follow up any enterprise of his own; and they expected that the majority of the soldiers with which they had furnished him would desert him, as soon as he entered their territory. But his present

position, master as he was of almost everything except their city, and threatening every day to cut off their supplies, showed them that their danger was greater than had been anticipated. They therefore sent again to remonstrate with him, in rather humbler terms than before : they affected to take it much to heart that the person whom they had looked up to as their protector should have become their persecutor, and they declared that they would do anything for him except surrender their liberty. In conclusion, they entreated him at least not to continue to employ against them their own troops. In answer to these representations, he said that the city of Milan belonged to him by right of inheritance, and that he was merely seeking his own; that he was not the enemy of the great body of the people, but merely of a domineering faction that sought to deprive him of his rights; that, as a proof of this, he appealed to the manner in which he had respected the property as well as the persons of the people, whenever they had come into his power; that, as for the Milanese troops in his army, they had his permission now, as heretofore, to act just as they liked. On the departure of the ambassadors, he had some little trouble to preserve discipline among his troops, a considerable number of whom set upon them at no very great distance from his camp, and stripped them of all they possessed. Fortunately for his reputation, he received intelligence of this act of violence in sufficient time to have all their property restored to the injured parties, and to have several of the malefactors hanged in their presence. He was about to proceed in the same manner with all who had been concerned in the robbery, when the ambassadors entreated that their lives should be spared.

Sforza well knew that his party at Milan would be considerably strengthened, both by the commanding position which he held at that instant, and by the manner in which he had abstained from wantonly injuring the people. He also judged that a favourable impression would be caused by the kind treatment and protection which their ambassadors had received at his hands. For this reason he sent with them to the city a friend of his own, who found a considerable number, both of the nobles and the common people, well disposed to receive him, and he was not without hopes that they might all be prevailed upon to do so. He was allowed to plead the cause of his master in the hall of the dukes, before the assembly of the people. But whatever expectations he had previously entertained were frustrated by the influence of one Georgio Lampugnano, who had accompanied the ambassadors to Sforza's camp, and shown himself throughout to be one of his bitterest enemies.

He made a most violent speech to the people, in which he called both Sforza himself and Bianca Maria by the most opprobrious names, and asked them if they thought that such people were fit to be rulers of their ancient city. He concluded by saying that their would-be duke had many sons, brothers, and connections, each of whom they would find an intolerable tyrant; that under them neither the persons nor the properties of their citizens, nor the honour of their matrons or maids, would be safe; that they would have to rebuild at no small cost of money and labour the citadel, which they had so lately levelled with the ground; and that they might ere long behold their wives and children working as slaves in re-erecting this instrument of oppression.

The passions of the ignorant, and, it may be, the fears of many sober-minded people, were stirred up by this harangue. Many false stories were circulated against Sforza, and many of his most questionable acts, and of the deeds of severity which, at different times, he had thought himself necessitated to commit, were exaggerated so as to blast his reputation. And there were many people who had seen with their own eyes, or who had heard from their fathers of, the cruelties that had been perpetrated by their rulers of old, and to whom the dangers that were set forth in such strong language by Lampugnano must have appeared in no way overdrawn. The result of the whole was, that Sforza's name, for a time, became a sort of byword of unpopularity, and all classes declared their determination to oppose him to the very last drop of their blood. In their present critical position, they intrusted the chief conduct of their proceedings to Charles Gonzaga; they ordered Francesco Piccinino to return with all his force to the city; and they placed garrisons, under the most trustworthy of their captains, in Como, Monza, Novara, and several other towns which still remained faithful to them. They also sent to the king of France, and to the dukes of Burgundy and Savoy, to beg for aid; and they left no means

untried to render the name of Sforza as unpopular, both in Italy and out of it, as they had already made it within the walls of their city.

Sforza, seeing that matters had come to this extremity, resolved to give the Milanese and their allies some experience of the evils of war. His first step was to lay siege to the town of Abbiate; and having, in three days, effected a considerable breach in the walls, he summoned the inhabitants to surrender. On their refusal to do so, he swore that, as soon as it fell into his hands, he would abandon it, without any mercy, to be pillaged by his soldiers. There is very little doubt but that it would have shared the fate of Piacenza, if it had not been saved by the intercession of Bianca Maria. It so happened that, previous to her marriage, she had passed the greater part of her time there along with her mother—she had many friends among its inhabitants, and was much attached to the people in general. Fortunately for them, intelligence of their impending fate was soon brought to her at Pavia, and she used all her influence with her husband to save them. As he seldom refused anything to a wife to whom he was so much indebted, he consented, for her sake, to pardon them. Having promised this, he sent a second summons to them to surrender. But the inhabitants, either through ignorance of the manner in which a city could be taken by storm, or at the instigation of the garrison, who were anxious to gain time for the Milanese, again sent a refusal. The news of this spread like fire among the camp; the soldiers desired nothing so much as that their general should be irritated by the obstinacy of the citizens, and abandon them to their fate. A great body of them having rushed forward to the breach, crying out, “Booty! booty!” and begun to effect an entrance into the city, it required the utmost exertions of Sforza and one of his officers to restrain them. When order had been in some measure restored, the former, thinking that the inhabitants must now have become convinced of the futility of all further resistance, approached the breach to arrange about the terms of the capitulation. But here again they seemed determined to tempt fate; for one of their number, probably thinking that he would do a good deed if he put Sforza out of the world, hurled a javelin at him, which, however, an attendant managed to ward off by the handle of his spear. Sforza merely remarked that his time had not yet come, and moved on, neither daunted nor irritated. On his arriving at the place where he had expected the leading citizens to treat with him, and finding nobody, he said that he took their behaviour on this occasion much more to heart than the attack that had been made on him; for that it really seemed as if they were trying to make a fool of him, and to bring destruction upon themselves: nevertheless, for his wife’s sake, he would spare them if he could; but that he very much feared that he could not restrain his soldiers any longer. The dread of this last event brought the citizens to their senses, and they surrendered before daybreak on the following morning. The commander of the garrison, well knowing that the fortress could not stand the enemy’s cannon, soon after followed their example.

The possession of this city enabled Sforza to turn the water from the canal which led from the Ticino to the city of Milan. By this act he prevented the inhabitants deriving their usual supplies from the adjacent country. He was, however, disappointed in his expectations of starving them into an immediate surrender. His enemies had managed to inspire all classes with so great a dread of his rule that they determined to submit to any privation rather than receive him as their ruler. Their present distress caused them to exhibit an example of firmness and patriotism; the nobles and the wealthier citizens produced whatever stores they might by chance have had in their own houses, and sold them at a moderate price; the government allowed the people to procure stones for grinding the corn from the walls, the public buildings, and the largest of the houses; and all disaffection and dissatisfaction was easily suppressed.

Though he failed in producing at once the desired result, Sforza continued his plan of operations. About the same time, he received from Venice a reinforcement of two thousand infantry, under the command of Marcellus. With these he took several more towns and strong places, almost without any opposition. Nearly all the cities in the vicinity of the lake of Como, with the exception of the town of Como itself, surrendered to him. Piccinino, who was now commanding for the Milanese, though he did not dare openly to oppose him, attempted to make a diversion in favour of his employers. For this purpose he left Milan, with a considerable

body of men, very early in the morning, entered the territory of Pavia before sunrise, and carried off a considerable quantity of cattle from a place within one mile of the town itself, where the inhabitants of the surrounding country had placed them. He then attacked Chiarella, a strongly fortified place between Pavia and Milan. It was not long, however, before the commandant of the garrison at Binasco, which, it may be recollected, had been taken not very long previously by Sforza, received intelligence of what was going on, and marched forth to the rescue. Piccinino, on seeing him approach, retired to the monastery of Caravalle.

Not long afterwards, an ambassador from Florence arrived in Sforza's camp. He begged to assure him of the best wishes of Cosmo de' Medici, and the chief men of the republic; but stated that, as their resources had been exhausted by the war with Alphonso, they were unable to supply him with money. He promised, however, in token of their friendship and support, to remain in his camp until he had succeeded in making himself master of Lombardy. Though Sforza would, of course, have preferred money to good wishes, there is no doubt but that the open and avowed support of a man like Cosmo de' Medici must have strengthened his cause in the eyes of Italy, and may, in the same measure, have contributed to his ultimate success.

Being now in possession of nearly all the towns in the vicinity of Milan, he proceeded to carry on his operations beyond the Ticino. He first turned his attention to the important city of Novara, which had been taken by the duke of Savoy in the unsettled state of the affairs of Milan. He ordered boats to be brought from Pavia to construct a bridge across the Ticino. Having invested the city on all sides, he summoned the inhabitants to surrender, accompanying his summons with the usual threat of abandoning them to the pillage of the soldiers, should he take it after their refusal. As the fortifications were in a bad state of repair, and as there was no force at hand to relieve them should they hold out, they had nothing left but to obey. Their example was soon followed by the inhabitants of the other towns; Romagnano, the only one where any resistance was experienced, was after its capture given up to the victors. The booty found therein, along with the ransom paid for the prisoners, is said to have been as good as several months' pay. While he was in this neighbourhood, the city of Tortona, which, it may be recollected, had been taken possession of by him nominally for the Milanese, but in reality for himself, and had been finally taken for the former by Bartolomeo Collio, was divided into two factions—the one which called itself Guelf, being in favour of the Milanese republic; the other, bearing the opposite appellation of Ghibelline, supporting the man who aspired to be its duke. The latter party, taking advantage of his vicinity, sent to him to say that, if aided by a sufficient force, they felt sure that they would be able to put him in immediate possession of the city; and on the appearance of five hundred of his cavalry, they performed their promise. He then took the city of Alessandria, and assigned it to the marquis of Montferrat, much against the wish of the inhabitants, who all preferred to be subjected to him.

Intelligence was then brought to him that a certain friend of his had agreed with the garrison of Parma to surrender to him on the first favourable opportunity; he therefore sent his brother Alexander to settle matters. The latter arranged that a considerable part of the garrison at Piacenza, along with a detachment from Brescia, should form a junction with a few others of his adherents who were in the Parmese territory, and forthwith march upon the city. Unfortunately, however, for the success of this plan, one of the commandant's letters to the Venetians had fallen into the hands of the Milanese, and made them aware of his intentions; and they, indignant at the discovery of his treachery, sent orders for the whole of the garrison to be put to the sword. The execution of this bloody, though certainly not unmerited act of vengeance, was only prevented by their having received timely intimation of the discovery of their plot, and making their escape to some strongholds in the neighbourhood. As Alexander still continued to threaten the city with a considerable force, the Milanese sent Jacobo Piccinino to oppose him.

Whatever prejudices might have been excited against Sforza at Milan, his continued success made no small impression upon the minds of the people. Many of them looked on in fear and trembling, uncertain

which way to turn themselves. Charles Gonzaga, to whom, as has been stated, the Milanese had intrusted the chief command of their affairs, feeling that he could not much longer make head against him, bethought himself how he might best turn this state of affairs to his own advantage. For this purpose he devised a plan of seizing the city of Milan himself—not, indeed, under any expectations of continuing to retain it, but under the hopes of exchanging it with Sforza for Cremona, or some important places in the vicinity of his ancestral possessions. He had already written to his friends at home to come to him in his present quarters, intimating to several of them that he had sundry good things in store for them. He was making arrangements for seizing the Signoria on a certain day, scouring the streets with his cavalry, and procuring parties of his adherents to shout out “Long live duke Charles!” It was not long, however, before some, who became suspicious of his proceedings, used every means in their power to persuade the citizens to maintain their liberty; besides which, there were others who, however they might have wished for a republic, began to weary of a contest in which success appeared at least to be doubtful; and the majority of them thought that, if they must submit to somebody, it would be better to be ruled by Sforza than by Charles Gonzaga. Among the latter was Georgio Lampugnano, who had on a previous occasion so effectually excited the minds of the citizens against Francesco. They also thought, that, if they must sooner or later have Sforza, they might make better arrangements for a constitutional government now than at a future time, after they had been conquered by him; and as Charles Gonzaga had never ceased to persecute them from the time that he had found himself thwarted by them, they were anxious under any terms to get rid of him. They therefore intimated to the former, that, if he appeared in the vicinity of the city, something might turn up to his advantage. They also ordered their general, Ventimiglia, to form a junction with him, along with his forces. As he was always attached to Sforza before he had quitted his army at a time that he supposed he was acting in concert with him, he was only too glad to execute their orders. He was received with the greatest friendship by his former commander-in-chief.

As it seemed now probable that Sforza would sooner or later be at the head of affairs at Milan, he was joined, by many of those characters who, like the rats that always desert a foundering vessel, invariably leave the falling for the rising party. Several of those who had from time immemorial been his opponents in war, and were still called Braccians, after the founder of their school of arms, flocked to his standard. One of them brought with him a body of two hundred horse that had belonged to Francesco Piccinino. It was not long ere this general also followed the example that had been set by many of his party. He happened at this time to be not very far from Landriano, the place whither Sforza had gone under the expectation of being at once made duke of Milan. Being in great want of money, men, and everything required to maintain his position, and beholding himself deserted by his friends and his troops, he made up his mind to join himself with the man whose fortunes now seemed to be more than ever on the ascendant. But, at the same time, deeming it advisable to keep two strings to his bow, just as he was about to betake himself to the camp of Sforza, he sent word to the opposite party at Milan that he hoped to rejoin them in the commencement of the spring. Many of Sforza’s friends endeavoured to dissuade him from having anything more to do with such a faithless ally, saying that he really could not foresee to what amount of personal danger he might be exposed by admitting him within his camp. He, of course, knew him too well to place any reliance in him. Nevertheless, as his career had now come to a point in which any appearance even of increased strength would be of use to him, and as nothing could prevent his getting immediate possession of Parma, if his brother Jacobo were to withdraw his forces, he determined to make what use of the two brothers he could for the time. He also tried to attach Piccinino in some degree to himself by promising to him his daughter Drusiana, whom the death of Fregoso at Genoa had left at liberty to make a fresh engagement. This alliance would make the fortune of any adventurer, should her father succeed to the duchy of Milan; and events then showed that great things might be expected even by marrying a natural daughter. But from this arrangement he could not expect more than a temporary adherence to his cause: as he himself had already lost much by the continued enmity both of his father-in-law and son-in-law, he was too well acquainted with the habits of his countrymen not to be aware that family connection never stood in the way of self-interest.

The arrival of Piccinino in the camp of his new master was followed by such explanations of past misunderstandings, and protestations of mutual friendship, as never take place between parties who really trust one another. The former declared that he had not been induced to join him through any pressure of circumstances, but that he had done so entirely from preference; that whatever he had promised he would faithfully perform; that he would do his duty in whatever station he might be placed, and never shrink from any danger by which the fortunes of his friend might be advanced. Sforza, in reply, assured him that he had not the slightest mistrust of him whatever; that he hoped that both his brother and himself would regard him as their best friend; that, for his part, he looked upon them both as his sons; that there never had been any enmity, but merely a glorious rivalry, between their late father and himself. When the interview was over, many people suggested to Sforza that he had now an excellent opportunity of quietly getting rid of a man who had at all times been either a treacherous friend or a dangerous enemy. They added that they had ascertained, beyond all doubt, that he had made arrangements for joining the opposite party at Milan the instant he should see a favourable opportunity of doing so; that they had been informed that, before he had joined them, his soldiers had come to him and said, that, if he did not speedily do something for them, they would either desert him or send him a prisoner to the enemy; and that he had merely come to him as the only harbour of safety in the sea of his difficulties. Though all this was well known to him, he made a most magnanimous reply, which, as a good name was at that time of peculiar importance to him, may be supposed to have expressed his actual sentiments. He said that he preferred the risk of being killed himself to being guilty of the blood of one who had put himself under his protection; that he would behave in such a way to him that, if there was to be any quarrel between them, the fault should not be with him; that, even if he had just cause for killing him, the world at large would ascribe his conduct to motives of policy or revenge. On that very same day Piccinino returned to the place whence he had come, and despatched a letter to the king of Naples, saying that, although he was now serving under his enemy's banner, he hoped he would still consider him as his friend, and that of the republican party at Milan; that dire necessity alone had compelled him to act as he had done, and that he would rejoin his old allies on the very first opportunity. To send this letter in safety, he was obliged to apply to Sforza for a convoy through the cities that acknowledged his jurisdiction.

While Piccinino was treating with each of the rival parties, Sforza himself appears to have been carrying on a double negotiation with the Milanese. He had one correspondence with the chiefs of the old Ghibelline party, many of whom had been at first opposed to his pretensions, but were now willing to arrange terms on which they might receive him as their duke; another with Charles Gonzaga, who hoped to get something for himself by withdrawing his opposition. Matters, however, did not proceed as favourably for him as he might at one time have expected; the terms proposed by the former appeared to him so stringent that he haughtily rejected them; and the latter, finding that he himself was gaining nothing, made use of an artifice to get rid of some of the leading men among his opponents. Letters written in cipher, and said to have been intercepted, were brought before the public, and interpreted; and it seemed as if the writers of them had been making proposals to Sforza which were highly displeasing to the majority of the citizens. Whether these letters were genuine or not does not appear; but, such as they were, they were sufficient to raise a storm of indignation against those to whom they were ascribed. The leaders of the opposite party did not dare openly to put them to death; but pretending to be very anxious for their safety, they advised them to escape by night out of the city, for the purpose of placing themselves under the protection of the emperor; and told them that they would give them an escort to Como, where they would find a supply of all things necessary for their journey. The people in question naturally hesitated to commit themselves to their enemies; but on receiving repeated assurances from Gonzaga that nothing hostile was intended, they set out as was desired. Instead of bringing them to Como, as they promised, their guards brought them, during the hours of darkness, to Monza, where they were cast into prison. Giorgio Lampugnano, the chief man among them, was beheaded; another of them was brought to Milan and examined upon torture. In his agonies he accused several citizens of note, of whom some were executed, and others made a timely escape. The property of all who fled was confiscated; several others who were suspected were ordered to depart, and many, thinking Milan no safe place, voluntarily followed their example.

Among the latter were the ringleaders of those who, when it had been proposed to make peace with the Venetians, had instigated the people to shout out "War, war!"

In this manner did Charles Gonzaga manage to clear Milan of a considerable proportion of its noble citizens. The government then fell into the hands of a party composed of the most audacious demagogues and the lowest order of citizens, who soon made their fellow-countrymen experience some of the worst evils of democracy.

They obliged those who were supposed to be attached to the exiled Ghibelline party to bear the whole weight of the taxation. One of their first acts was to publish an edict denouncing capital punishment against anyone who should mention Sforza's name, except in terms of disparagement. They made some additional declarations about maintaining their liberty to the last, and added, that if by any chance they should be unable to do so, they would surrender to the devil or the Turkish sultan sooner than to Sforza. So complete was the reign of terror which they established, for the time, that many of the citizens, who desired nothing more than to be allowed to follow their avocations, were afraid to express any opinion whatever in public.

Though Sforza was in hopes that he might gain the crowning object of his ambition by negotiation, he still continued to follow up his military operations. Fighting, as he now was, on his own account, he seldom allowed his troops much repose during the winter. His brother Alexander still remained in the vicinity of Parma, where he was opposed by Jacobo Piccinino. In the month of January 1449, the extreme cold had forced him to station his troops in cantonments in the neighbourhood of Filino, and Piccinino and the Parmese, taking advantage of this circumstance, had formed a plan for surprising them. At the same time Alexander himself was devising, along with Pietro Maria, the citizen who had promised to admit him within the city, a joint attack upon the Parmese. They were, however, anticipated by their enemies: their troops were driven in towards the city of Filino, and a smart battle took place beneath its walls. After it had been carried on for some time with various success, Piccinino's division was driven back with considerable loss by Alexander Sforza; and the former, immediately after his defeat, received intelligence of the treaty that had been made between Francesco Sforza and his brother. On this he at once abandoned the Parmese to their fate. They, however, though deserted at a most critical moment, did not lose heart: they retired in the most perfect order to the city, and prepared to defend it to the last. Alexander was in no condition to follow them, but he opened a fresh negotiation with some of the inhabitants to take Parma itself by surprise. The party that were favourably disposed towards him had managed to get possession of one of the gates, which they promised to open to his army. Their treachery, however, was discovered in time, and the infuriated citizens made a violent attack on the gate that was held by the traitors, under the hopes of getting possession of it before the enemy should make his appearance. The defenders of the gate knew that they could expect but little mercy from their betrayed countrymen, should they fall into their hands; and in order the more effectually to secure themselves from their violence, they let fall the portcullis. But this device, which for a time protected them from their fellow-citizens, served in the end to save the latter from their enemies. On the appearance of Alexander's army at the gate, it was found impossible to lift the portcullis higher than would give sufficient space for a man to crawl under. A few of the light-armed cavalry, nothing daunted, threw themselves off their horses, and made their way into the city; but as their example was not followed, they were left to sustain a desperate conflict in the interior. Those that were not killed on the spot, afterwards expired of their wounds. The citizens, after having made a most successful sally, and driven back their enemy with considerable loss, attacked and set fire to a tower which was still occupied by the traitors. When they had compelled them to surrender, they vented their ire on them by putting them to various tortures and sundry kinds of death. One among them, who was known to be much attached to Sforza, and generally suspected of having been the chief instigator of their treachery, was hung from a window in the public hall, where his body was left for some time, to serve as a warning to others.

Shortly after this, Alexander Sforza was joined by Bartolomeo Collio, with a body of two thousand horse and five hundred foot. It soon became evident, even to the most sanguine of the Parmese, that they could not long sustain a conflict against the augmented forces of their enemies, more especially as within the last few months they had twice learned by experience, that in a city which, for nearly four centuries, had been divided into parties, it was impossible to depend upon the fidelity of all. They were still, however, as much averse to being governed by Sforza as they had been when they closed their gates to him immediately after the death of Filippo Maria; and as they had formerly belonged to the family of Este, and retained no disagreeable recollections of their rule, they determined, after due consultation, to make an offer of their city to the present representative of that family. That prince happened then to be at Venice, and the offer of the Parmese was conveyed to him through his brother Borsio, the signor of Reggio. Being too prudent to do anything without the consent of his powerful neighbours, he at once referred the matter to their senate, stating his claims, and adding, that, if they did not wish him to have the city, the inhabitants would sooner see it added to the republic of St Mark than fall into the hands of Sforza. When he had stated his case, he was ordered to withdraw; and on being brought back to hear their determination, the doge Foscari addressed him in the following words : “There is none of our customs of longer date, or more rigidly observed by us, than that of strict adherence to our word. It is incumbent upon us to perform the whole of the covenant we made with Francesco Sforza concerning the cities, the towns, and the territories of the old duchy of Milan : therefore we neither want Parma ourselves, nor will we allow you to take it. If you wish to please us in this matter, you will use whatever influence you have with the citizens to persuade them to surrender to Sforza”. When these words of the doge were made known to the Parmese, they saw that there was no course left for them but to make the best arrangement they could with Alexander. As Alexander was not taking the city for himself, and as he was anxious to go to Pesaro on business of his own, he at once acceded to their propositions; and after having told them that these must be ratified by his brother, he went on his way. When the terms were brought to Francesco for his approval, he found many things in them which he did not like, and which, had they been in the first instance submitted to him, he would have refused. Nevertheless, for the sake of his reputation, he acceded to them all, and even promised in no way to molest one or two of the citizens who, in the words of his biographer, were the most hostile to him of the many enemies he had in Italy. After this, the Parmese admitted his soldiers within their walls and into the citadel, which they had refused to do before.

CHAPTER XX

NEGOTIATIONS OF THE MILANESE WITH THE DUKE OF SAVOY.—ARREST OF WILLIAM OF MONTFERRAT

While the events above narrated were going on, Sforza was engaged in closely blockading the city of Milan. As it was still winter, he did not bivouac his troops in the open country, but stationed them in the villages and fortresses around. His forces, augmented as they had been by those of Piccinino and Ventimiglia, were sufficient, when thus placed, to occupy every side of the city; the canals which formed a communication with the Ticino were strictly guarded, and all the gates of the city, except one, were blockaded. Even at this one, egress and ingress were almost prevented by a force of six hundred cavalry, stationed at no very great distance on this road. By these means the Milanese were reduced to such straits that many thought they could not hold out much longer.

In this crisis, Charles Gonzaga deemed it advisable to make a friend of his opponent, that when he himself failed he might do something for him. For this reason he gave him to understand that a large party in the city were growing heartily weary of the rule of the demagogues; that he would not be at all surprised at their opening the gates any day; that he would therefore advise him frequently to show himself in the vicinity, and to be on the alert to take advantage of anything of the sort that might occur. Above all, he recommended him to be outside the eastern gate of the city on the 1st of March, the day on which the elections for the new magistrates were to take place, and on which the popular feeling would be almost sure to display itself. Though Sforza frequently appeared near the city, he gained nothing by so doing, and on more than one occasion he had reason to suspect treachery on the part of his informant. But such conduct was too common in those days to have excited either indignation or surprise. Though he was again disappointed in his expectations of being admitted within the city, he continued to take possession of every village, monastery, castle, and stronghold of every description in the neighbourhood, so that the Milanese possessed nothing outside their walls. On one occasion, when they made a sally to relieve the monastery of Castellatio, they were driven back with considerable loss.

The ascendancy of the democratic party in the city was in nowise shaken either by the inconveniences which the prolonged blockade entailed upon the inhabitants, or by the continued success of their enemy. Events soon occurred which tended for a time to confirm it. The late duke's second wife, a daughter of the duke of Savoy, whom, as has been related, he had married in his early struggles against fortune, continued to reside at Milan; she had endeared herself to all classes by her bounties, and was respected for the propriety of her conduct—a virtue, perhaps, less common in those days than now. It is not improbable that she viewed with

great jealousy the pretensions of a man who aspired to succeed to her husband in right of his natural daughter. Either for this reason, or it may be at the instigation of some of her family, who might have hoped to turn the war of the Milanese to their own account, she proposed to the leading citizens that they should send to the duke of Savoy for assistance. It need hardly be said that they lent a ready ear to her suggestions. As her father, who had been anti-pope in the days of the schism, had abdicated, the ducal throne was then occupied by her brother. He promised immediate compliance with their requests, and gave out, in a vaunting manner, that he would bring fifty thousand men against their enemies. To all who knew anything about the resources of that prince, it was evident that these numbers must have been a mere empty boast, and they may have been inclined to have placed but little reliance on a promise that was expressed in such exaggerated terms. But as many of the government of Milan had been taken from the ignorant multitude, the answer pleased them well, and it served both to confirm their authority, and to re-establish the drooping spirits of the citizens. Sforza, who of course had information of all that was going on, tried in vain to show them that, mighty as these promises sounded, their performance was impossible : they continued more averse to him than ever, and assured him that, come what might, they would be ruled by anybody sooner than him. To all their contumelies he calmly replied that he was merely contending for his inalienable right, and that he was determined to have it; that hitherto he had used all his successes with the greatest moderation, and that nothing would grieve him more than to proceed to extremities; but that, if they persevered in their present insensate policy, he knew not what he might find it necessary to do. Though he never actually said that he would storm the city and pillage the inhabitants, it is obvious that he alluded to it throughout the whole of his discourse. And though the government continued unmoved, they took the utmost precautions that neither his speech nor the threats that were conveyed in it should be known to the multitude.

Sforza still hoped to reduce the city without attempting to storm it. Monza was almost the only place in the neighbourhood that remained in the hands of his enemies, and he observed that, in spite of all he could do, frequent communications were passing between it and both Vercelli and Milan. It seemed to him as if the taking of it would almost cut them off from their last resource. Though he himself remained in the vicinity of the city which was the grand object of his ambition, he sent thither a considerable force under the command of some of his best generals, including Ventimiglia and Piccinino. But here he was doomed to lose more than he ever had done before by the treachery of the latter. Piccinino was ordered to lead his forces to the eastern side of the town; but instead of bringing them directly under the walls, so as to prevent all possibility of ingress or egress, he took up a position at a small village at about the distance of a mile. It was not long before a considerable breach was effected in the walls, and to all appearance the city must have fallen at once. The inhabitants sent to inform the Milanese that, if they were not immediately relieved, they must surrender the following day. The Milanese despatched thither a considerable body of troops under Charles Gonzaga, who managed to make his way to it by night, and effected his entrance on the side which Piccinino had been ordered to guard. Gonzaga, shrinking from a conflict with Sforza's army, and fearful of his vengeance should he fall into his hands, proposed that they should remain in the city and await the attack of their enemies; adding that, when they were driven back by so much larger a force than they expected, they would doubtless raise the siege in despair. But the citizens, eager to free themselves from the enemy, were not guided by this advice; they sallied forth before daybreak; and ere the besiegers were aware of their approach, they set fire to their tents, and inflicted no small loss upon them otherwise. Ventimiglia, however, and the other generals of Sforza, though taken unawares, did not lose heart; they rallied their men, and even drove the enemy back to the ramparts. For some time they maintained a conflict there with the greatest bravery, under the expectation that Piccinino, who had been duly apprised of what had happened, would have come to their assistance; but no small confusion was caused among the troops by the burning tents in the rear; and the space between the fire on the one side, and the enemy on the other, was so small that they were unable to form in a regular line of battle. Finding that Piccinino was again playing the traitor, they retired in no small confusion to Canturio, without even being able to bring off any of their artillery. All their tents were consumed by the flames; their baggage, with the implements made use of in the siege, fell into the hands of the enemy. In addition to this damage, Sforza sus-

tained no small loss in the death of Dulcius, one of the best and most trustworthy of his captains, who was wounded by a bullet in the knee, and a few days afterwards expired of spasm.

The Milanese were beyond measure elated at the turn which their fortune seemed to have taken. They appear, indeed, to have thought that their enemy would have been obliged to retire from the field till he could, in some measure, repair his loss. Acting on this supposition, they sent forth a body of men to retake the monastery of Castellatio. But Sforza had already experienced too many vicissitudes, and had too much confidence in his own resources, to be so easily cast down; and he ordered his troops to blockade the city more closely than heretofore. On finding themselves still pressed by their enemies, the force that had set forth to relieve Castellatio retired with great precipitancy. Piccinino too, though he had inflicted much injury on Sforza, did not think that the time had yet come for openly breaking with him; he therefore endeavoured in the best manner he could to explain his conduct, and promised, upon receiving some more artillery, to continue the siege of Monza. Sforza, though it is needless to say he was not deceived, thought that he might still strengthen his cause by appearing to keep on good terms with him, and promised to have sent to him four more pieces of artillery from Cremona.

About this time a Venetian army, under Sigismund Malatesta, made its appearance on the Adda, and retook several of the cities which they had lost in the preceding year. Crema alone, of all the places in that neighbourhood, continued to hold out against them. The Venetians, as the Milanese had done previously, had been anxiously soliciting Sforza to attend to their interests in preference to his own; they now sent to request him that he would repair the loss he had inflicted on them at Caravaggio, by furnishing them with men and implements for the siege of Crema. In compliance with their entreaties, he sent them six hundred cavalry, and a number of artisans to make implements. But events soon happened which caused him to turn his attention to a different quarter.

The duke of Savoy, though he failed to fulfil the magnificent expectations which he held out to the Milanese, gladly availed himself of the opportunity that was offered to him of extending his dominions under the pretext of succouring his allies. For this purpose he collected together six thousand men in Vercelli, under the command of an officer named Compecius. One of his first measures was an attempt to surprise the important city of Novara, which was only twelve miles from their headquarters. He sent thither a force of a thousand men, who managed, under cover of night, to scale the walls, and actually effected an entrance into the citadel. They had already occupied about half of the building when the guards awoke, and the whole garrison arose with a mingled shout of terror and surprise. The Savoyards were now as terrified as they had hitherto been audacious. Though the number of the defenders did not exceed two hundred, they fancied that the whole city had risen upon them; their terror was aggravated by the circumstance of their not expecting quarter, which they themselves had never been accustomed to give, and they thought only of seeking safety in flight. The commandant of the citadel, taking every advantage of their panic, succeeded with his small body of troops in capturing a considerable number of them before they could effect their escape. After this the Savoyards confined themselves to laying waste the country and taking the castles and villages. This they did with a cruelty which contrasted strangely with the practice of the Italians. Not content with destroying and pillaging whatever came in their way, they murdered men, women, and children alike. Such was the terror that their name inspired among a population who were so little accustomed to the sight of blood, that even before their approach the inhabitants of many places sent to say that they were willing to submit to them.

Sforza, on seeing himself attacked in this quarter, sent to remonstrate with Amadeus, the father of the reigning duke. He said that he ascribed this attack entirely to him, and that surely his endeavours to establish his rights against a certain party at Milan ought not to have provoked his interference. He also reminded him that, if from any particular circumstances he had felt himself bound to assist this party, it would have been

Christian like and honourable to have begun by making a formal declaration of war. He trusted, therefore, that he would at once have restored to him all the places in the Novarese that had been taken by the soldiers of his son; at the same time, if he was determined to continue his injustice and aggression, he wished him to recollect that he was in alliance with the powerful republics of Florence and Venice, who were bound to assist him. To this Amadeus made a reply rather unbecoming one who had for some time set up to be the head of a mild, unambitious, and peace-making religion. He said that, as he had resigned all his temporal possessions to his son, and was entirely given to his spiritual avocations, he could not interfere; but that he for one could not see why his son should give back a single thing that he had taken, or why he should in any way alter his policy; and that those who wished to live on good terms with the Savoyards should recollect that from time immemorial it had been their custom not only never to renounce their claim to anything they had ever possessed, but even to continue to encroach more and more upon the possessions of their neighbours.

The count, in no small degree irritated by the response of the late anti-pope, determined to repel with all his force this unprovoked aggression of his son. His first plan was to send an expedition against them under the command of Jacobo Piccinino. That general had of his own accord offered to undertake its command, on the condition that he was not to be associated with his brother. But the latter, on hearing of the arrangements that were in progress, and thinking that such a favourable opportunity of injuring Sforza by his treachery was not to be passed over, sent word to him that if his brother went he must go thither also. Much as Sforza mistrusted him, he did not wish to give him cause of complaint, or to proclaim his want of confidence to the public. But that he might not all at once endanger his forces, by allowing a traitor to command them in the face of a formidable enemy, he ordered Jacobo to cross the Po, and to join his brother in the Milanese. At the same time, he, in order to rivet the fidelity of the former, formally betrothed to him his daughter Drusiana, in earnest of his previous engagement, but deferred the celebration of the wedding till such time as he should get possession of Milan; and, that he might effectually guard against the treachery of the brothers, he intrusted the chief command of the war against the Savoyards to Bartolomeo Collio.

That general, as has already been mentioned, was in the command of the Venetian forces that had been sent to assist Sforza; hence he could merely use them in fulfilling the stipulations of his employers, and could not be expected to engage in any of the count's private wars or ulterior designs. As these stipulations were that they should assist him in acquiring possession of all the territories that had belonged to Philip at the time of his death, they were of course bound to repel any hostile force that might attempt to subjugate any part of these territories; but they were not obliged to carry on the war beyond their boundaries. As in the present instance the Venetians had no object in extending their own conquests to the west of the Milanese, and of course did not wish to see the power of Sforza, should he ever gain possession of Milan, unduly increased, they could hardly be expected to go beyond the terms of their agreement; and as Bartolomeo had already shown his jealousy of Sforza by attacking Tortona, it was not likely that he would exceed the wishes of his employers for the sake of doing him a favour. Hence Bartolomeo's war with the Savoyards was entirely defensive: he did his best to retake the strong places on the east of the Sessia that had submitted to them, and attacked them whenever they attempted to cross it; but he declined doing anything beyond it. In all the operations that he did attempt, he was completely successful: in a short time all the strong places, with only one exception, submitted to him; and on one occasion he defeated a considerable body of the enemy that had crossed the river, and made a prisoner of their general. And though he himself refused to follow up his success by invading the territory of the duke of Savoy, he had under his command a considerable body of Sforza's own troops, who, having no such scruples, frequently made predatory excursions in the country beyond the river, in which they were often joined by numbers of the soldiers of the Venetians. Thus in a short time Sforza was quite freed from the incursions of his new enemies; but he was still obliged to reserve a considerable body of men near the Sessia, to keep them in check.

About this time his operations were further crippled by the treachery of his old enemies, the Piccinini. From the information that he had received from several quarters, he knew that they were meditating immediate desertion; and though he had never had any doubt as to their ultimate intentions, he had still entertained hopes that they might have remained nominally in his service until something should turn up in his favour at Milan, or at least until he should be able to make peace with the Savoyards, and be rejoined by the forces of Bartolomeo Collio. As he plainly foresaw that their open defection, in the present crisis of his affairs, would considerably injure his ultimate chances of success, he was in no small strait how to act with regard to them. His most expeditious, and possibly his safest course, would have been to put an end to them both, or at least to throw them into captivity, for then they could never again injure him, either by foul means or by fair; and as they had so often committed acts deserving death, he could not be restrained by any scruples of conscience from doing so. But, at the same time, he felt that, aspiring as he did to hold a place among the sovereigns of the Peninsula, a good name was worth more to him than a considerable body of troops, and that he would probably suffer more by the loss of it than by any act of the treacherous, though not very talented, brothers. Though in his own mind he had not the slightest doubt either of their former misdoings or their present perfidious intentions, he was not in possession of any written documents or proofs, wherewith he might justify himself to others; and in the absence of these, he well knew that any act of severity would afford material for slander to his enemies, and might arouse even the misgivings of his friends. After some deliberation he made up his mind to behave towards them as if he neither knew nor suspected anything; and being anxious to resume the siege of Monza, which only a short time before he had been compelled to relinquish through their treachery, he assigned to them the same post which they had formerly held on the east of the city. He was even about to proceed to their camp to give them their orders in person, but was restrained from doing so by the remonstrances of his friends. But the brothers ere long came to him to hear his pleasure—

“making fair show,

And hiding with false faces what their false hearts did know”.

They then obtained his permission to remain where they were one day longer, promising immediately afterwards to repair to the place that had been allotted to them. When the appointed day came, they marched with all their troops into the city of Monza. The inhabitants had been prepared to receive them, and on their arrival they endeavoured to persuade them to make a sally on the besiegers. They refrained, however, from doing so, when they saw that their commander William, marquis of Montferrat, was in a position to defend himself till such time as he could receive succours from Sforza. Shortly after this, William, not having sufficient force remaining to prosecute the siege, departed, though without any molestation from the garrison; and the Piccinini marched with their forces, consisting of three thousand cavalry and one thousand infantry, to Milan, where they were received with a species of triumph.

Intelligence of these events was brought to Sforza while he was engaged in the performance of mass. Though they must, in no small degree, have deranged both his plans and his prospects, he did not betray the slightest agitation of any sort, but calmly remained where he was till the conclusion of the ceremony. He then gave orders for his wife to retire to Pavia, and summoned his generals to a council of war. They were almost all of opinion that, weakened as they now were by the defection of the Piccinini, and the necessity of detaching a part of their forces to keep the Savoyards in check, it would be no longer safe for them to extend through the Milanese, but that they ought to concentrate them in one position, in order to be able effectually to resist any attack of the enemy. But however prudent this advice might have been, Sforza, fearful lest his acting in this manner should be ascribed to either weakness or fear, positively refused to adopt it. And seeing that his men were in no small degree downcast by recent events, he endeavoured to revive their spirits by the all-powerful charm of his eloquence : he told them that, however the accomplishment of their wishes might be deferred, it

was still as certain as ever; that the Piccinini were but incompetent generals, and that the Milanese would soon find out that they would have been better without them; that, for his own part, he would sooner have them openly opposed to him than working against him by their intrigues, while they pretended to be his friends; and that, for the present, all they had to do was to take care never to be taken by surprise.

The hopes of the Milanese were in no small degree elated by the arrival of the Piccinini; and their leaders were now loud in their boastings that they would, in a few days, clear their territory of the enemy. They made several sallies, under the expectation of doing so. But seeing that they made no impression, and that the enemy continued, as before, to occupy the whole of the country around, they changed the plan of their operations, and sent an expedition to the relief of Crema, under the command of the Piccinini and Gonzaga. Its success at first must have surpassed even their most sanguine expectations. While they were on their way thither, the town of Melegnano, which had been intrusted by Sforza to the care of the Piccinini, and had been left by him in an almost defenceless state, fell into their hands. Sigismund Malatesta, the commander of the Venetian forces at Crema, having heard of the change in the prospects of Sforza, retired on their approach; and shortly afterwards, the town of Melzo, with the greater part of the implements that had been destined for the siege of Monza, fell into the hands of the Milanese.

These events were sufficient to convince Sforza that, if he meant to preserve his footing in and around the Milanese, he must be up and acting. He first marched to Melegnano, a place which is described by his biographer as being the most important for the carrying on war, and inflicting every possible injury on the Milanese. He took the place itself, without experiencing almost any resistance, and managed to save the inhabitants from the cupidity and lusts of his soldiers. The enemy's forces, of course, made their escape into the citadel; and though its mason-work was remarkably strong, and though it was surrounded by a deep trench which was then filled with water, he prosecuted the siege of it so successfully that, after six days, the garrison promised to surrender if, within three days, they were not relieved. Before the expiration of that time, however, the Milanese generals approached with an army, consisting, it is said by all historians, of thirty thousand men. But of this large force ten thousand only were regular troops; the remainder were volunteers, who, out of a passionate desire to maintain their present constitution, had joined their ranks—a fact which, when we consider the reluctance of the Italian citizens at that age to serve as soldiers, shows how unpopular Sforza must have been with a certain class at Milan. And though, of course, they were undisciplined, and could not do much in close fighting, most of them were armed with guns, which, as yet, had not been used in Italian warfare, and which, though it was probable they could not send a ball either with much precision, or with sufficient force to injure men clad in heavy armour, might, from their very novelty, cause no small annoyance and terror.

Against these numbers, Francesco Sforza, having collected his troops from Pavia and other places, was able to oppose a body of thirteen thousand disciplined soldiers, well accustomed to victory. Piccinino was perfectly aware that his multitude of recruits could not stand long before them, and that, if he did not carry the day at once by the mere appearance of numbers, they might probably be driven back, and cause no small confusion among his regular troops. He therefore thought it better to endeavour to persuade Sforza to raise the siege than to risk an engagement. With this view he sent him word that, though he was now opposed to him in war, he had never ceased to regard him with friendship and respect that he really should be loth to see his whole army destroyed or routed, but that, as he then was in command of sixty thousand men, and as he would be joined in the course of the engagement by William of Montferrat, this result would be inevitable if he were to attack him on the following day; that he therefore entreated him, for his own sake, to raise the siege, and to retire during the night.

The receipt of this message filled Sforza with joy : he well knew that nothing would give Piccinino greater pleasure than to be able to annihilate him, and that, if he were really in a condition to do so, he would

be the last man to give him timely warning to enable him to make his escape; and he felt convinced that his present step was taken because he felt doubtful of the result of an engagement. He sent word in reply, that he was much obliged to him for his information, but that he himself knew perfectly the character and the intentions of every man in his camp; that he was exceedingly rejoiced to hear of the great number of his soldiers, as he would have so many more prisoners, and so much more booty; and that he would even save him any further trouble by beginning the attack himself.

During the night he had all his workmen employed in levelling the inequalities of the ground between his own position and that of the enemy—a measure which, as his own force consisted entirely of well-disciplined troops, and his enemy's strength lay in no small degree in skirmishers and sharpshooters, was of the very greatest importance. But before commencing the attack, he found that the substance of the message which had been sent to him had been artfully spread among the soldiers, and that they were in no small degree terrified at the report both of the numbers and of the new weapons of their adversaries. Sforza did his best to convince them of the exaggerations that had been made use of with respect to the former, and of the inefficient nature of the latter. He made the most admirable preparations for the approaching battle. He well knew that the enemy's greatest advantage lay in the mere appearance of numbers; that a large part of the multitude opposed to him were undisciplined volunteers, who would not stand before his men in a close fight; and that if these were once to give way, his own soldiers would regain heart, and the crowd of fugitives could not fail to embarrass the regular troops upon whom they would be driven back. To accomplish this result, he put two hundred of his very best cavalry under the command of William of Montferrat, whom he ordered to lead the attack : he gave them particular directions to continue sabering and riding down the enemy, but on no account to halt to make prisoners, threatening the penalty of death to any one who should do so.

No plan more likely to spread havoc among the ranks of his opponents could have been adopted; and when we consider the great prestige of his name, and the incapacity of the opposite generals, it is almost certain that, if his enemies had awaited him, it would have been crowned with success. But they on finding that, so far from being terrified into raising the siege, he was actually about to attack them, did not dare to await him, and retired to Milan, giving out that the citadel had capitulated before their arrival. On their part the garrison, seeing that the relieving force had entirely disappeared, surrendered according to their engagement.

If Sforza's talents stood him in good turn in this emergency, the display which he then made of them inspired some of his contemporaries with an admiration which was in the long run prejudicial to him. While he was going through the camp, giving orders and making arrangements, he was accompanied by Marcellus, the Venetian general, who had continued to abide with him since his alliance with his countrymen. The latter afterwards declared that, highly as he had always thought of the abilities of the great captain, he had until that day no idea of his skill in military matters, his admirable tact in managing the tempers of the soldiers, his quickness in council, his readiness in action, or the great admiration with which his troops regarded him, and the implicit obedience which they paid to his orders. He then expressed his conviction of the danger that would accrue to his countrymen if they were to allow such a man to be Duke of Milan; that if he were once well established as such, he would never rest easy till he had enlarged his boundaries at the expense of his neighbours; but that if, on the other hand, they were to allow the Milanese to remain subject to their present rulers, they must at no distant period come under their domination. These impressions, which he lost no time in communicating to the senate at Venice, soon afterwards produced their effect.

The regaining of Melegnano left Sforza at liberty to continue his operations in the Milanese. He still cherished the hopes of entailing such privations on the citizens as would make them discontented with their present government, and cause a rising in his favour. To do this more effectually, he ordered a number of reapers

and mowers to sally forth from Pavia and Novara, and to cut down and carry off whatever they could find upon the land.

Another piece of good fortune occurred, sufficient in no small degree to restore the hopes of Sforza's partisans. Skirmishes still continued to take place between the Savoyards and the Venetian and Sfortian troops on the banks of the Sessia, but without any very decided success, till one day a considerable body of each met, more by accident than otherwise, near Borgo Maniero. Though the Sfortians and Venetians were considerably inferior in numbers, nevertheless, as they looked upon the Savoyards as barbarians, they determined for the honour of their common country not to decline the encounter. The Savoyards, observing the comparative smallness of the attacking force, and beholding a wood of considerable extent in their rear, began to suspect, as the Gauls did when they entered Rome, and as Machiavelli advises all people to do when they observe an enemy placing themselves in a notoriously disadvantageous position, that some ambush was laid for them. They therefore thought it prudent to adopt measures to save themselves from what they thought an imminent danger of being overwhelmed by superior numbers; so, alighting from their horses, they formed a circular palisade of stakes sufficient to retard the advance of the enemy's cavalry; and from behind this they inflicted great damage on them with their arrows. The Italians were driven back in some confusion, and the Savoyards, seeing that no fresh forces appeared, left their palisade to follow them, and became scattered in the pursuit.

Bartolomeo Collio, having received intelligence of what had happened, and seeing a considerable body of the enemy in the vicinity of his own headquarters in pursuit of the fugitive Sfortians, called a council to deliberate what should be done. But at the same time, Salernitanus, who had always been a steady adherent of Sforza's, said that, as the honour of their common country was at stake, this was a time for action, not for deliberation, and put himself at the head of a thousand horse, with which he galloped forward. As the Savoyards were scattered and disordered, they immediately recoiled before the charge of a compact body of men; the example of Salernitanus was soon followed by Bartolomeo and the other Italian generals, who, now that their national feelings were roused, little heeded the exact terms of any treaty. The Savoyards, having brought up all their forces to repel the combined attack that was now being made upon them, rallied within the circular palisade, where a protracted, and, what was rare in those days, a sanguinary combat ensued. But though they fought with bravery, they were unable to stand before the superior skill of the Italians; and after a great number had fallen on the spot, they broke from their ranks, and fled in confusion. The victors followed them till the close of the day, and having taken nearly all the chief captains of the enemy, they sent them prisoners to Sforza, who, having received their parole that they would not bear arms against him during the remainder of the war, gave them their liberty. So highly elated was he at the result of this battle, which completely subdued the new enemy whom the intrigues of Philip's widow had raised up, that he said it much more than compensated for the loss he had sustained in the desertion of the Piccinini. But the blood that was shed thereat filled the Italians, who were accustomed to a very different species of warfare, with horror, and, as M. Sismondi remarks, may have paved the way for their easy submission to the French in the following century.

Though the attack of the Savoyards had failed, they had, nevertheless, done signal service to the Milanese by effecting a diversion in their favour. The great object of the latter, as has already been remarked, was to gain time: they knew that Sforza had not means of his own to continue a protracted contest, and they hoped that the Venetians would soon get tired of waging war merely for him. Hence every fresh enemy that even threatened him, and every city of his that made even the semblance of a revolt, benefited their cause; the temporary desertion or disaffection of every captain, however incompetent—every doubt they could cast upon the fidelity of any one in his camp—was of use to them. It was not long before they were favoured by two events of this nature. The inhabitants of Vigevano, the most important city in the territory between the Ticino and the Sessia, having driven out their commandant, hoisted the colours of the Milanese republic. Sforza also had received several hints that William of Montferrat meditated leaving him, for the purpose of securing Alessandria and Bosco for himself. As the loss of Vigevano might entail upon him that of the whole of the

country between these two rivers, he determined, loth as he was to absent himself from the immediate vicinity of Milan, to repair in person to retake the city; and he managed, by a polite artifice, to defeat the intentions of Montferrat. While he was with his troops endeavouring to construct a bridge over the Ticino, in the immediate vicinity of Pavia, he invited him to come to that city to visit his wife; and after he had been in this manner lured into the citadel, he was given to understand, in the civilest manner possible, that he must remain there for the present. At the same time, his captor took care that all his property should be respected, and his dominions should be preserved for him. After having finished, not without some little delay, the bridge over the Ticino, Sforza repaired to Vigevano, determined to prosecute the siege with the utmost celerity, that he might return as soon as possible to the place where he deemed his presence was of the greatest importance.

The details of this siege are interesting, as exhibiting both the military science of the Italians, and the determination with which, when their feelings were thoroughly roused, they could still fight for their liberties. Time was equally important to both parties—to Sforza, as every day's absence from the Milanese diminished his chance; to the besieged, as they hoped that the republic would send a force to relieve them, or at least to effect a diversion in their favour. Encouraged by the Milanese soldiers in their garrison, and by hearing that Piccinino had been sent to Sepri, they disputed every inch of ground to the last. Though their powder was soon exhausted, they defended themselves bravely with swords, javelins, and all the other weapons which had been formerly in use. When their walls began to crumble before the artillery of the enemy, they erected behind them a great mound of earth, which they protected by sacks of wool from the cannon-balls.

Sforza was much vexed by the loss of time thus caused, and determined to do what he could to take the city by a *coup-de-main*. He had, at the commencement of the siege, constructed wooden towers in different places, from which his soldiers were able to inflict considerable annoyance on the enemy whenever they appeared on their walls. He now divided his army into eight bodies, with which he purposed to attack the city successively, thinking that neither the numbers nor the courage of the besieged would be able to withstand the continued onset of fresh troops. He promised one hundred pieces of gold to the first who should make good his ground within the city, fifty to the second, and twenty-five to the third. The chief command was intrusted to one Donatus, a Milanese officer who had earned great reputation at the siege of Piacenza. The appetites of all were in no small degree whetted by the recollection of the spoil which had been obtained in that city.

Against these dispositions the inhabitants, who felt that, after their protracted resistance, they could expect but little mercy, prepared to defend themselves with all the resolution of despair. Early in the morning they crowded the churches, and prayed most fervently to be delivered from the impending calamity; and whether it was that they really believed in their efficiency, or that they thought that the sight of all that was deemed most sacred might inspire spirit into their defenders, and some superstitious awe into their aggressors, they carried forth the pictures of holy personages and the relics of the saints. At first the men continued to fight sword in hand with the assailants, while the women stood beneath to supply them with weapons and missiles; but the latter, in the course of the day, clothed themselves with the uniforms, and put themselves in the places, of those that fell. Those that remained on the walls showered down hot water, burning pitch, stones and beams, on the devoted heads of the assailants. Seven of the divisions of the besieging army had already been repulsed, when their general ordered them to desist from the assault, and to annoy their enemy with missiles from the wooden towers. By this measure the numbers of the defenders were so much thinned that they were unable to repel the next attack; several of the assailants soon made good their position on the walls; the citizens were told that the enemy was among them, when they were saved by an accident from the dreaded fate. One of Sforza's men, a commander of a division, while standing on the wall, received a blow on his head, which precipitated him upon those who were at that moment actually engaged in the ascent. The foremost men of the advancing column were thus hurled down upon their comrades beneath, and caused no small panic and confusion in their ranks. The defenders seized the opportunity; and, though only a few minutes before they had given up fighting in despair, and were each thinking how they might make the best terms for themselves, they now began to shower

down upon them the weapons which they had used with so much effect in the morning. Sforza deemed it useless to continue the attack, and recalled his soldiers, determined to renew it early on the following day.

The Vigevans, though they had defended themselves bravely during the day, saw too plainly that they could not hold out any longer, and that their only chance of saving their property lay in a capitulation. Accordingly, before sunset, they sent to propose terms to Sforza. There was nothing that he would have liked better than to have punished them for their treachery, and to have kept up the somewhat drooping spirits of his army by the plunder of the city; but he felt that, even if he were to make himself master of it on the following day, it might be some time before he could bring together his troops, who would remain there in search of plunder, around Milan; and as every movement was of importance to him, he consented, after some little deliberation, to accept their offer. The only condition which he added was that they should rebuild the citadel, which they had destroyed after the death of Filippo Maria, and give up to him the leading men who had prompted them to rebel. These he confined in the castle of Pavia. During the night he had some little trouble in preventing his soldiers from breaking into the city in search of booty; but as he had great authority with his army, and as the citizens had been warned to be on their guard, there was no mischief done.

During the progress of the siege, Charles Gonzaga and the Piccinini retook several places of minor importance, and laid waste the territory of the Pavians. But Sforza, feeling assured that, if he retook Vigevano, he could easily repair whatever mischief might in the meantime be effected, was not diverted from his purpose either by the loss of the former or the cries of the latter for assistance. Offers were also made to Ventimiglia, who, it may be recollected, had on a former occasion gladly embraced an opportunity of leaving the service of the Milanese for that of his present employer, and who, perhaps, was the most attached to him of any of his generals. Ventimiglia was so incensed at the proposal that was now made to him, that he sent the bearers of it to Sforza, who did not hesitate to hang them; and the count himself, after having left a thousand horse in Novara, lest the Savoyards should again show themselves in his dominions, returned to the territory of Milan.

As Sforza had been unable to bring the Piccinini to a general action since their last desertion of him, he resolved to punish their treachery by taking the places that belonged to them between Piacenza and Parma. He hoped by this measure also to make a demonstration to all the powers of Italy, as well as to the Milanese, of the real efficiency of his forces. Accordingly he ordered some of the officers on whom he could most depend to cross the Po with a body of men sufficient for the purpose. They soon took all the towns and strong places that had belonged to the treacherous brothers, experiencing very little resistance from any except Firenzuola, which required a forty days' siege to reduce. Of the forces that were taken prisoners in these towns only the officers were retained, while the soldiers were given their liberty on the condition that they would not again bear arms against Sforza.

In the meantime Nicolo Guerriero, an enemy of Sforza's, had been entreating the king of Naples to send a force to take Parma; and that monarch, ever mindful of what the great captain and his father had done against him, sent thither two divisions, one of a thousand horse and five hundred foot, under the command of Astorre, and another of five hundred, under that of Raimondo Amichino. Alexander Sforza undertook the defence of this territory for his brother. He easily persuaded the former of these generals to desist from his enterprise, and to disband his forces, on the receipt of a thousand pieces of gold from Francesco. He then repaired to Colornio, a town belonging to Nicolo Guerriero, who had brought this new enemy into the field. At his approach Nicolo fled for safety to Mantua. Raimondo Amichino having, to the no small indignation of the Sforzas, been allowed a free passage through the territories of the marquis of Este, who at that time professed to be in alliance with the Venetians, made an attempt to relieve Colornio; he was, however, completely defeated, and that town soon afterwards fell into the hands of Alexander. Thus the man who had attempted to make this

new diversion against Sforza paid the penalty of his interference by the loss of his city, and the war in the Parmese terminated without further incident.

Sforza himself retook, without any difficulty, the places that, while he had been engaged in the siege of Vigevano, had fallen into the hands of his enemies. Most of them, indeed, returned to him without any resistance; Castellione, the only one that held out against him, was after its capture abandoned to the soldiers. He then continued as before to blockade the city, and to lay waste the territory of Milan. His position was now, perhaps, as good as it had been at any time since the beginning of the war : he was in possession of almost all the strongholds in the neighbourhood ; he had completely defeated every attempt that had been made by the new enemies who had been incited against him, and had let everyone see that he had been able to maintain his position in spite of the desertion of the Piccinini. He was assured that he had still a powerful party in the city, although they were for a time silenced by the violence of their opponents. In this position he calmly awaited the approaching elections, hoping that he might weary his enemies into submission, but determined, should his present policy fail, to adopt more violent measures.

CHAPTER XXI.

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE MILANESE AND VENETIANS.—CHARLES GONZAGA JOINS SFORZA

ON the 1st of July 1449 new magistrates were elected at Milan. Those who had held the highest offices during the preceding months had rendered themselves extremely unpopular, both by the arrogance which they then displayed, and by the sufferings which their policy had entailed upon the people; and in the words of the historian of Milan, they were detested by all who wished to live well, or who had any pretence to nobility. On the expiration of their magistracy they were cast into prison, and were succeeded by men of more aristocratic tendencies, and supposed not to be unfavourably disposed towards Sforza. But though his bitterest enemies had been incarcerated, his name was still under a ban; and such was the ascendancy of the mob at Milan that, till it was known how they were inclined to receive him, no one dared make any propositions concerning him.

In accordance with the supposed wishes of the populace, the new magistrates commissioned a certain Henry Panigarola, one of their own countrymen, of the Guelf party, who happened at that time to be at Venice on business, to go before the senate and represent to them that, as they had at all times been such ardent supporters of liberty, instead of aiding an aspiring usurper in subjugating their nascent republic, they ought, on the contrary, to assist them in maintaining their independence against him. He laid the views and pleaded the cause of his countrymen with great effect before the senate, who referred the matter to a committee consisting of the doge and four of the principal citizens. At the same time, Marcellus, the Venetian ambassador in Sforza's camp, continued to give them the same advice as before; and he now further said, that he was convinced that all their efforts to place Sforza in Milan would be utterly useless. The committee finally decided that Panigarola should be entreated to remain in the city for the present.

Meantime Sforza, either unconscious or unmindful of these negotiations, continued his former plan of operations. He occasionally diversified them by taking a fortified place which had either remained in the hands of, or had recently revolted to, the enemy; but more, perhaps, for the sake of making a demonstration of his power, or of giving occupation to his troops, than for any positive advantage. In one of those undertakings he was much grieved at the loss of one of the most devoted and confidential of his adherents, by name Manno Bariles, who, in attempting to pass the Lambro on horseback, was drowned, much in the same manner as his father had been in passing the Pescara. To show his respect for the deceased, he had his body conveyed to Pavia, where his funeral was conducted with the greatest pomp, and attended by the principal officers of his army. Shortly after this, the town of Pizzighettone, most important from its position on the Adda, revolted to him; and though he was embarrassed in consequence of a scarcity of provisions, and the breaking out of a fever in his camp which carried off some of his ablest officers, he was able to take the fortress of Cassano, which commanded the bridge over that river. About the same time Sigismund resumed his operations against Crema, whence the Piccinini had forced him to retire in the preceding year. Charles Gonzaga was proceeding to the relief of this town, when events occurred at Milan which caused a fresh disposition of parties.

In the beginning of September the magistrates who had been elected in July were deposed, and were succeeded by those who, at their accession, had been cast into prison. The violence of the extreme democratic party now became greater than ever, and they directed their fury against the two ex-magistrates, who were obliged to fly for their lives. One of them succeeded in reaching Sforza's camp; but the other, being unable on account of a lameness to escape from his pursuers, was brutally murdered. Overtures were again sent to the Venetians, and the former edicts which forbade men to speak respectfully of either Sforza or his wife were renewed.

At this time Charles Gonzaga was at Lodi on his way to Crema. He had always been exceedingly jealous of the ascendancy of the Piccinini, and doubtful of the ultimate chances of success of the Milanese, and he now affected excessive wrath at the murder of the ex-magistrate. Influenced either by his righteous indignation, or, more probably, as is hinted by the annalist of Italy by motives of self-interest, he opened negotiations with Sforza; and he now proposed to put him in possession of Lodi, and to procure the surrender of Crema either to him or the Venetians. He, however, strongly recommended him to take it for himself, alleging that, if the Venetians once got it, they would probably make a separate peace for themselves with the Milanese. In return for this, he requested him, if ever he got possession of Milan, to give him a part of Cremona, and to allow him henceforward to rank among the foremost of his generals. Sforza replied that, as Cremona was the property of his wife, he could not dispose of it, but he agreed to give him Tortona in lieu of it; at the same time he said that he would have the greatest pleasure in complying with the latter part of his demand, and promised him a considerable stipend for his own services and the maintenance of his troops. Though Gonzaga had much set his heart on Cremona, so near to his native city of Mantua, he at once accepted the terms that were offered to him, and he forthwith arranged with the inhabitants of Lodi, who appeared to have been much disgusted with the ruling faction at Milan, that after his departure they should admit Sforza's troops within the walls.

In the meantime the representations of Panigarola, and the letters of Marcellus, produced their due effect at Venice. The senate came to a resolution no longer to continue the war with the Milanese, or the payment of the stipend to Sforza. They sent messengers to inform the latter of their determination, and at the same time gave them directions not to depart from his camp until they had brought him round to their wishes. And the messengers had scarcely set out on their errand, when the arrival from Marcellus of information concerning the arrangements that had been made with Gonzaga about Lodi and Crema, caused the Senate to send an express after them, ordering them not to be too abrupt in their negotiations, but to dally with him till they should get possession of Crema.

When Sforza heard of the Venetian messengers' approach, he suspected the object of their visit, and, fearful lest it should transpire and cause fear and disaffection among his troops, he proposed to meet them at Ripalta, a town on the other side of the Adda. As he was about to proceed thither, several of his friends remonstrated with him on the imprudence of entrusting his person to those who, it was supposed, were about to become his enemies; but though he must have clearly foreseen his approaching rupture with the Venetians, he was anxious to keep up the appearance of cordiality to the very last moment: he therefore turned a deaf ear to their warnings, and proceeded with an air of confidence which might have been either real or assumed. On his meeting the messengers he accosted them with the usual compliments, and asked to know their pleasure. They at once told him that as the war was lasting much longer than had been anticipated, and as there did not seem to be any immediate prospect of his attaining his wishes, they had come to propose some accommodation between him and the Milanese; that as they knew his great abilities and his integrity, they would leave all arrangements to his discretion, and, as he had recently obtained new and almost unlooked-for success, the present seemed a most opportune moment for terminating the war with honour and advantage. He replied to them in the flattering tone usual with those who see through, but wish to feign ignorance of, the falsity of their friends. He said that he knew that the senate of Venice had in all its transactions shown itself superior to the other governments of Italy in integrity, justice, and faith; that for that reason he did not believe the hints which

had been made to him of their being about, contrary to their most solemn engagements, to discard him, and to make peace with the Milanese; and that if such things were spoken of at Venice, he felt well assured that they came only from a few unprincipled citizens, and were scouted at by the majority. On one point he was anxious to inform them correctly : his prospects of success were very different from what they seemed to think, for he was now in possession of Cassano, and in a very few days would have Lodi, and the only other towns which commanded the passes of the Adda, namely, Trezio and Bivio, would soon surrender; that after this it would be utterly impossible that the Milanese, cut off as they would be from all their communications with the other states of Italy, and already weakened by their internal dissensions, could hold out.

After the semblance of a negotiation, both parties went their way—Francesco to his army, the ambassadors to Bergamo, there to await the further decisions of their senate. The former then received a deputation from the Cremese, who declared that their countrymen dreaded nothing so much as being subjected to the Venetians, and entreated him to take their city for himself. Though the possession of Crema, lying as it did between Lodi and Cremona, would have been a matter of great importance to him, as consolidating the territory that he already possessed, nevertheless, as his availing himself of this offer would have hastened the approaching rupture between the Venetians and himself, and would have both justified them, and damaged him in the eyes of all Italy, and as he looked to do more by procrastination and by preserving his reputation than by force of arms, he thought proper to refuse it. He therefore replied that, much as it grieved him to decline the offer of a people who were so well disposed towards him, he had already promised their city to the Venetians, and would undergo any disappointment sooner than violate one jot or tittle of an engagement that he had solemnly made. On the following day he went to Lodi accompanied by a considerable body of infantry, and was forthwith admitted within its walls. He then summoned the garrison in the fortress to surrender, saying that, if they did not do so forthwith, he would proceed to storm them with the whole of his available force; and as they merely wanted an excuse to justify their conduct to the Milanese, they obeyed without any delay. In this citadel Sforza found Arasmo Triulcio, who had always taken such an active part against him at Milan. The unfortunate captive endeavoured to stammer forth excuses for his conduct, but Sforza, though he was above taking vengeance upon him, sent him a prisoner to Pavia, the place where he confined all those who had the inclination and the power to injure him. Not long afterwards Crema surrendered to the Venetians, and Sforza repaired with the whole of his army to Vico Lambrato, within two miles of the eastern gate of Milan.

As the conquest of Crema must have deprived the Venetians of all reasonable grounds of dissatisfaction, he was not without hope that their apparent alliance with him would last till he could accomplish his wishes. Several reasons made him think that a period when he might do this was at hand: the Milanese were already suffering from scarcity; they were so divided among themselves, that it did not seem likely they could long hold together; Charles Gonzaga had already brought him a considerable accession of force, and his effective strength was daily augmented by a number of deserters. But, as he was aware that the Venetians were only watching for an opportunity of dissolving their alliance with him, he felt that he had no time to lose, and he proceeded to take measures of a more decidedly offensive nature than hitherto, rather, perhaps, under the hope that he might thereby terrify the Milanese into submission, than with the intention of actually taking the city by storm. And there is no doubt but that he would have succeeded, if he had not been foiled, as of yore, by the treachery of his captains. Bartolomeo Collio, who commanded the Venetian soldiers in his army, had on many occasions shown himself jealous of his rise; he was now fully aware both of the intentions of his government and of the sentiments of Marcellus; he felt well assured that any lukewarmness on his part would not bring upon him their displeasure; and he determined that he, at least, should have no hand in making his brother condottiere duke of Milan.

All Sforza's measures on this occasion were selected with prudence, and undertaken with energy. His first attempt was to take the suburb that lay beneath the eastern gate of the city. This was defended by a trench of considerable magnitude, which, as it was now the month of December, he thought might be filled so

as to afford a passage for his cavalry, and be crossed by his infantry between sunset and sunrise. To do this as rapidly, and with as little noise as possible, he selected the spot in which each division of his army was to cross at a certain hour of the night. When the appointed time came, Bartolomeo and the Venetians were not in their places, and the former, on being sent to by Sforza, said that he could not come till he had all his forces together. In this manner he managed to retard the commencement of the enterprise till the appearance of daylight. Sforza, though he knew that his chances of success were now much diminished, determined to proceed. But his soldiers had not advanced far ere the Milanese became aware of his designs, and sent forth from behind the suburbs a well-directed shower of javelins, arrows, and bullets. So great, indeed, was the quantity of firearms, both artillery and hand-guns, used on the occasion, that the place was for some time enveloped in a thick cloud of smoke, and the assailants' troops were unable to discern their way. After two hours' hard fighting, Sforza retired. In this skirmish several men were wounded, and others were taken; but the Piccinini, who dreaded nothing so much as that the Milanese should hear Sforza well spoken of, refused to keep their prisoners of war within the city.

Sforza himself, though sorely vexed at the conduct of Collio, did not yet give up all hopes of success. It was not long before he agreed with a certain captain of cavalry, for a thousand pieces of gold, to put him in possession of the eastern suburb. But now Marcellus and Collio saw that, if they did not wish to behold Sforza in immediate possession of Milan, they must openly declare their intentions; they therefore made no scruple in informing him that the preliminaries of peace had already been settled at Venice, and that none of their soldiers should either enter the town, or in any way injure the property of the Milanese. On the very day on which it had been arranged that he should take the suburbs, the Venetian ambassador arrived in his camp, confirming the unwelcome intelligence; and after some preliminary dissertations, to the same effect as those he had made before the taking of Crema, he proposed to him the following terms :—That he was now to desist from making war against the Milanese, and to leave them in the undisturbed possession of all the country between the Po, the Adda, and the Ticino, with the exception of the city and territory of Pavia; that he was to keep for himself all the other cities which he had taken in Lombardy, and which had belonged to his father-in-law at the time of his death; that the city of Lodi, which was situated on the Adda, was to be given up to the Milanese. Twenty days only were to be given to him to consider the proffered conditions. In order to incline him to accept them, the ambassador said, contrary to the truth, that the senate had concluded an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the pope, the king of Naples, the republic of Florence, and the duke of Savoy; and that all these powers would unite with them in maintaining the independence of Milan.

Though Sforza had for some time past been aware of the intentions of the Venetians, nevertheless the receipt of this message, just when he thought his greatness was ripening, overwhelmed him with disappointment. He made a reply of considerable length to the ambassador, in which, after having endeavoured to depict the conduct of the Venetian republic in somewhat the same colours as his own behaviour had, on a former occasion, been drawn by the Milanese, he informed them that they were mistaken in several of the facts to which they had referred in justification of their proceedings; for that he had now brought matters to such a crisis that he must very soon get possession of the city of Milan; that, though the mob were opposed to him, the majority of the nobles were in his favour; and that he had at hand supplies of food sufficient to maintain an army much more numerous than his own for any length of time. He acknowledged that he was in want of money, but he knew that his soldiers were so attached to him that they would remain with him though their pay was in arrears; that, so far from his being a burden to the Venetians, he would repay to them anything they would now advance him, and he would never ask them for the balance of the stipend that they owed him. He concluded by requesting the ambassador to return to Venice, and bring the matter once more before the senate for their reconsideration. This, however, he refused to do, saying that it was not the manner of the senate to rescind any resolutions which, like the present, had been duly sanctioned by a committee.

Seeing that he could prevail nothing with the ambassador, he asked for one day to consider their propositions. There is no doubt but that, from the very first, he himself had made up his mind as to what part he would take; but he dreaded lest the Milanese should sally forth upon his army, while they were weakened and disordered by the desertion of the Venetians, in which case he thought that the latter, ever eager to obtain a share in the spoils of war, might join his enemies. He therefore availed himself of the respite that was allowed him to retire to Culturano. Mean time his own soldiers, who had expected ere long to share in the honours and rewards that awaited him, were beyond measure incensed with the Venetians, and were with the greatest difficulty prevented from making an attack upon those that still remained in or near their camp. Whenever their officers or ambassadors made their appearance, they were assailed with hisses and opprobrious epithets, and some of them were even stripped of their armour and robbed. But Sforza, determined that the Venetians should have no cause of complaint against him, did his best to bring the offenders to justice, and insisted that all their property should be restored to the officers. And when their envoy, Marcellus, who had remained with him during the whole period of their alliance, was taking his departure, he accompanied him to the distance of five miles from the camp, in order that he might more effectually protect both his person and his property.

After the departure of these ambassadors, Sforza received information that the Venetians were concentrating a considerable force behind the Adda. This, of course, convinced him that they were sincere in their intention of joining the Milanese, should he continue the war. This he was resolved to do; but as he was no match, unaided, for their combined armies, he scrupled not for a time to conceal his intentions, by means of double-dealing of the same sort as that which they had adopted towards him. He therefore granted a truce of twenty days to the Milanese; and he sent his brother Alexander once more to make a semblance of treating with the Venetians, though he secretly forbade him to be a party to any arrangements which should exclude him from Milan. At the same time he despatched another message to Cosmo de' Medici and the Florentines, begging them to assist him.

As this armistice was granted at the sowing time, he was secretly in hopes that the Milanese would use as seed a considerable quantity of the grain that they had laid up in their city—an act which would serve him even more effectually than the continuation of the blockade. Nor was he mistaken. When the Venetian ambassadors first made their appearance in Milan, the unfortunate inhabitants thought their troubles were at an end, and made token of their joy by the lighting of bonfires, the sounding of bells, and the discharging of cannons. And when the enemy had retired to Culturano, and had granted them a truce for twenty days, they thought that these acts must have been done in anticipation of a general peace, for they little dreamed that he would have the audacity to oppose himself single-handed against them and the Venetians. So, instead of availing themselves of this respite to bring more provisions into the city, they brought their grain out of it into the country, hoping that they would once more be allowed to reap their harvests in peace. Nor did they continue to keep their fortifications in order as before. The Venetians also were so far deceived as to discontinue the concentration of their forces behind the Adda. All this time he himself was engaged in negotiations with the Milanese governor at Trezo, which commanded a pass over the Adda, and from him he exacted a promise not to let the Venetians cross to join the Milanese. The only other pass which was not commanded by his troops was at Bivio, which he thought he could easily defend.

Unmoved by the remonstrances of Alexander, the Venetian senate obstinately declined to abate one jot or tittle of their demands. The former, to gain time, asked leave to send again to consult his brother. But the senate—in contradiction, it would seem, to all the laws of nations—replied that, if he would not sign the treaty as it was now presented to him, he should not be allowed to depart in safety from Venice. He forthwith signed the treaty, after which he left the city by night to convey to his brother Francesco the unwelcome intelligence.

On hearing what had passed, Francesco was in no small degree vexed, but as his ambassador had exceeded his authority, he did not think himself bound by his act. However, to satisfy his conscience, or to justify himself in the eyes of the other Italians, he called together and consulted an assembly of those who were most skilled in international and pontifical law, and received their permission to act as he pleased. He then declared his intention of prosecuting the war with the Milanese, and resisting the Venetians, should they make any attempt to cooperate with his enemies.

CHAPTER XXII

DEATH OF FRANCESCO PICCININO.—SFORZA MAKES TERMS WITH THE DUKE OF SAVOY

THOUGH Sforza's ambition and courage were generally known, his present resolution caused some surprise even among his friends. The Florentines, on hearing thereof, were for some time divided as to what part they should take; and though they did not come to a decision till the issue of the war was otherwise settled, their deliberations are not a little remarkable, as illustrating the opinions that were then entertained regarding Sforza. His friend, Cosmo de' Medici, who had been in constant communication with him, and is supposed to have assisted him out of his private fortune, now thought that the time was come when he might persuade the republic to do something for him also. But Neri di Gino Capponi, who had signalised himself by several victories, and obtained a considerable influence among the Florentines, opposed him in this; partly, it may be from a real love of liberty, and some traditional hostility to the dukes, whose ambition his predecessors had for half a century kept in check; and in great measure also out of jealousy of his rival, Cosmo de' Medici, who was already too powerful for him, and would become still more so if his talented friend were to become ruler of Milan. He therefore endeavoured to persuade his countrymen that it would be much better for their welfare that Sforza should agree to the conditions proposed, than that he should continue the war. In the first place, he felt convinced that he was so disliked by the Milanese, that, sooner than surrender to him, they would put themselves under the rule of the Venetians—an event which would be detrimental to all parties. In the next place, supposing that he were to get possession of Milan, would not so great a state, when ruled by so great a soldier, be dangerous to the balance of power?—and as the latter had been bad enough as a count, would he not be utterly intolerable as duke of Milan? For every reason, it was better, as well for the Florentine republic as for Italy in general, that Lombardy should be divided into two states, which could never unite to do injury to others, and each of which, taken by itself, would be too small to be formidable. These considerations, he said, convinced him that it would be more for their advantage to maintain their former alliance with the Venetians, than to send assistance to the count.

On the other hand, it was maintained by Cosmo de' Medici, that it was utterly impossible the Milanese should preserve their independence, seeing “that their former constitution, their manner of living, and the continuance of parties of long standing, had altogether incapacitated them for self-government; and that, if Sforza could not succeed in making himself their duke, they must fall under the dominion of the Venetians. In such a case, he thought, nobody would be fool enough to hesitate whether he would sooner have for a neighbour a powerful friend, or a still more powerful enemy. Finally, there was no reason to suppose that the Milanese would of their own accord put themselves under the Venetians, merely because the count continued the war; for as he had a number of adherents in the city, while they, on the contrary, had none, when they found they must be ruled by somebody, their choice would undoubtedly fall upon him”.

The citizens were for some time uncertain as to whose counsel they would follow; at last they came to the determination to send ambassadors to his camp, with directions to see how he was getting on, and be guided accordingly. If they found him confident of success, they were to make a treaty with him immediately; if not, they were to postpone any direct settlement for the present. But before their arrival he had, without their assistance, obtained the great object of his wishes.

On the expiration of the twenty days' truce, Sforza, after he had made it publicly known that he was not bound by the acts of his ambassadors, took measures both for continuing the blockade of Milan, and for preventing the Venetians passing the Adda. As winter had already set in, he allowed his troops to remain in cantonments; but he stationed one division of them near Milan, so as to prevent any provisions being brought into the city, and the remainder near Bivio on the Adda, ready to take the field at a moment's notice. In the meantime death freed him from an enemy who, though he was not formidable from his talents, had nevertheless done him much mischief. On the 16th of October, Francesco Piccinino, seeing that his troops continued to desert from him to the man who had been the constant rival of his family, and who was still the idol of the Italian soldiers, died of dropsy brought on by chagrin. He was succeeded in the chief command of the Milanese army by his brother Jacobo, who had certainly shown himself less destitute of talent, and less addicted to treachery. On his appointment to this post of honour, he received from the citizens the title of the "Thunderbolt of War".

Sforza continued to take measures well adapted to his new position. He forthwith concluded a treaty with the duke of Savoy, to whom he gave several places which he had taken in the territory of Alessandria and Novara. The cession of any of his conquests must have been galling to a man of his ambition; but on this occasion he thought it well to follow the proverb which says that a wise man should know to give up something at a proper time; and that when he has several enemies, it is expedient to make peace with one, a truce with another, and a fight with all his might against the third. About the same time he allowed the Venetian ambassador a free pass through his army when on his way to Milan; and on being remonstrated with for doing so, he replied that his enemies must defend themselves by fighting, and not by negotiation. But, doubtless, he had good reasons for his conduct. In the first place, as the stability of his position at Milan, should he ever succeed in getting possession of it, must depend much upon the good-will of his neighbours, he wished to avoid giving any unnecessary offence and, in the next place, as he had reason to believe that the Milanese were already reduced to the extremity of famine, he wished the Venetians to be acquainted with their actual condition. Not long after this, the commandant of the fortress at Trezo, on the far side of the Adda, surrendered to him, and also delivered to him as captive Innocenzo Cotta, one of the Milanese commissioners, who had gone thither from the Venetian army to reconnoitre the pass. Lucius Cotta, the brother of the captive, happened at this time to be the commandant at San Columbano, a place which, as it was several times during the war taken and retaken, must have been of considerable importance, and Sforza sent word to him that, if he did not give him possession of that fortress, he would hang his brother outside the walls. Lucius's love for his brother was stronger than his patriotism, and the castle was duly given up. Thus the possession of the principal places in the Milanese, with the exception of Monza—of the passes of the Adda, with the exception of Bivio, which might easily be defended, and of the principal towns on the Po and the Ticino—gave Sforza every facility for keeping asunder his enemies, starving the inhabitants of Milan, and procuring supplies from all quarters for his own army.

The new commander of the Milanese forces had soon an opportunity of measuring himself with the greatest captain of the day. It has already been stated that the latter had a considerable force in cantonments near Bivio, ready to take the field the instant the enemy should attempt to cross the river. The road from that place to Milan lay between two mountains, on each of which he had a small force stationed, sufficient at any time, as he thought, to keep the enemy in check, till he should be able to arrive with reinforcements. Information being brought to him late one evening that the Venetians were actually passing the river, he resolved to collect his forces, and repair thither without delay; and though the winter was now far advanced, and the Italian soldiers were little accustomed to face the inclemency of the seasons, yet, for his sake, they did not hesitate to encounter the hardships of a winter campaign in the immediate vicinity of the Alps. During the night-march to Bivio, he was rather alarmed on beholding the number of fires on the mountains which guarded the road to Milan, but he continued to hope that they had been lighted by the troops that had been stationed there by him. On his arrival there, however, he found, to his great surprise and mortification, that his guards had been surprised and expelled thence by the Venetians, and that these mountains, by means of which he had hoped to prevent their junction

with the Milanese, were in possession of his enemies. He also heard that Sigismund was about to pass the river with all his forces on the following day, with the intention of forming a junction with Piccinino.

Sforza saw that, should Sigismund's plan succeed, all his chances would be annihilated; and one with less resources, or less confidence in himself, would have abandoned his enterprise in despair, and endeavoured to make what terms he could for himself. But, desperate as his situation now appeared to be, he did not give in, for he well knew that, if he could only retard the junction of his enemies, the people of Milan must ere long be starved to death or surrender. His first step was to make a vigorous effort to drive the enemy from the mountains, and so repair the mischief that had already been done. Though he failed in doing this, he was able to confine them to the highest and most inaccessible positions, so that they could in no way co-operate with their fellow-soldiers, should they attempt to pass the river. For a few days both armies remained in this situation. Skirmishes continued to take place, to the great annoyance of the troops, who suffered much from the cold, and whom nothing but the prospect of instantaneous success on the one side, and the dread of losing everything on the other, could have induced to take the field. At last information was received that Piccinino was advancing with a considerable army from Monza. As there were several routes by which he might ascend the mountains, and form a junction with the forces thereon, Sforza saw that his only chance was to meet him at a distance from the remainder of his enemies; so, after a council of war, in which it was debated whether they should divide the army or not, he marched against him with the whole of his force. He did not, however, set out till after dark, and he artfully placed his sentries and their fires in such a manner that the enemy had no notion of his departure. Pushing on with celerity, he managed before daybreak to attack Piccinino, whose troops, confounded as they were by the suddenness of the onset, the dangers of which were as usual magnified by the darkness, made but a feeble resistance. The victors got possession of all their baggage and equipments, and pursued their foe to the very walls of Monza. They then retraced their steps to Bivio, where, in spite of the fatigues of the preceding night, they arrived at the close of the day. Thus within twenty-four hours had Sforza's troops marched over a distance of twenty-five miles, and gained a most important victory—such was the rapidity of his movements, and such was their readiness to undergo fatigue for a commander who had so often led them to victory.

As soon as Sigismund, the general of the Venetians, beheld that his enemies were not in their former position, he ascribed their departure to fear, and passed the Adda with the whole of his army. Before advancing farther, he thought it advisable to make himself master of one or two strongholds in the vicinity of the mountains that were still held by the troops of his father-in-law. These, however, resisted his utmost efforts during the whole of the day, and in the evening he was confounded by the intelligence that Piccinino's army had been routed and dispersed, and that the enemy, whom he believed to be retiring before him, were coming, full of exultation after their victory, to their former position. Not daring to await the issue of a battle, he retired with the main body of his army behind the Adda, while those that originally occupied the mountains remained. Thus Sforza had completely succeeded in keeping asunder, for a time at least, the armies of his opponents. But the circumstance of the mountains being still held by the Venetians gave him much uneasiness, both because it rendered it necessary for him to keep a considerable body of troops to guard the pass of the river, and because they did much damage to the adjoining territory, most of which was the property of the Milanese nobles who had supported him. At last he managed to cut off their supplies by taking a small fort which commanded their communication with the river. On this, about a thousand of those who were stationed on the mountains surrendered unconditionally to him, and he, ever true to his policy of endeavouring to get himself a good name, set them free, and presented the servants of their captain with a ducat each. The remainder, amounting to about three thousand, escaped by night over a bridge near Oliginato, which had only recently been constructed, and which they now broke down to protect their retreat. Having thus undisputed possession of these mountains, he constructed fortifications on them, from which a small body of men might completely guard the passage of the Adda.

The famine was now sore at Milan. The unfortunate people continued to send to Sigismund, entreating him to come to their relief; but he, baffled by the superior skill of his adversary, could do nothing. At last Bartolomeo Collio proposed to turn Sforza's position by a manoeuvre somewhat similar to that by which Sforza had himself, ten years before, surprised Nicolo Piccinino on the banks of Lake Garda, and offered to conduct the army to a place adjoining the lake of Como, whither the inhabitants of the city of Como would send a fleet to transport them to the other side. Though it was now the middle of January, they hesitated not to expose the troops to the hardships of a campaign in the Alps. This bold movement was skilfully directed by the Venetian generals, and opposed with equal skill by Sforza. The great object of the latter was to prevent his enemies taking up any position on the lake whence they could embark, and in his endeavours to do this he was frequently engaged with them on the mountains between Bellagio and Bellona. In one of these skirmishes, a remarkable anecdote is told of him, which shows the almost magical effect of his presence both on his friends and his foes. He had happened for some days to be absent from his army, and the enemy profited by the occasion to make an attack on his troops. The Sfortians were somewhat taken by surprise, and several of their castles were on the point of falling into the hands of the enemy. At this moment he himself, having had no knowledge of what had taken place, returned, and, beholding the critical position of affairs, he threw himself into the midst of the combat, and cried out with a loud voice, "Here am I!". The effect of these few words, pronounced in his well-known tone, was almost incredible. If we are to believe the accounts given to us by his secretary, Simoneta, and Corio, the Milanese historian, who wrote in the time of his son, the foremost ranks of the enemy threw down their arms and made obeisance, and many of them pressed forwards, eager to kiss the hand of the man whom they revered as the greatest ornament and honour to their profession. Be this as it may, it is certain that their rapid retreat, and the immediate rally of his own men, soon restored the battle. And there is very little doubt but that he would have prevented the Venetians embarking on the lake, if all his calculations had not been deranged by the unexpected revolt of some of the towns on the coast, and some of the owners of the fortresses whom he had looked on as his staunchest adherents. Profiting by this circumstance, the Venetian commander managed to embark his forces on the lake, and to bring them over to the mountains of Briganza.

Another circumstance occurred about this time which raised the drooping hopes of the Milanese. Sforza was informed that seven regiments of Piccinino's cavalry were anxious to join him on the first opportunity, and that they would most certainly do so, if he would send a body of his own horse to meet them on a certain day, when they were to be on their way to Como. He, nothing doubting, sent a large force to the appointed place, under the command of Salernitanus and Ventimiglia. Piccinino's cavalry duly appeared; but, either by accident or design, their commanding officer, who had expressed his wish to join Sforza, was not with them. When a commissioner went forward to summon them to fulfil their engagement, they said they knew not what he meant, and seized his person. The Sfortian cavalry, seeing what had happened, without awaiting the orders of their generals, galloped forward to attack those whom they had expected to join them. In their first encounter they were completely successful. But, unfortunately, they continued to follow their foe till they became entangled with the main body of Piccinino's army; and when they were disordered in the pursuit, and laden with spoil, they were in their turn attacked and defeated. The advantage gained in this casual encounter was represented by Piccinino and his friends as a complete victory gained in a general action, and was celebrated as such at Milan by illuminations and triumphal processions. And Piccinino, with a view of turning the impression so caused to the best possible advantage, had it signified to the inhabitants of the towns and the garrisons of the castles that he had completely routed the enemy, and that their best course would be at once to surrender to him.

But the count was not the man to be daunted by such a slight disaster. All the places in the Milanese remained faithful to him; even the owners of the fortresses in the mountainous territory of Briganza, as they were chiefly Ghibellines, and opposed to the democratic party at Milan, were unmoved by the presence of the Venetian army. He himself lost no time in concentrating his forces in the plains adjoining the mountains, so as to attack the latter, should they attempt to proceed to Milan. But his situation was every day becoming more

critical. He was placed between two hostile armies, each of which was equal, if not superior, to his in numbers. There was a great want of forage for his horses, and the men had been living on grapes, turnips, and chestnuts—poor fare for Italian soldiers engaged in a winter campaign at the foot of the Alps. Even of this diet it was reported, on the 28th of January 1450, that they had but a three days' supply.

Under these circumstances, Sforza determined to make another attempt against Monza, by the capture of which he hoped more effectually to cut off the supplies of the Milanese, and to interpose between the armies of his enemies. The conduct of this enterprise was intrusted to one Marliano, an officer of Charles Gonzaga's. He sent forward some of his captains to sound the disposition of the garrison, and to reconnoitre the defences of the town. The former were reported to be faithful to the Milanese, but it was said that the latter might easily be taken by night from the side of the Lambro. An expedition set out on the evening of the 31st January, for the purpose of effecting an entrance into the town in the manner proposed; but by one of those so-called accidents, which seem to be brought about by the contrivance of false friends, and in which, in this case, there is much reason to suspect Charles Gonzaga, who must have seen the difficulties of Sforza's situation, they lost their way in the dark. When morning appeared, they found themselves seven miles from the city, which it had been their object to surprise during the night. After the failure and consequent discovery of this design, it was not deemed prudent to repeat it.

The contest between Sforza and the Milanese now seemed to depend on whether his troops or the citizens could endure hunger the longest. As murmurs had begun to be rife among the former, he deemed it prudent to call a council of war, more, perhaps, for the sake of soothing his officers by his eloquence than of profiting by their advice. All the generals who attended it were unanimous in their sentiments. They represented to him in the most forcible manner the dangers of their present situation, placed, as they were, between two hostile armies, and straitened for provisions, and strongly recommended him to fall back upon Lodi and Pavia: by so doing, they said, he would confirm the allegiance of the inhabitants of these two places, who might otherwise be induced by the present uncertain aspect of their fortunes to waver. If he were well established there, he would get supplies for his own army; and as there was but little provision left in the country they proposed to evacuate, he might starve the Milanese as effectually as at present. Even if the Venetian army were to advance to form a junction with Piccinino, they would soon be compelled by want of food to retire, so that, if he were to follow their plan, he could not fail to bring the Milanese to terms which would be alike advantageous and honourable. But this advice, however prudent, did not suit him; and in reply to it he said, that it would be a pity to be disheartened by their present difficulties, when Milan was all but in their hands; that their retiring from their position would be ascribed to cowardice. He therefore strongly recommended them to remain where they were till Sigismund should advance towards Milan, when he promised them he would retire to the cities they had mentioned, if he did not see an opportunity of attacking them to advantage. He allowed that the Venetian army exceeded his in numbers; but for this, he said, they fully made up for in valour, and reminded them how often he had defeated Sigismund, Piccinino, and Collio. He concluded by telling them that he had made arrangements for getting supplies from Pavia, Lodi, and the other cities on the rivers.

Though all were heartily tired of this winter campaign, yet as nobody could do anything against the eloquence and the influence of their chief, they were compelled to give in to him; nevertheless he found it necessary to keep up their spirit by some show of active operations. For this purpose he frequently drew them out in battle array near Monza, as if expecting an engagement. In the meantime he omitted no means which could conduce to his ultimate success. He repeated his injunctions to the officers and soldiers to be doubly careful that no provisions should be brought into Milan; and having heard that his subjects at Lodi and Pavia had been tempted by their high price to send them supplies, he forbade them doing so under penalty of death. He requested all his friends in these places to send him from their private stores what was requisite for his own army; and where his friendly entreaties were not complied with, he did not hesitate to avail himself of force. With a view of providing against any sudden attack of the Venetians, he had his own positions fortified in the

most complete manner; and arrangements were made, by which, should anything occur, the different divisions of his army were to communicate by signal. Sigismund, so far from showing any disposition to attack him, seemed more desirous of securing the communications in his rear than of advancing to the assistance of the Milanese.

If we may judge by the conduct of the men of little faith, which is always a pretty sure index of the expectations of a party, suffering and privation had made both sides equally despondent. Jacobo Piccinino offered, on the condition of receiving Piacenza, with all the castles in the vicinity that had belonged to his father, to pass over to Sforza; while Ventimiglia, who had hitherto shown considerable attachment to the latter, promised to give up the town of Canturio, in which he was then stationed, and to join the enemy. The former, however, moved either by remorse, or by the dread of putting himself in the power of the man he had so often betrayed, changed his mind; and when his friend Luchino, through whose agency the arrangements had been made, brought him letters from Sforza, he denounced him as a traitor, and had him hanged. Ventimiglia was also prevented by the sagacity of his commander-in-chief from carrying his designs into execution. When the latter first received intimation of them, he was loth to believe it, but, after further intimation, went himself to Canturio with sufficient force to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. On his arrival there he had him brought into his presence, and frankly told him what he had heard. Ventimiglia attempted in vain to exculpate himself. Sforza found additional proofs of his intentions, and sent him to be incarcerated at Pavia.

The blockade of Milan had now continued for more than one year, with the exception of the short truce of twenty days, which had been rather detrimental to the inhabitants than otherwise. But their patient endurance, and the vicissitudes to which Sforza was exposed, had induced many even of those who most admired his talents to doubt of his ultimate success. Now, however, the fruits of his well-laid plans began to manifest themselves. The famine in the city was becoming too severe even for those who said that they would sooner die than submit. The poor, who had always been very numerous at Milan, and who, it is probable, at this time formed no small portion of the government party, were compelled to live on asses, horses, dogs, cats, rats, mice, and many other things so abhorrent to the nature of man, that, in the words of the annalist of Italy, they often gulped down the very death they sought to avoid. Indeed, their use of the above-mentioned animals had become so common that they were publicly sold in the principal square in the city, and the people frequently quarrelled among themselves in their anxiety to get them. Roots and vegetables were eagerly sought after, and devoured undressed. None, except the most wealthy, ever tasted wine. Many of the aged and diseased expired in the streets. The lamentations of the wretched, the groans of the dying, and the howls of the despairing, were heard in all quarters. Many made their way out of the city, thinking it better to fall into the hands of men than to face such a calamity. Several betook themselves to the castles and threw themselves on the charity of the commandants, who were seldom so hard-hearted as to refuse them admission or relief. But Sforza forbid any species of relief to be administered to them, and gave orders that, whenever it was possible, they should be driven back to the city. As all those who had found a temporary asylum in the neighbouring towns and castles were expelled, the whole country was soon filled with famishing wretches of all ages and sexes; many, who thought that, in the country, they might possibly lay their hands on vegetables or weeds, threw themselves into any place where they hoped to escape the observation of those who were ordered to drive them back into the city; neither matrons nor maids hesitated to make any sacrifice to preserve their lives.

To all remonstrances that were made to him, Sforza replied that he was merely acting according to the rules of war, and that the prevalent misery was to be ascribed not to him, but to the obstinacy of the Milanese. His then opponents, and subsequent calumniators, did not hesitate to avail themselves of the circumstance to injure his reputation and to blacken his memory. But in reviewing his conduct after a lapse of four centuries, it must be admitted that, though the effects of his measures came more immediately under his observation than often happens in such cases, the most humane commanders of the present age have not hesitated, when occasion required, to inflict the same amount of misery on the undeserving inhabitants. The sufferings of the Genoese in

1797, and of the Maltese in 1799, were probably equal to those of the Milanese in 1450; yet no one has laid them to the charge of either Lord Keith or Lord Nelson. Perhaps, indeed, Sforza's conduct may have been in more strict accordance with the rules of justice than that of either of the English admirals, as it is probable that those he beheld suffering from famine had taken no inconsiderable part in excluding him from what he conceived to be his rights. The reflection that these commanders were only executing the orders of others, while he was carrying on the war on his own account, will only serve to transfer whatever blame may be attached to these transactions from their shoulders to those of the authors of the late wars. The repetition of such acts, indeed, may seem to call for an alteration in the rules of war, or may serve to convince mankind of its folly and iniquity; but surely it is unjust to blame an Italian condottiere of the fifteenth century, for conduct which has been followed by Englishmen whom we have honoured with titles, and whom history has dignified as heroes.

The Milanese authorities ceased not to solicit Sigismund to attack the enemy who caused such misery. But as he had been so unrelenting in his hostility to his father-in-law, and had, by the recent murder of his daughter, Polixena, both aggravated his displeasure and committed a crime which would justify any punishment, he dreaded nothing so much as falling into his hands; and he did not think his superiority in numbers sufficient to compensate for the greater skill and prestige of his opponent. For these reasons he declined to attack him, and told the Milanese messengers that the citizens had only to hold out a very short time till want of supplies should compel their enemy to relinquish the blockade. The Venetians themselves were secretly in hopes that, in the extremity of despair, the populace would make the city over to them. However, as it was necessary to pretend to be doing something, Sigismund ordered a considerable quantity of provisions to be brought from Bergamos and the country around to the Adda, which he promised to forward to Milan. But Sforza thwarted all his designs : by withdrawing the garrisons from the fortresses, he brought together a sufficient force to show a bold front to any enemy who should appear, and to blockade the city more closely than ever. For he well knew that the crisis of his fate was now come, and that, if he could in any way maintain his ground against his enemy, he would soon be in possession of Milan ; if not, he would soon be compelled, whether he now held the fortresses or not, to evacuate the country.

Within the city of Milan the famine began to produce its usual train of consequences. The citizens no longer gave vent to their grief in mere passive lamentations; tumults arose in various places, and the authority of the men in power began to wax weak. The magistrates, well aware of the state of feeling of the populace, took the greatest precautions that they should hold no assemblage, while they themselves met in the church of Santa Maria to devise means of appeasing them for the present, and providing for the future. As regards the latter, they could see no hope but in making over the city to the Venetians. But the subject of their consultation soon got wind, and two of the most independent of the citizens, by name Pietro Cotta and Cristoforo Pagnano, went about sounding the wishes of the populace. By degrees a great crowd assembled outside the walls of the church. The government sent one of the most eloquent of their colleagues to persuade them to disperse; but, so far from prevailing with them, he had some difficulty in escaping out of their hands. They then tried to do by force what he had failed in accomplishing by eloquence, and sent another of their adherents in command of a body of cavalry, and carrying with him a number of halts, to let them see what they were to expect in case of disobedience. But a rebellion caused by hunger was not to be put down so easily; the appearance of the halts irritated instead of frightening the populace; and the troops that had been sent against them were driven back in confusion. They then began to sound the bells, and make other notes of preparation against an enemy. In the course of the night they made an attack on the palace, which was then occupied by the magistrates. After a repulse, in which Pietro Cotta, whose name has already been mentioned, was taken and thrown into prison, they again came together, and managed to gain admittance by a side entrance into that part of it which was inhabited by the widow of Filippo Maria. The guards, on seeing this, fled in dismay. The principal entrance was soon opened, so as to admit the body of the people. Leonardo Veniero, the Venetian ambassador, attempted to stay their course; and having made use of high-sounding language, mingled with threats, he was seized by the leaders of the populace, and torn to pieces. The magistrates were then happy to be able to make their escape; and the

populace, after they had got possession of the palace, set to to make themselves masters of the gates, at one of which alone they experienced resistance. Having thus completely revolutionised the city, they agreed to meet the following day in the church of Santa Maria, to consult about what was to be done.

Great was the concourse of people that came there at the appointed time. All professed their attachment to the republic; but experience had convinced them that they could not maintain their independence. They had then only to make a choice of rulers; and as they all agreed that they would not put themselves under the Venetians, they discussed the respective merits of the pope, the king of Naples, the duke of Savoy, and the king of France. Francesco Sforza was in the minds of all; but for some time no one dared to mention a name which had latterly become a byword of unpopularity. But among the people assembled in the church was one Gaspar Vicemercato, a man who was at all times distinguished for his courage, and who had been among the leaders of the insurrection of the preceding day; and having himself served under Sforza, he had probably learned that he was not so bad as he had been painted. On the present occasion, he displayed his wonted hardihood, by being the first to propose that they should call in the man whom they had been taught to hate like the devil or the sultan. He backed his proposition by several very forcible arguments. In the first place, he represented to them that, torn as they were by faction, crippled for want of money, and almost expiring from famine, they must give up all attempts to preserve their liberty. Secondly, with respect to the princes whose merits they had discussed, the pontiff and the kings of Naples and France were all too far off to do anything for them in their present emergency; and the duke of Savoy was not strong enough to protect them. They must therefore make choice between Sforza and the Venetians. In such a case, they surely could not have any hesitation to call in the son-in-law and adopted child of their late duke, a man whom he knew to be so humane and merciful that he would be more likely to deport himself as the father than as the tyrant of the city.

This advice seemed based on sound reasoning, and possessed the additional recommendation of pointing out to many a hungry man the only method by which his necessities could be relieved before night. It was incredible with what alacrity it was adopted. All shouted out the name of the man whom, one day before, they had been taught to regard as their bitterest enemy; and it was forthwith decreed that Gaspar Vicemercato should proceed to inform him of the wishes of the people, and to request him to come to the city without any delay.

During the whole of the preceding day, Francesco Sforza was well aware of all that was going on in the city. As before, he kept his men under arms, ready either to proceed to Milan, or to repel an attack of the Venetians. On the day following that on which the citizens had agreed to submit to him, he called a council of war, trusting as usual to his eloquence to make the measures which he had predetermined appear to be adopted in compliance with the advice of his officers. He then asked them to give their opinion, whether it would be better to attack the army of Sigismund, who would most likely be in some measure disheartened by the news of the recent occurrences, or to march to Milan, where their presence would not be without weight in the deliberations of the citizens. The majority of the captains were naturally more desirous of the booty that was always acquired after a victory, than of gaining any advantage, however great, for their general. At present, elated as they were by the recent turn which affairs had taken, and confident in their leader, they had little doubt of the result of a general engagement; whereas, if their presence should cause the Milanese to give in, their general would of course protect the properties of those whom he wished to make dutiful subjects. They, therefore, eagerly demanded to be led against the Venetians. But the considerations that in former times would have prompted Sforza to the same course did not now influence him; he felt that the die of his fortunes was now being cast at Milan; compared with its issue, the glory and the spoils of a victory were nothing. He managed to represent the posture of affairs to them in a manner so artful that they all gave in to his opinion. It is probable that in this he was backed by a large number of exiled Milanese nobles, who looked to his success as the means of restoring them to their home and their position ; and who, having sought security in the vicinity of his camp,

might have been asked to assist in the deliberations of his officers. It is certain, at all events, that he was attended by a considerable number of this class the instant he set out for Milan.

He had not proceeded far when he was met by Gaspar Vicemercato, who formally announced to him the resolution of his countrymen. He was followed by a great concourse of citizens, who were anxious to curry favour with their new ruler, or to beg bread from the troops. Their number is said to have been so great that the fields adjoining the road for ten miles were swarming with men. The avidity with which they snapped at and swallowed whatever was given to them by the soldiers, showed how great had been their sufferings. In the conflict of their adulation, and their real joy, they cried out in the Latin language as they had heard it in church, "This is the day which the Lord made, and let us rejoice in it".

When he arrived at the Porta Nuova, by which, as it adjoined the quarter in which the insurrection in his favour had begun, it was arranged that he should enter, he found the gateway stopped by a species of barricade. An attempt was then made by some of the citizens to prescribe conditions to him. He, however, very coolly said, "If I had foreseen this, I should have managed matters in a very different way". The significance of this hint was not lost; the republicans were in no condition to resist; and even if they had been, there were many who were more anxious for a good meal than for a constitution, and would not brook any delay. Gaspar also reminded them of the message which they had authorised him to deliver. The gateway was then cleared, and the new duke was admitted without further obstruction.

Perhaps history does not furnish us with any more remarkable instance of the fickleness of the lower orders, than the reception that was now given to Sforza. But a short time before this, the Milanese mob, having the upper hand in the city, forbade any one to mention his name except in opprobrious terms; now were heard the shouts of this very same people in honour of Duke Sforza. In the words of his secretary, who doubtless witnessed the scene, "men pressed upon one another, anxious to seize his hand, or in any way to touch him. So great was the throng, that for some little way his horse appeared to be carried on the shoulders of the citizens. All this time the dignity of his appearance was almost more than human; his countenance was both composed and cheerful, his words were seasoned with wonderful suavity. There was not less reverence than amity in their mode of receiving him, and he in his turn deported himself with a facility of manner and graciousness that was perfectly astonishing. As he was always peculiarly observant of all religious ordinances, and on this occasion was more than ever anxious to conciliate the good-will of the clergy, his first step was to go to the church of the Holy Virgin to return thanks for his fortune. This he was obliged to do on horseback, as the surrounding crowd was so great that he was unable to alight. He then proceeded to the house of one of his friends in the forum, where, after a slight refreshment, he began to take measures for setting his duchy in order.

His proceedings on this occasion were distinguished by his usual sagacity. Having placed a sufficient number of soldiers in the towers adjoining the gates, and in the senate house, he then ordered the citizens to lay down their arms; assuring them that they should be kindly treated, and that their properties should be protected. Provisions of all sorts were ordered to be brought into the city without any toil or tribute; both the Cremonese and the Pavians, whose situation gave them a great command of the produce of the surrounding country, were requested to lose no time in making good the deficiencies that had been caused by the blockade : three days after the capitulation of the city, no traces of famine remained. After all these matters had been arranged, he appointed Charles Gonzaga deputy governor of the city, and on the very day on which he had entered it he took his departure to Vimercato, in the vicinity of the headquarters of his army.

On his arrival there he learned that the Venetians, along with Piccinino, had retreated across the Adda, in spite of a futile attempt of one of his own generals to intercept them. Having thus fairly gained the upper hand in the field, he allowed his soldiers, exhausted by the hardships of a winter campaign, to go into

cantonments. He then sent ambassadors to the potentates of the peninsula and to the neighbouring states of Europe, requesting them to acknowledge him as duke. In the meantime he took up his own headquarters at Monza, a place sufficiently near Milan to allow him to superintend the arrangement of affairs. Men of the utmost capacity and probity were selected to fill the chief offices of state. Two of the leading democrats, who, while their own party had the upper hand, had indulged in every species of violence and insult against the others, and who now trembled for their lives, were cast into prison; a few others were banished to Pavia or elsewhere, but the majority lost nothing by their change of rulers. Many both of those who had been his friends, and of those who wished to be so for the future, came to visit him at Monza; and there was scarcely a day on which he did not receive assurances of allegiance, or addresses of congratulation, not unfrequently drawn up in an adulatory strain. And when matters appeared to him to be sufficiently settled, he fixed the 10th April, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Holy Virgin, as the day on which, accompanied by his wife and his child, he was to make his second entry into Milan.

Sforza's formal instalment in the dignity which he valued so highly, and for which he had so ably contended, was celebrated with a pomp well worthy of the occasion. From his present quarters he passed by a cross-road to the vicinity of the Ticinese gate, where he was joined by Bianca Maria and Galeazzo, who had shortly before attained his seventh year. They were followed by Alexander Sforza, with a great number of the captains who had fought under him, all of them mounted and equipped in the most magnificent manner. On the other side the leading citizens had come from Milan to meet them, bringing with them a triumphal car with a canopy over the seat, covered with white muslin and embroidered with gold, in which they wished their new duke to enter their city. But this he, out of policy or modesty, refused to do, saying that such dignities were fitted only for kings. Escorted by the nobles, and followed by his captains, he proceeded on horseback to the church of the Holy Virgin. Before passing the vestibule he was clothed with the white muslin garment worn by former dukes. He then entered the church along with his wife, where he was formally invested with the ducal dignity, in a speech composed for the occasion. After deputations of citizens, chosen from each quarter, had sworn allegiance to him, he was presented with the keys of the gates, along with the sceptre, crown, sword, and other insignia of his office.

When this ceremony was over, he made his eldest son count of Pavia, the title which he himself had held after he married the heiress of Visconti. Vicemercato, who had been the foremost in aiding his accession to his new honour, and the first to announce to him fortune, was raised to the dignity of count, and not long afterwards presented with the town of Valentia. A festival of five days was proclaimed, in which the new duke entertained the chief men of the city in a manner becoming his station. The time which was not occupied in these entertainments was passed in dances, plays of various descriptions, and tournaments. These last were held with the greatest spirit: rewards were given to those who acquitted themselves the best, and all seemed anxious to appear to the greatest advantage in the presence of the first general of the age. At the conclusion of the festivities, he created a new order of knighthood, with which he decorated one hundred and fifty of those whom he thought had most befriended him throughout. Thus the name of Francesco Sforza, from having been a by-word of reproach, became the most popular in the state.

He had at this time the additional gratification of being acknowledged by all the potentates of Italy, with the exception of the Venetians and the king of Naples. The Florentine ambassadors had already proceeded as far as Reggio, with directions to be guided by circumstances, when they received intelligence of the surrender of Milan. Great was the joy of their countrymen when this circumstance was reported to them; in place of the Visconti, whom they had looked upon almost like hereditary enemies, they now beheld one who had shown himself their most constant friend; and in the present circumstances of Italy, they were not sorry to see him in a position to make head against the Venetians and the king of Naples. The ambassadors were ordered to proceed from Reggio to offer their congratulations, and, it need hardly be said, were received by the new duke with every mark of honour. And though the Emperor, Ferdinand III, had said that, after the death of the last of the

Visconti, the duchy should revert to the Empire, and though the king of France claimed it for his nephew the duke of Orleans, neither of them made any attempt to enforce their pretensions by arms.

If the new duke of Milan, says M. Sismondi, could, at this very moment, when he had obtained the prize which had been the great object of his ambition, have foreseen the future destiny of the family whom he had raised to the throne, his joy would have been turned into sorrow. In the words of a Milanese historian of the sixteenth century, his crown was not destined to descend to a sixth heir; and the five successions through which it did pass were accompanied with many tragic events in his family. His son Galeazzo, as a punishment for his crimes and his lust, was killed by his attendants, in the presence of the people, in front of the altar, and in the midst of the celebration of sacred rites; after which, the whole city was deluged with the blood of the conspirators. Gian Galeazzo, who came afterwards, was poisoned by Ludovico the Moor, and was the victim of the crimes of his uncle. He, in his turn, after having been made prisoner by the French, died of grief during his captivity. The fate of one of his children was like to his own; and the other, after having passed a long time in banishment and misery, re-established his children on his shattered throne, and afterwards saw the termination of both his family and his kingdom.

Such was the value of the prize for which Sforza had so long, so earnestly, it may be thought so unscrupulously striven; such, too, is the value of many things, for the attainment of which mortals still rise up early, go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness.

BOOK SIXTH.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF SFORZA TO THE PEACE OF LODI, 1450-1454.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAMPAIGN IN LOMBARDY AND TUSCANY.—CONSPIRACY OF PORCARI AT ROME.

MACHIAVELLI, in that celebrated work entitled *The Prince*, says, that the man who rises from being a subject to be a sovereign, must have either great good fortune or considerable talents, and that those who rise in virtue of the latter, find less difficulty in maintaining their position than those who have been aided by the former. As an example of the truth of his assertion, he refers to Francesco Sforza, who, he says, by lawful means and great talent, became Duke of Milan, and kept with little trouble that which he had acquired with great difficulty. The whole of Sforza's subsequent history will show that he possessed as much ability in governing as he had exhibited in diplomacy and war. And many of the deeds which he found it necessary to do in order to preserve his position, like those which he did to reach it, will show the sagacity of the historian whose remark has been quoted.

Neither the applause with which he had been received when he first entered the city, nor the pomp of the festivities which followed his coronation, lulled him into a dangerous feeling of security. Though desirous of winning the affections of his new subjects, he knew that it was at least as requisite for him to be feared as to "be loved", and that many of those who, when he had the power of conferring on them any benefit, were the loudest in their professions of devotion, would be the first to revolt from him in the hour of need. But in following out this policy he did not commit any act of unnecessary severity. Fortunately, there were no more direct heirs of the late duke whom it might be necessary for him to put out of the way. And having, as has already been mentioned, banished some of his most active opponents, and thrown into prison one who had committed many crimes in the name of liberty, he endeavoured to treat the other citizens as if they had never been his enemies.

He lost no time in strengthening the fortifications of the gates, and rebuilding the citadel which had been demolished on the death of the last duke. But well knowing that this fortress was generally regarded as a badge of servitude, and that by its restoration he would cause many to suspect that he meditated acts of tyranny, and would make it evident to all how little he trusted them, he wished that it should appear that he was doing so at the instigation of the citizens themselves. For this reason he persuaded his partisans—who, it is probable, were at this time tolerably numerous—to suggest to the multitude how much the restoration and repairing of their strongholds would conduce both to the ornament and security of their city.

Whatever might have been the general opinion as to his real intentions, all saw that it would be useless to oppose them; many even made a virtue of necessity, and pretended to be anxious for the restoration of the obnoxious edifices. One only of the citizens, Giorgio Piatto, an advocate of considerable celebrity, had the courage to raise his voice in opposing the wishes of their new ruler; but not daring to speak anything against him personally, he most artfully avoided the imputation of disloyalty by saying, that, if they could insure all their dukes being like Francesco Sforza, they would have nothing to fear, but they knew not by whom he might be succeeded or supplanted; and that if this fortress were ever in the hands of a tyrant or a foreigner, they had no idea to what oppression they might be subjected. He concluded by a sentimental appeal to the reigning duke, to trust more to the hearts and the affections of his subjects than to bulwarks of stone—a piece of advice which, however beautiful it may sound, has seldom been found practicable by those who have aspired to rule. The eloquence of the advocate was no match for the influence of the duke. At the expense of a thousand ducats a new castle was built, which, according to the historian of Milan, surpassed in strength and beauty anything that had previously been erected on level ground.

Sforza, deeming himself now tolerably well established in his new position, bethought himself of one whom, a short time before, he had thought it necessary for his safety to cast into prison. He not only released William of Montferrat from his confinement at Pavia, but also put him in possession of Alessandria and the surrounding towns, which he had coveted so much. He, however, stipulated that he should pay him two thousand ducats annually, in lieu of the custom-dues which he had formerly received therefrom. This William promised to do, and signed a treaty to that effect at Lodi. But he never forgave the indignity to which he had been subjected. When he found himself safe at Alessandria, he protested against the treaty, which, he said, he had only signed under the influence of fear, and took the earliest opportunity of joining the enemies of the new duke.

His example was, not long afterwards, followed by Charles Gonzaga. Sforza had, according to his stipulation, put him in possession of Tortona; he had also formed the most intimate alliance with his brother, Louis, the marquis of Mantua, and had even gone so far as to promise that his son and heir, Galeazzo, should marry Louis's daughter. But whether it was, as some strongly suspect, that the getting rid of Charles was one of those things which the hard necessity of the case and his recent succession compelled him to do, or whether, as is said by Sforza's secretary and biographer, Simoneta, Charles had, out of jealousy of the favour shown to his brother, begun to intrigue with the Venetians, it is certain that, on the 7th of November, he cast him into prison at Binasco. In a few days, however, being moved by the intercession of Louis, he released him on the condition of his giving up Tortona. Charles, on finding himself at liberty, made his way by a circuitous route to Venice, to be ready to join the enemies of the new duke when required.

Sforza was now neither at peace nor at war with the Venetians. Both parties alike feared one another. The duke of Milan dreaded the great power and boundless resources of the republic of St Mark, while they stood in awe of his military talents. Thus he was enjoying a cessation from the toils of war—the first he had known since his sixteenth year, when he made his appearance in the battle in which his father defeated Tartaglia, near Rome. But cares of a weightier nature now pressed upon him. A terrible pestilence, the result of the famine which had placed him on the ducal throne, broke out at Milan; and as this year had been fixed by the pope for a jubilee at Rome, the number of pilgrims who were passing through Lombardy, on their way to the holy city, rendered impossible that isolation by which the progress of disorders of this nature may be stayed. Thus it soon spread to Lodi and the other cities of the duchy, where the predisposing causes had not existed, and was carried thence to Rome. So severe was it at Milan, that two hundred occasionally died of it in one day; nor did it cease till it had carried off thirty thousand, or, according to some, as many as sixty thousand. Piacenza is said to have been left almost without inhabitants. It continued, with more or less severity, till the end of the following year.

The peninsula, though desolated by this plague, was at least free from the horrors of war. Its potentates had been wearied and exhausted by preceding struggles; so that, though there could not be said to be a thorough understanding among them, there was at least peace in the land. This was in no small degree brought about by the mediation of Pope Nicholas V. That excellent pontiff was more given to learning and the fine arts than to war; and whenever he took part in the drama of Italian politics, he appeared in the character of a peacemaker. By his intervention Alphonso came to a definite peace with the Florentines, with whom, though he had not invaded their territory since he had been forced to raise the siege of Piombino, he had hitherto been nominally at war; and with the assistance of the marquis of Este, he persuaded the Venetians to join that monarch in signing a treaty with the Florentines at Ferrara. By the jubilee which he held in this year, he managed to replenish his coffers with money, which he employed in relieving the poor, in repairing and enlarging the churches, and in beautifying the city. Early in October, Borso of Este quietly succeeded to the marquisate of Ferrara, which had become vacant by the death of his brother Lionel, a prince who appears to have inherited all the good qualities of his father, though the shortness of his reign has assigned him a less prominent place in the history of Italy. The city of Genoa alone was ill at ease. In the month of July the inhabitants deposed the reigning

doge, and, after an ineffectual attempt to recall his predecessor, they elected his nephew in his room. But their commotions did not disturb the tranquillity of the neighbouring states.

This state of things, however, was not of long duration. The Venetians continued to regard in no friendly light the new duke of Milan; and they endeavoured to form a coalition against him of those who viewed him with jealousy, fear, or dislike. They were soon joined by the king of Naples, the duke of Savoy, and marquis of Montferrat, all of whom were actuated by some one of these motives, and who, though they dreaded his talents, entertained hopes that he was not sufficiently firm on his new throne to make head against their number. But he, though he wished for time to set his new duchy in order, and though he was fully aware of the almost inexhaustible resources of the Venetians, did not lose heart when he heard of their machinations. Misunderstandings had already arisen between the Venetians and the Florentines, and he found no difficulty in forming a counter-alliance with the latter, together with the Genoese and the marquis of Mantua. The above-mentioned misunderstandings were further fomented by a decree of the Venetians and the king of Naples, banishing from their dominions all the Florentines, with the exception of some few who were specially privileged to remain.

In this position of his affairs, Sforza was fortunate in being able to secure the assistance of one of the best condottieri of the times. Bartolomeo Collio, disgusted at the preference shown to others, determined to leave the Venetians. Under pretence of his term of service having expired, and the non-payment of arrears, he asked their leave to retire. But they, seeing that they could get nothing more by him, and determined that the duke of Milan should not have the benefit of his services, resolved to act with him in somewhat the same manner as they had done with Carmagnola, and ordered Jacobo Piccinino to seize him and kill him. Piccinino managed to surprise and make prisoners of his troops, which consisted of fifteen hundred horse and four hundred foot, but he himself succeeded in making his escape to Mantua. Thence he repaired to Milan, where he was received by his old opponent with every demonstration of friendship. Sforza, to make good Collio's losses, assigned him the command of two thousand horse and five hundred foot, and promised him a larger stipend than he had ventured to ask. Thus, before the end of the year 1442, all parties were again ready for hostilities, and were only awaiting the commencement of the following spring to resume active operations.

In the course of the winter, the emperor Frederic III made an expedition into Italy, for the purpose of receiving the imperial crown from the hands of the pope. As the Italians had long since ceased to be jealous of imperial influence, the greatest respect was shown to him wherever he went; even the Florentines, those ancient guardians of Italian liberties, honoured him with a magnificent reception. It was in vain, however, that Sforza, who was peculiarly anxious to stand in the same relation with him as the Visconti had done with his predecessors, continually entreated him to come to Lombardy to receive the iron crown at Monza, and even sent his heir, Galeazzo Maria, to meet him at Ferrara. Either because he would not acknowledge the present duke, or because he feared that the plague was not extinct at Milan, he remained obdurate against all his solicitations. The pope, though he had the precaution to fill his fortresses with armed men, received him with all the respect that was due to the powers that be. When asked to crown him king of Lombardy, he requested a few days to consider, and afterwards, in spite of the remonstrances of the Milanese ambassadors, he consented to do so, merely reserving the rights of the archbishop of Milan. About the same time the emperor solemnised a marriage with a daughter of the king of Portugal, who was also a niece of Alphonso's. Three days afterwards, he, along with his new wife, received the imperial crown from the pope with all the customary ceremonies. Having made a sojourn of a month with his wife's uncle, he set forth on his return to his dominions.

On his way north he made a short halt at Ferrara. He was there met by ambassadors from the duke of Milan, and the governments of Florence and Venice, all of whom were anxious to secure his good offices, and was requested by them to arrange the differences which were just about to lead to hostilities. Whether he really tried to preserve the peace does not appear, but he certainly effected nothing. Borso of Este, the new

marquis of Ferrara, seems to have succeeded more than any other prince of the time in gaining his good-will, having been by him created duke of Modena and Reggio. On the 10th of April the duke was installed in his new dignity. The great concourse of people, and incessant applause, both of the Ferrarese and the other subjects of the house of Este, which greeted him on the occasion, shows that he preserved all the popularity of his ancestors. On the 19th the emperor took his departure, and after a short halt at Venice, where the republic made wonderful efforts to receive him with due honour, he proceeded to Germany. Thus, though he did not take any open part in the war, nevertheless, by receiving the crown of Lombardy at Rome, and by visiting the king of Naples and the Venetians, while he declined to do the same honour to Sforza, he gave the enemies of the latter all the advantage of his name.

As he did not arrange a peace while at Ferrara, his departure thence was the signal for the recommencement of hostilities. On the very day on which he set forth, the Venetians beat their drums in token of a formal declaration of war. At the same time, the marquis of Montferrat, aided by his brother William and the duke of Savoy, made an attack on the Milanese dominions from the west; and Alphonso despatched his son Ferdinand with a force of eight thousand horse and four thousand foot into Tuscany.

The details of the campaign between Sforza and the Venetians, though they have been celebrated in a bombastic strain by a Neapolitan writer, are destitute of interest. Each party passed into the territory of the enemy, and remained there doing what mischief he could. The Venetians crossed the Oglio with a force of fifteen thousand horse and three thousand foot, took several strongholds—among others, Soncino—and laid waste the surrounding country. On the other hand, Sforza advanced from Cremona into the territory of Brescia, where he carried on operations of the same nature. After he had been joined by the marquis of Mantua, he took the important town of Ponte Vico. The Venetians then began to construct a bridge over the Adda, with a view of invading the Milanese. To hinder their operations in this quarter, Sforza despatched his brother Alexander, who was, however, surprised and defeated by one of the Venetian generals; and after he had lost nearly all his baggage, and eight hundred of his men had been taken prisoners, he escaped with difficulty to Lodi. But as the duke had ordered all the fruits of the earth and property of the inhabitants to be conveyed to the strongholds, the Venetians, though they overran the country almost to Milan, found nothing therein, and so far from enriching themselves with booty, they could scarcely maintain their soldiers. As Sforza's position in the Brescian territory enabled him to intercept the supplies that were sent to them from home, they were soon obliged to retire; and after various manoeuvres and occasional skirmishes, they brought all their forces behind the Oglio to free their dominions from the presence of the enemy.

Meanwhile, William of Montferrat, with four thousand horse and two thousand foot, crossed the western frontier of the Milanese, and, having been for some time unopposed, began to threaten the city of Pavia. Sforza then sent a small force against him under the command of his brother Conrad, who gained a complete victory near Alessandria. For some time after this, William did not dare to reappear in the field, but, hearing of the defeat of Alexander Sforza, he took courage, and began carrying on intrigues with one Gian della Noce, a general of the duke's, who he hoped would join him with a sufficient force to enable him to resume active operations. The discovery of these intrigues, and the execution of Della Noce, obliged him again to keep quiet for a season.

For some time the Venetian and the Milanese armies continued manoeuvring in the territory of Brescia in the presence of each other. Neither party, indeed, seemed to court a general engagement. The Venetian captains naturally dreaded the great military talents and almost unprecedented success of their opponent, while he, as, in the event of a disaster, he had not the means of reorganising an army, was reluctant to risk anything. The former availed themselves of this circumstance to increase their own reputation and to damage that of the duke : they began taunting him and his officers with cowardice, and they gave it out through

Italy that, though they constantly offered him battle, he declined it through fear. Sforza was too jealous of his fame, on which he felt that much of his fortune must rest, to allow these insinuations to pass by unnoticed, and he issued counter-statements, saying that the reluctance to fight was all on their part. At last, when the autumn was rapidly drawing to a close, both parties seemed to think that something should be done to save their reputation. Accordingly, the duke, after having satisfied himself that his numbers were not inferior to those of the enemy, and made choice of his ground, sent the Venetian generals a challenge, which, whatever might have been thought of it at the time, cannot but seem ridiculous to every modern reader. After having called God and man to witness their injustice and his innocence at the commencement of the contest, he made a most pathetic allusion to the miseries which the continuance of the war was entailing upon the whole of the peninsula, especially upon the unfortunate Brescians, who, as he said, were literally ground to atoms by the continual laying waste of their fields and bombardment of their towns. He then said that he really thought it was time that these evils should cease, and that he saw no other way of putting an end to them than their agreeing to meet in a certain spot and fight it out among themselves, a proposal which he did not think they would decline, after their having frequently given out that they were continually courting while he was avoiding an engagement, and having sent him a letter, saying that they would soon give him reason to repent that he proceeded so far in their dominions. He therefore promised to meet them with all his forces in the plain of Monte Chiaro, four hours after sunrise, on any day that they would name; and, as a token of the sincerity of his intentions, he sent them a gauntlet stained with blood. "Thus", he concluded, "will the burning of houses, the smoking of towers, and the violence offered to matrons and virgins, stop; thus will cease the slaughter of men and the other horrors of war. It will be a fine thing, also, that such a multitude of brave men should meet in an open place to make a trial of their valour; and the result will show which of us, in the judgment of the Almighty, is acting most justly". This challenge, which was of course meant as a mere bravado to show off before the other powers of Italy, was accepted and replied to in somewhat similar terms. The Venetian generals, after all due protestations of bravery, said, that though it was for the challenged to name the place of meeting, they would nevertheless be ready for him in the plain he had named on the following Monday. As pledges of their faith, they sent him two gauntlets, and the same number of javelins dipped in blood. Thus, they said, as became the honour of the Venetian senate and the extent of its empire, they would persecute all tyrants, and continue to wage war with one who had so often effected his conquests with their arms, and made use of their money to get, first a wife, and afterwards a sovereignty, for himself.

The purport of this answer spread rapidly through the Milanese camp, and the spirits of the soldiers, who had seldom remained so long in the field with so little advantage to themselves, were considerably elated thereby. Sforza, most likely expecting that his adversaries really meant to fight, made all the usual preparations for an engagement. From the directions that he issued, it would appear as if the only danger he dreaded was, lest his soldiers, after the first advantage they gained, should become disordered in their eagerness to enrich themselves with booty. He threatened the punishment of death to any one who left the ranks; he said that whoever should take a horse of the enemy's, and bring him within their lines, or even to a place whence they should be unable to get him back, was to be the owner of the horse; in like manner, if any one should seize one of the enemy by the crest of the helmet, or by the neck, and in any way detain him till his fellow-soldiers were unable to assist him, he was to have a right to the captive. Also, every person was to have a right to any one whom he had unhorsed, as well as to half the horse, should the animal be taken by another.

On the appointed day the Sfortian soldiers advanced in order to the plain of Monte Chiaro. A thick fog and a drizzling rain prevented their seeing the dispositions of the enemy. As they proceeded, a mighty shout, as if coming from a multitude of men, was heard from behind the brushwood, on the Venetian side of the plain, but no one appeared in the field. At first the duke of Milan suspected some ambush, to guard against which he reserved a considerable body of men in the rear for the defence of his camp. But as the time passed away, and there were no signs of the enemy, he sent some of his light troops forward to see what had become of them; and they soon brought him back word that they were already at some little distance off in full retreat. He afterwards

ascertained that the shout which he had heard in the morning had been raised by men placed behind the brushwood, for the purpose of impressing his soldiers with an idea of great numerical superiority; after which the Venetian generals, finding that the Milanese were not terrified thereby, had not the courage to measure themselves with Sforza. The only one of the enemy found on the spot was the Neapolitan poet, Porcelli, who had accompanied the opposite army throughout their campaign, and who now asked leave to visit the great captain of the age. The poet, in return for the courtesy with which he was received by the duke, promised to give him a good name in his book. Thus ended the day which was to have decided which was the bravest of captains of Italy, and which of the contending parties had most justice on his side. Both armies then retired to their cantonments for the winter.

The campaign in Tuscany was as barren of incident as that which has been described. Ferdinand, the son of Alphonso, having entered that territory with twelve thousand men, wasted most of the summer in taking a few places of minor importance. Having afterwards failed in an attempt against two small towns in the valley of Chianta, he laid siege to Castellina. This place is described by Machiavelli as being badly fortified by art, and still worse fortified by nature; but, weak as it was, the army which besieged it was still weaker, and after forty days it was obliged to depart. "So formidable were those armies, and so dangerous were those wars", says Machiavelli in irony, "that those fortresses which in these days are abandoned as being defenceless were then looked upon as impregnable, and held to the last". During all this time the Florentine army, under Sforza's two kinsmen, Sigismund Malatesta and Michael Attendolo, looked on, thinking that they could not do better than let their enemy waste his resources in a vain attempt to take places which, even if they were to fall into his hands, would profit him nothing. They had some little trouble in protecting their coast from the incursions that were made from the Neapolitan fleet, but ultimately they were able to prevent their continuance. After being obliged to raise the siege of Castellina, Ferdinand retired to winter quarters in the territories of his father.

During the winter the duke of Milan received two slight additions of strength. The Venetian general, Tiberto Brandolino, the same who had planned an attack on his camp at Caravaggio, passed over to his service; and Collio, whom he had stationed in West Lombardy to keep the marquis of Montferrat in check, was supported by the French general Rinaldo. He then retired to Cremona to spend the Christmas with his wife and family, in whose society he seems to have had much pleasure, whenever he could spare time from the labours of politics and war. After a few days' repose he began to make preparations for the future.

Skilful as Sforza undoubtedly was, both in politics and in war, it is allowed on all hands that he had at this time enough to do to make head against his enemies. The pecuniary resources of Venice, compared with those of any other state, may be said to have been inexhaustible. Recent events had reduced those of Milan to the very lowest ebb; and it is probable that Sforza's private fortune, which never had been large, had been rather diminished than augmented by his accession to the dignity of a duke. And he had now not only to make head against the Venetians on the east, but also to defend his western frontier against the duke of Savoy and the marquis of Montferrat, and to defend his Parmese dominions against an attack made upon them by two brothers of the family of Correggio.

In this emergency, Sforza had recourse to his old friend Cosmo de' Medici. The wealthy Florentine republic, of which he continued to be the chief ruler, was at this time as much in want of troops to continue the war against the king of Naples, as the duke of Milan was in want of money to pay his large armies; the two friends agreed to administer to the necessities of each other, the former by a subsidy of eight thousand florins of gold, the latter by a body of two thousand troops, under the command of his brother Alexander. They also sent to demand help from the king of France, promising him that, if he would send René of Anjou to their assistance, they would allow him one hundred and twenty thousand florins for the maintenance of his army, and endeavour to reinstate him in the kingdom of Naples as soon as they could free themselves from the hostility

of the Venetians. This, they said, they would soon be able to do, if he would comply with their request. It was finally arranged that Rene should enter the peninsula with a force of two thousand five hundred men.

While these negotiations were going on, the Venetians showed themselves determined to leave their adversaries no breathing-time. Regardless of the cold, they made an expedition into the dominions of the marquis of Mantua during the month of January. The campaign, however, was as uninteresting in its details, and as undecisive in its results, as that of the preceding year. Sforza's means were so crippled that it was some time before he could take the field with an efficient force, and without him the marquis was unable to make head against his enemies. Hence, in the beginning of the year several of his fortresses fell into their hands. In the capture of one of these, (Manerbe,) which took place on the 15th April, the Venetian commander-in-chief, Gentile da Leonissa, was mortally wounded. The chief command of the Venetian armies then devolved on Jacobo Piccinino, whose partial successes in the preceding year had procured him the name of being the next best general in Italy to Francesco Sforza. But his conquests were now stayed by the appearance of the latter with a force vastly inferior to his own. Being attacked by him on the 17th of May, while engaged in the siege of Pontevica, a town between the Brescian and Mantuan territories, he retired the instant he recognised him among the opposite ranks.

The duke of Milan then marched against the Brescian fortresses. But his forces were not sufficient to effect their reduction; and the marquis of Mantua, whom he frequently solicited to come to his assistance, was not only more anxious to recover the places he had lost at the beginning of the year, but he had now enough to do to defend his remaining possessions against his brother. For Charles, who had never ceased to covet his patrimony, had invaded his dominions from the side of Verona with a Venetian army of three thousand horse and five hundred foot, and at first carried all before him. After a short time, Tiberto Brandolino, who, as has already been mentioned, entered the service of Sforza during the preceding winter, came to the assistance of Louis. The latter, thus reinforced, lost no time in attacking his enemy. On the 15th of June a battle took place between the two brothers in a plain between the cities of Mantua and Goito; and after a protracted resistance of five hours, Charles was obliged to give way, leaving in the hands of the victors one thousand horse and several captains of divisions.

Louis did not fail to turn this victory to account; he retook several of his fortresses, and was proceeding to lay siege to Gedo, when Piccinino joined his forces with the remains of Charles's army, and prepared to attack him. But the news of Louis Gonzaga's victory near Goito had already made Sforza determine to evacuate the Brescian territory, and cooperate with his allies in the vicinity of Mantua. In pursuance of this plan, he had already advanced as far as Gottolenzo, when intelligence was brought to him that Piccinino was proceeding with forced marches upon Gedo. Sforza was well aware that the forces of the marquis were not sufficient to resist a combined attack of the garrison at Gedo and the army of Piccinino, and that his friends would most undoubtedly be defeated, if he was not there to compensate by his presence for their inferiority in numbers. For this purpose he himself galloped off in the direction of that city, accompanied by a body of light cavalry, giving directions to his generals to bring the army after him with as little delay as possible. When he arrived at the scene of action, he found that his allies were already beginning to give way before the superior forces of his opponents. But he was destined on this occasion to afford another example of the wisdom of Machiavelli's observation, of how much the presence of a victorious general avails in deciding the fate of a battle. The news that Sforza himself was on the field, and that they would shortly be joined by the whole of his forces, spread like wildfire among the ranks of his allies, and passed from them to those of his opponent: the former were raised from the slough of despondency—the latter, from having expected a certain victory, began to tremble for the issue of the battle; and Piccinino, having so frequently had terrible experience of his inferiority to his antagonist, withdrew his forces from the engagement. As his line of retreat lay across a marsh, where his superiority in infantry could not fail to tell, Sforza did not deem it prudent to follow him with his wearied troops. But Piccinino, though he was thus protected, continued his retreat during the night, leaving Gedo to its fate.

Thus, by the middle of summer, Sforza and Louis Gonzaga had pretty nearly regained the ground they had lost at the early part of the spring. After this, occasional skirmishes, and sometimes even bloody encounters, took place, but neither party was able to effect anything of importance: Piccinino was afraid to come to a regular engagement with his great opponent; and Sforza, not thinking himself sufficiently strong to attempt offensive operations, resolved to await the succour that had been promised him from France.

Nor was this year's campaign in Tuscany productive of any more decisive results. Alexander Sforza and Sigismund Malatesta retook some minor fortresses, but were prevented, by jealousy on the point of precedence, from co-operating to effect anything of importance. Ferdinand, who still commanded the Neapolitan forces, did not dare to risk a general engagement, but took up a position in the mountains near Siena, whence, by ravaging the Florentine territory almost up to the walls of the city, he caused no small degree of panic among the inhabitants. His father made an attempt to gain a footing in Tuscany by means of one Gherardo Gambacorti, the signor of a castle in the Val di Bagno, a place which is situated in the mountains between the source of the Tiber and the Arno. By promising him a fief of equal value in the kingdom of Naples, Alphonso persuaded him to make over to him his dominions, which he looked upon almost as the key of the valley of the Arno. He was, however, prevented from carrying his project into execution by the loyalty of the inhabitants, who rose in masses and expelled the Neapolitan soldiers—an act by which they not improbably preserved the independence of Florence.

The pope, though he did not take any part in these wars, was not without his trouble at home. There was at this time at Rome one Stefano Porcari, a man of no inconsiderable attainments, and of acknowledged ability and virtue. Like many other such persons, he was ambitious of signalling himself by some great deed; and for this purpose he resolved to make an attempt to rescue his country from the dominion of the priests, an undertaking in which his knowledge of their evil practices, and of the detestation in which they were held by the nobles and the people, made him hope for success. Like Rienzi in the preceding century, he indulged in many dreamy anticipations of being the second founder of Rome, and began to think that the beautiful verses of Petrarch,

“Sovra il monte Tarpeio canzon vedrai

Un Cavalier che l'Italia onora

Pensoso più d' altrui che di se stesso”,

were written in prophetic anticipation of himself.

These thoughts had so completely engrossed Porcari that he was not able to contain himself; his words, his actions, and his mode of living, let everybody see what was passing in his mind. When his fame reached the ears of Nicolas, he had him banished to Bologna, and gave directions to the governor of that city to have an eye on him. But Porcari, nothing daunted, continued his intercourse with some kindred spirits at Rome, whom he managed to visit, making his journeys with such celerity that the governor of Bologna was not aware of his absence. At last it was arranged that all these lovers of liberty were to sup together at a certain house in Rome, where Stefano Porcari was to join them. The supper was laid out, the would-be saviour of his country arrived in garments embroidered with gold, wearing a necklace and other ornaments which were thought to become his assumed character; speeches were made full of patriotic sentiments, and a plan was laid for seizing the palace of the pope, and calling on the people to resume their liberty. But their assembly was suddenly broken up by the arrival of the pope's soldiers; the patriots were all seized and brought to prison; and ten of the leading men among them, including Stefano Porcari himself, were hung outside the castle of St Angelo. Several of the

people, supposed to have been privy to the plot, were afterwards put to death, with perhaps less trial than justice might seem to have required. Thus ended a conspiracy, concerning the promoters of which Machiavelli justly says that, "if their intentions were good, their judgment was bad; for though the conception of such enterprises may be attended with some little prestige of glory, the carrying them into operation is certain to be accompanied by evil".

CHAPTER XXIV

CONSTANTINOPLE TAKEN BY THE TURKS.—PEACE OF LODI

THE belligerent powers were in the position described already, and the pope had safely quelled the sedition in his city, when they as well as he were astounded by the intelligence of an event, which seemed likely at no distant day to menace the common independence of the former, and the very existence of the religion of which the latter was the head. All Italy heard with dismay that the capital of the Eastern Empire had been taken by the Turks; that the Emperor Constantine, with forty thousand Christians, had been slain; that the churches had been profaned, and that the most abominable excesses had been committed by the unbelieving barbarians. The establishment of the religion of Mohammed in the largest city in the known world, seemed in itself no inconsiderable blow to Christianity, while the material interests of the Italians appeared likely to suffer by the

loss of the Genoese colony of Pera, and the interruption of the Venetian commerce in the Levant. The peninsula of Greece seemed but a feeble barrier between their own shores and the barbarians. Men now began to think that it was no small reproach to the sovereigns of the peninsula, and of Christendom, that they had been so long striving among themselves, when they should have united against the common enemy. The pope wrote letters to this effect to the different rulers of Europe, and sent to Naples, to Milan, to Florence, and to Venice, requesting the respective governments to despatch ambassadors to Rome to negotiate a peace, and threatening excommunication to all who would not comply.

The different potentates had no objection that their delegates should go to Rome to talk of peace, but each was too much under the influence of self-interest to abate one jot or tittle of his own pretensions for the good of the community. As usual, they were not without the most specious excuses to justify their conduct. When the pope's message was delivered to Sforza, he replied to the legate that he was not waging war of his own accord, but was obliged to do it in self-defence against the Venetians; that his enemies were now attempting neither more nor less than to make the whole of Lombardy a province of their republic; that if it had not been for him, they would long since not only have done this, but have subjugated the whole of Italy, not even excepting the States of the Church. If, therefore, the pontiff really wished for peace, let him send to the Venetians, who were the constant disturbers of tranquillity and breakers of treaties, and not to him, who only wished to be allowed to live quietly in his own dominions. If the places which they had taken were restored, and if Alphonso, who without a just cause or pretext had invaded the Florentine dominions, were to lay down his arms, he, for one, would be happy to forget all past differences, and to unite in a common confederation against the Turks.

When these things were known in the camp of the Venetians, a cessation of hostilities for four days was agreed on, to allow the wishes of the pope to be laid before the senate. But even this truce, brief as it was, was broken as soon as it suited one of the contending parties to do so. A considerable body of Sforza's troops had gone on a foraging excursion; the enemy, observing that they were unarmed, and at a long distance from their fellow-soldiers, sallied forth against them, and carried them off, along with their horses and their beasts of burden. The pope's ambassador remonstrated with them seriously on this breach of faith, and threatened them with excommunication if they did not restore all that they had taken. But they cared as little for the anathema of the pope as they had done for their own most solemn engagements; and Nicholas' ambassador, finding that all his pacific efforts were exerted to no purpose, returned to his master.

Sforza was with his army, awaiting the arrival of Rene, when Piccinino made another attempt against him, which did but little honour to his integrity. It had been agreed between these two generals that the inhabitants of some of their towns should be allowed to go out into their fields without fear of annoyance from their enemy. The people of Castellio, trusting to this convention, were out in the country during the harvest-time, when they were suddenly attacked by a large body of Venetian troops, who, after having taken much booty and many prisoners, proceeded to lay siege to the city. The town itself was almost in a defenceless state, and the citizens, who had probably served too many masters to be particularly attached to any, were on the point of surrendering. The place was, however, saved to the duke of Milan by the intrepidity of one of his officers, by name Donatus. As soon as he heard what had happened, he made his way into the city, disguised in the uniform of the Venetians, and did his best to persuade the inhabitants to hold out till assistance should arrive. They, however, seemed little inclined to listen to him, and even threatened him with violence should he do anything to bring upon them the horrors of a siege. On this he made his escape into the citadel, whence he managed, by means of signals, to make his situation known to Sagramoro, another of Sforza's generals, who happened to be at hand. The circumstance of the wife and children of the latter being at Castellio made him doubly anxious to come to the rescue; and he managed on that very night to attack the camp of the besiegers, while they all lay in that false security which the certain expectation of victory too often engenders. A fight followed in the dark, during which Venetian occasionally slew Venetian, and Sfortian slew Sfortian. It was not

long, however, before victory, as it usually does on such occasions, declared itself in favour of the assailant; the Venetians all fled, or were taken prisoners, and Castellio was preserved to its former possessors. The captive officers, when remonstrated with on their treachery, defended themselves by the paltry quibble that they had made a truce with the inhabitants, and not with the walls of the city; and that, though they wished to take the latter, they meditated no injury to the former.

Agreeably to his engagement, Rene of Anjou had collected in Provence a force of two thousand four hundred men, with whom he had set out to the assistance of his allies. He was, however, for some time prevented from forming a junction with them by the duke of Savoy and the marquis of Montferrat, both of whom had, at the instigation of the Venetians, refused to allow his army to cross the Alps by the mountain-passes which they commanded. This, however, the Dauphin Louis, who was connected with the house of Savoy, and who seemed to cherish a sort of instinctive hatred towards the Venetians, undertook to arrange, and, by a combination of entreaties and threats, he induced the marquis and the duke to withdraw their opposition. Meanwhile Rene himself, impatient of the delay; had sailed with a small body of troops from Marseilles to Ventimiglia, a town some distance north of Genoa. Proceeding thence by Asti to Montferrat, he settled all the differences between the marquis of that place and Sforza, and thus enabled the latter to bring four thousand men from the vicinity of Alessandria to his own headquarters near Brescia. Shortly after this the duke of Anjou was joined by his own troops, consisting of two thousand four hundred men, whom the duke of Savoy had allowed to cross over the Alps. Thus, by his friendly negotiation and his reinforcements, he increased the effective strength of his allies by six thousand four hundred soldiers.

Before proceeding to the headquarters of the war, Rene paid a visit to Bianca Maria at Milan. On his arrival there, he was so sumptuously entertained by her that neither he nor his soldiers—who, as the annalist of Italy remarks, appeared as fond of pleasures of all sorts, amusements, and feasting, as did their countrymen three centuries later—were in any hurry to leave it. It was in vain that Sforza sent to remind them that the season for taking vengeance on their enemies was passing away; they were unable to tear themselves from the delights of Milan, and they always found some excuse to stop on. At length, after a delay of fifteen days, René took his departure for Lodi, and proceeded thence to Pizzighettone, where Sforza sent a considerable detachment of troops, to receive him with the honours becoming a friend and a sovereign. After this, he lost no time in joining the duke of Milan in the Brescian territory, where he made a formal proclamation of war against the Venetians. As the arrival of Collio about the same time, with the force that had been employed against the marquis of Montferrat, put them in a position to act on the offensive, it was deemed advisable to call a council of war to arrange their future plan of operation.

The speeches delivered by the two principal persons at this council—namely, the duke of Milan and the marquis of Mantua—are amusing, as illustrating the manner in which each endeavoured to convince others, as they possibly also might have persuaded themselves, that the measures which they most desired for the protection and enlargement of their own dominions were also most conducive to the general good. The marquis proposed that they should begin their operations by laying siege to Asola, a town on the confines of the territories of Brescia and Mantua, the capture of which, he had no doubt, would be followed by the surrender of all the places in the latter. Having done this, he thought they ought to pass on to the vicinity of Verona, where they would find all the inhabitants only watching their opportunity to throw off a yoke which they detested, and afterwards to make themselves masters of all towns between the last-named city and Vicenza, where they would find excellent winter quarters, and where he would undertake to provide them with abundant supplies. After these propositions had been variously discussed by Collio, Tiberto, and the other generals present, the duke of Milan delivered his opinion as follows. “If”, said he, “it were now the beginning of summer, I should certainly approve of the suggestions of my friends; the advanced season, however, requires that we should act far otherwise. Before the setting in of the winter, Cremona must be recovered, and all possibility of the enemy’s crossing the Adda must be prevented. For it would be perfectly ridiculous in us to take up our winter quarters

in the Veronese at a time that the enemy might be encamped around the walls of Milan. In addition to this, we must recollect that our allies, the French, cannot stand the cold as we can, and must, at no distant time, be lodged in comfortable winter quarters. For this reason alone, even if there were no other, we must set about the operations which are nearest at hand. And I promise my friend, Louis Gonzaga, that, as soon as we shall have cleared the Cremonese, secured the passes of the Adda, and settled the French for the winter, I will bring my forces to cooperate with his in the manner he has proposed". The duke of Milan, as usual, carried the day.

It was about the middle of October, just three months and a half after the repulse of the Venetians at Gedo, that the Milanese and Mantuan army, strengthened in the manner already described, resumed active operations. Their career was one of almost uninterrupted success. Sforza had, however, no small difficulty in managing Rene's soldiers, who were chiefly natives of Picardy, and accustomed to a totally different species of warfare from that which had been practised by the civilised Italians. In their general conduct, they fully sustained their character of being more than men in the first onset, but more easily beaten than women, if firmly resisted. The first time they met the enemy, they had assigned to them a post of no very great importance, and received particular directions about their mode of fighting and plan of attack. But they had no idea of any discipline or obedience to commands: raising a loud shout, they rushed on without any semblance of order; but, fortunately for their allies, their rashness did not in any way affect the result of the battle. On a subsequent occasion, at the siege of Pontevico, they, as well as the Italians, incurred no small danger by rushing forward before a practicable breach had been effected, and by exposing themselves uncovered to the shower of stones that were thrown on them from within. Afterwards, when it was determined to storm the city, they solicited the commander-in-chief to be allowed to have all the danger and the glory to themselves; but, being repulsed on the first onset, nothing would persuade them to renew it. And when the place had been taken by the valour of their allies, they showed that they, indeed, deserved the name of barbarians. On finding that those who had first entered the city had also secured the best share of the booty for themselves, they vented their disappointment by putting to the sword not only the Venetian soldiers, but even the unoffending inhabitants, and spared neither age nor sex in their fury.

The unfortunate citizens of Pontevico, who had little expected, and therefore made no preparation against, such unheard-of cruelties, implored the protection of those of their captors who were their countrymen. A pretty sharp contest arose between Sforza's French and Italian soldiers: the latter were determined to save the citizens, the former would not be balked of their prey; and it was not long before each party began to make use of their arms. The French, who could not long stand before the united force of the Italian soldiers and inhabitants, were obliged to fly, to escape the fate which they proposed to inflict upon others, and it required the utmost address of Sforza to prevent the whole body of his Transalpine allies from being sacrificed to the vengeance of his countrymen. The fury of the citizens, in the end, proved their ruin. Having in the first burst of their wrath set fire to some house, to which their would-be butchers had fled for safety, they were unable to prevent the flames from spreading, and Sforza, perceiving what had happened, and thinking that he might have some difficulty in preventing the place revolting to the Venetians, ordered his soldiers to allow the devouring element to take its course, and told the inhabitants to quit the city.

If the French auxiliaries of René were of little use to Sforza in regular operations, they did him good service by the terror which they spread through the region around. The circumstances attending the capture and destruction of Pontevico were, as usual, exaggerated by report; and in the words of a contemporary writer, "in all the towns subject to the Venetians, people were continually fancying that the French were at hand, and that their mothers, wives, sisters, and children, were about to be butchered before their eyes". Wherever he went, the towns seemed to contend with one another as to which should be the first to proffer their submission. The Venetian garrisons were seized on by the citizens, sometimes permitted to depart out of the town, and sometimes, even within sight of the army of Piccinino, sent as prisoners to the duke of Milan. So rapidly did these events take place, that within the eighth day after the fall of Pontevico nearly all the places in the

Cremonese and Brescian territory were in the hands of the victors. The army of Piccinino in despair retired to Brescia; even then, though they were not pursued by an enemy, their retreat partook of the nature of a rout; each soldier seemed anxious that his person and his property should as soon as possible be protected by the walls of the city, and their march was in no small degree retarded by the confusion which such haste invariably begets. Finding on their arrival there that the inhabitants, being afraid to admit such a disorderly multitude within their walls, had shut their gates against them, they took up the most secure position they could find between the city and the mountains.

Sforza, though annoyed at not being able to bring Piccinino to a general action, was now at least able to continue his operations without any fear of interruption. In a very short time all the plain between the Oglio and the Adda, with the exception of the cities of Bergamos, Crema, and one or two places of minor importance, surrendered to him. At two of them only (Roado and Orci) did he experience any resistance. In taking the first, he adopted the then rather novel expedient of firing, from his cannon, stones, which fell upon the heads of the unfortunate inhabitants—a practice which, though it has since been frequently adopted, is certainly unjustifiable on principle, and seems, as much as the system of starving a whole city or nation, to call for an alteration in the rules of war. The capture of the last mentioned of these places caused him no small anxiety, and detained him a considerable time, during which, however, he was solaced by a visit from Bianca Maria. That lady's desire of seeing her husband was so great that the terrors of a winter campaign could not keep her from him; and after she had arrived in his camp, she preserved, amidst no small privations and hardships, as much serenity of mind as if she had been enjoying the luxuries of her capital. For the winter had already set in with unusual rigour, and the necessary hardships of the season were in no small degree aggravated by a tempest of such severity, that it tore up several trees by the roots, and overthrew the tents of the soldiers, including those of the duke of Milan. After the surrender of this place, Rene and his soldiers retired to winter quarters at Piacenza.

If Sforza could have continued the campaign in the manner that he himself wished, he would have proceeded to lay siege to Bergamos and Crema. He had already made some dispositions to do so, when the marquis of Mantua reminded him of the engagements he had made about marching into his territory after he had taken certain places on the Oglio and Adda; and, being swayed either by honour or policy, he gave in to his wishes. Having placed garrisons in the captured towns—which, as he had lately been rejoined by his brother Alexander from Tuscany, he was able to do without much diminishing his effective force—and having sent Bianca Maria to Cremona, he proceeded along with his ally to Asola, the place to which the latter had proposed to lay siege immediately after they had been joined by the French. But the inclemency of the weather prevented their making any impression on that city. After a few days' exposure to no ordinary hardships, the duke and the marquis were glad to turn from the toils of war to the society of their wives, Bianca Maria and Barbara, who had come from their respective quarters to make acquaintance with each other in the camps of their husbands. They then agreed to retire to Mantua for the Christmas.

They had not been there three days when they were alarmed by the news that René was about to retire, with the whole of his forces, to France. As his so doing would most likely prevent the completion of their successes, Sforza hastened to him, to endeavour to dissuade him from his intentions. The duke of Milan's eloquence was so powerful that René was unable to reply to it at the time, and requested to be allowed one day to consider. He then sent one Gian Coxa to tell Sforza that, much as it grieved him to do anything disagreeable to him, he was now come to an age at which he was fitter for the society of his family than for the camp; that he must therefore retire; but he promised to send his son John, who had assumed the title of duke of Calabria, to take his place. The soldiers, too, had been perhaps more exposed to the inclemency of the weather than they had expected; they were in no small degree piqued at the superiority of the Italians, and had ceased to feel friendly towards them since their quarrel at Pontevico. The Florentines were supposed not to be displeased at this step on the part of the duke of Anjou; they had already regained all that in the preceding year had been taken from them by Ferdinand; and though the duke of Milan was their friend and ally, they had no wish to see

him undisputed master of Lombardy. René, after he had declared his intentions to Sforza, proceeded without delay to Asti, whence he crossed the Alps to Provence, without experiencing any opposition from the duke of Savoy.

The movements of René had wrought a change in the spirit of the contending parties, which the fear of their infidel enemy had been unable to effect. Experience had shown Sforza that without his assistance he could effect nothing decisive against the Venetians, and they had suffered too severely at the end of the year not to avail themselves of a favourable moment for treating. Sforza, however, was anxious not to appear wanting in his engagements to the marquis of Mantua, and for this purpose he lost no time in rejoining his army, and making preparations for resuming the siege of Asola. But the soldiers, who from the first had murmured at being led thither in winter, said they could not continue to expose themselves to the extraordinary hardships of the season. An attack which he, unmindful of these circumstances, had planned against the city, was prevented by a heavy fall of snow. On this, Louis Gonzaga told Sforza that he was now satisfied that he had done all that he could for him; that, much as he desired possession of Asola, everything was now against him, and it would be folly to proceed. Sforza, on his part, said that the failure of the enterprise grieved him as much as if it had been undertaken entirely on his own account. He called God and man to witness that it had not miscarried through any want of zeal or exertion on his part; and though they were now obliged to abandon it, they need not despair of ultimately succeeding. After the two friends had remained some time together in private consultation, the troops were allowed to retire to cantonments : those of the duke took up their quarters at Cremona, Piacenza, and Parma; those of the marquis around his own city of Mantua. Piccinino placed his army in winter quarters on the eastern side of the Lake of Garda and the Adige.

The belligerent powers gladly availed themselves of this respite to send ambassadors to Rome to arrange the terms of a peace, of which they had all become so desirous. As spring advanced, neither party showed any desire of recommencing the campaign. Sforza, indeed, took some precautions about securing the passes of the Adda, and the Mantuans and Venetians occasionally made pillaging incursions into each other's territories, but nothing in the shape of regular warfare was attempted.

The demands made by the ambassadors of each of the contending parties were so extravagant, that at first they seemed likely to preclude all hopes of an arrangement. The king of Naples required that the Florentines should indemnify him for the expenses of the war—a thing which they said he must do for them. The Venetians demanded that the count of Pavia—for they still refused to call Sforza by any other title—should not only restore all the places he had taken, but also give up Cremona; while his ambassadors insisted that he should have Bergamos, Brescia, and Crema, in addition to the territory he had possessed at the beginning of the war. To reconcile all their claims must have appeared difficult to anybody, and Sforza's secretary suspects that the pope was not in earnest in wishing for peace, thinking that he got better off while the different powers were venting their wrath upon one another, than he might if they were to agree among themselves and to turn upon him. Nothing, however, is easier than to reconcile combatants who are alike exhausted by fighting; and that which the pope was unwilling or unable to effect at Rome was done by the mediation of an Augustine monk, by name Fra Simonetta da Camerino, in Lombardy.

The Venetians, seeing that the negotiations at Rome were likely to end in nothing, sent the above-named person to the duke of Milan, offering to give up all claim upon Cremona, if he would do so likewise with respect to Bergamo, Brescia, and Crema. The duke consented to give up the two first named of these cities, but still stipulated for the last. The Venetians were too desirous of peace to continue to haggle about one city, and too fearful of augmenting the power of their formidable rival not to make one effort to prevent its falling into his hands. For this reason they expressed their willingness to give it up, and said that, if he would send thither Bartolomeo Collio, they would surrender it to him. As they had for some time past been carrying on

secret negotiations with this general, and had just arranged with him to leave the service of his former master for theirs, they were in hopes that, after he had got possession of Crema in Sforza's name, he would keep it for himself. Collio, however, boldly threw off all disguise; and on hearing of the state of the negotiations, he went at once to Venice, and advised them not only to keep Crema, but also to insist on much more favourable terms than they had at first proposed. The loss of the services of Collio, and the report that Sigismund Malatesta, who had hitherto fought for the Florentines, was about to follow his example, together with a pretty clear intimation from the latter that they could not continue to fight any longer, induced Sforza to come to terms at once. For this purpose he met the monk Fra Simonetta, accompanied by one Paolo Barbo, who was authorised to sign a treaty on the part of the Venetians.

On the 9th of April the duke of Milan and the Venetian commissary met at Lodi, and took upon themselves to make the following terms for the rest of the Italian states. The former was to relinquish all the conquests he had made in the territory of Bergamos and Brescia, but was to be allowed to retain the tract of land commonly called the Gheradda. A free amnesty was to be granted to the inhabitants of all the cities that had revolted to him. All the places that the brothers Correggio had taken in the territory of Parma were to be restored to him, and those that they as well as the Venetians had acquired in the territory of Mantua, were to be given back to Louis Gonzaga. The latter was, in his turn, to reinstate his brother Charles in his lawful patrimony. There was also a secret article in the treaty, by which Sforza was allowed to recover, by persuasion or by force, the places formerly belonging to Philip that were now held by the duke of Savoy, the marquis of Montferrat, and his brother William. Alphonso was to evacuate the Florentine dominions, on condition of being allowed to retain the castle of Castiglione in Brescia. All the potentates of the peninsula were to be called upon to subscribe to the terms that had been agreed on by the two leading powers of Lombardy.

The marquis of Mantua and the brothers Correggio were, of course, constrained to abide by the settlement that had been made by their more powerful neighbours. Alphonso, however, had no idea that other people should make arrangements for him, and for a time he continued obstinately to reject them. But on hearing that the pope and the republic of Florence gave the treaty their most candid support, he thought it prudent to offer it no practical opposition; and though he did not actually sign it for some months afterwards, he recalled his forces from the Florentine dominions.

It now remained for Sforza to recover those places on his western frontier that had belonged to his father-in-law. To the marquis of Montferrat, who had come to terms with him in the preceding year, at a time that he was compassed by many enemies, it must have appeared hard to be asked to make further concessions; but he knew full well that powerful states, after they get all they want by war, leave their weaker allies; so, after having in vain solicited Rene, who had arranged the treaty of the preceding year, to intercede in his favour, he gave up all that was required from him. Nor had Sforza much more trouble in arranging matters with the duke of Savoy. In three days his generals, Tiberto, Brandolino, and Roberto Sanseverino, took nearly all the castles on the east of the Sessia. The duke of Savoy, confounded by the suddenness of the attack and the rapidity of the success, sent ambassadors to Milan to complain of the injustice of requiring from him more than was arranged by the treaty he had made with Sforza, when he was fighting for the possession of Milan, and to say that, if he would abide by those terms, nothing would give him greater pleasure than to form the closest alliance with him. To cement their friendship, he proposed that his daughter should be betrothed to Galeazzo Maria. The duke of Milan, however, replied, that as he had broken the treaty alluded to by joining the Venetians against him, he must abide by the consequences; and that if all the places that had belonged to his father-in-law were not surrendered to him within eight days, he would deprive him of everything he possessed to the south of the Alps. Louis afterwards made many propositions for a compromise; but finding his antagonist quite inexorable, and being fully aware that, single-handed, he was no match for him, he gave in to the full extent of his demands. The duke of Milan then said that he would be happy to form an alliance with him; but as he had already promised that his eldest son should marry the daughter of the marquis of Mantua, he could only give his second son Philip

to his daughter. Though this connection was then agreed upon, its preliminaries were never signed, and it appears afterwards to have been given up by the consent of both parties.

The duke of Milan, being determined to avail himself of the present opportunity to consolidate the dominions of his father-in-law, sent to Borso, duke of Reggio and Modena, summoning him to surrender two places on the Parmese frontier. Borso's territories were not so large that he could well spare any part of them, and he had on many occasions shown himself jealous of Sforza; but as open resistance was useless, he replied that he never could believe that Sforza could prefer the possession of two petty towns to keeping on good terms with him. He also sent to the other potentates of Italy to implore their protection. On finding that they would do nothing for him, he said that he was willing to give up anything that the duke of Milan required; but begged, as a favour to himself, that he might be allowed to retain the least important of the two places he had demanded; and Sforza, though he had a long list of alleged grievances to complain of, said that he was willing to grant him any favour to secure his goodwill.

Thus ended the first war in which Francesco Sforza had been engaged since his accession to the duchy of Milan. Few, indeed, of the belligerent parties gained anything by it—certainly none of them had acquired any accession of territory that might not have been purchased for a much less sum than had been spent in the maintenance of their armies. But Sforza's position was in no small degree strengthened by the other powers treating with him as duke of Milan; and though his dominions might not be much enlarged by the clause in the treaty which assigned to him all that belonged to his father-in-law at the time of his decease, it was of great importance to him that its words acknowledged him to be the legal successor of the Visconti. There is little doubt but that he must have been fully aware of this at the time that he showed himself comparatively indifferent about territorial acquisitions.

BOOK SEVENTH.

FROM THE PEACE OF LODI TO THE ACQUISITION OF GENOA BY FRANCESCO
SFORZA, 1454-1464.

CHAPTER XXV

DISPUTED SUCCESSION TO THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES.— FERDINAND CROWNED BY THE POPE.

DURING three years of tranquillity that followed the peace of Lodi, Sforza acquired as much glory as he had done in times of war. The part which he had taken in arranging the negotiations to which all the powers of Italy consented, affords ample proof of the estimation in which he was held, and caused him from that time

to be looked up to as the pacificator and the arbiter of the peninsula. At the request of the pope and the Venetians, he sent ambassadors to Naples to endeavour to procure the formal adherence of Alphonso to the treaty. As that monarch had refused his assent to it, more out of pique at not having been previously consulted than from any positive objection to its conditions, it required merely time and tact to bring him over. By the persuasion of Sforza, he duly signed it on the 29th of January 1455; and at the same time he entered into an alliance for twenty-five years with the Florentines, the Venetians, and the duke of Milan, of which the principal object was to protect Italy against the Turks, and which was for some time afterwards the main-spring of Italian policy, and generally designated the Italian Alliance. But in becoming a party thereto, he reserved for himself the right of attacking the Genoese and Sigismund Malatesta—a condition which contained the seeds of the next Italian war.

From this time forward the king of Naples adopted towards the duke of Milan a line of conduct totally different from that which he had formerly pursued. As he had first become acquainted with him as the son of a powerful supporter of the Angevin party at Naples, and had afterwards regarded him as a clever adventurer, who might become a dangerous neighbour, if he were securely established either in or near his dominions, he had done his best to expel him from his fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, and to prevent him establishing a principality in the province of Ancona. And as he, like many others, had coveted the inheritance of the Visconti, he could not be expected to be friendly to the pretensions of any rival, least of all to those of an intimate friend of Cosmo de' Medici, and constant ally of the Florentines. But now that he was well established as duke of Milan, and had been acknowledged as such by the principal powers of the peninsula, their relative situations seemed totally changed. Their dominions were too far apart to leave many points in dispute between them; and should any member of the house of Anjou try to enforce his claims to the kingdom of Naples, the duke of Milan would be the most powerful enemy or ally that either party could have. In short, Alphonso was now weighed by all the reasons which he had urged with so much effect upon Philip after the battle of Ponza; and these reasons were rendered doubly cogent by the talents and the influence of the person who now stood in Philip's place. The circumstance of John, the son of René, who had assumed the title of duke of Calabria, being now at Florence, showed him that no opportunity of making useful alliances was to be lost. For this reason he availed himself of every occasion of speaking of Sforza in terms of the highest approbation, and took care that the altered tone of his conversation should be made known as well to his ambassadors as to others who were likely to report it to himself. The duke of Milan, thinking that nothing would so much strengthen him in his new position as an intimate alliance with the most powerful and the highest in rank of the sovereigns of Italy, and recollecting that the claims of the duke of Orleans to his dominions gave them a common interest in keeping the French out of Italy, showed every disposition to meet the overtures that were made to him from this quarter. To remove all causes of suspicion, he signified his willingness to forego his claims to the fiefs that had been held by himself and his father in the kingdom of Naples. Thus ere long did these two men, who had been for so many years opposed to one another, express their willingness to form the most intimate alliance. After the manner of princes, they deemed it necessary to cement, by matrimonial connections, the union which had been formed by a community of interests. Accordingly, Sforza betrothed his daughter Hippolyta to the king's grandson Alphonso, and the king promised his granddaughter, Isabella Leonora, to Sforza Maria, the third son of the duke of Milan.

Whether Pope Nicholas had been sincere or not in attempting to effect the pacification of Italy in the preceding year, he appears to have done his best to procure Alphonso's acquiescence to the treaty that had been settled by others at Lodi. He did not, however, long survive the attainment of the object which he professed to have so earnestly desired. For some time past he had been suffering from gout in the hands and feet, and towards the beginning of the present year his maladies began to assume a more formidable appearance. Feeling his end approach, he is said to have expressed, in the following words, a sentiment which doubtless has been felt by most good men who have been called from a life of study to take a prominent part in the affairs of the world. "Never", said he, "do I see anybody cross the threshold of my door in whose word I can confide. I am so

confounded by the tricks of those who surround me, that, if I did not fear the opinion of the world, I would give up the popedom, and once more become plain Thomas of Sarzano. While I was in that condition, I had more happy moments in a single day than I have now in a whole year". He departed this life on the 24th of March 1455, leaving behind him a great reputation for acquirements in learning and taste in the fine arts, as also for the more Christian virtues of charity and disinterestedness. Nor had his liberal pursuits and amiable qualities of mind rendered him in any way unfit for governing with fortitude and prudence. He was succeeded by Alphonso Borgia, bishop of Valenciennes, under the title of Callixtus the Third.

Whatever benefits the peace might have brought to the sovereigns and the people of Italy, it was ruin to the men whose "country was war, and whose home was their armour". At the head of this class now was Jacobo Piccinino. After the peace of Lodi, he had remained in command of the Venetian armies, at a salary of one hundred thousand ducats, till the end of the year; but at the expiration of his term of service, his employers, grudging the above sum in the time of peace, and disgusted with the disorderly behaviour of his soldiers, who were equally troublesome to friend and to foe, declined to re-engage him. Though full credit cannot be given to the exaggerated account of his deeds written by Porcelli—who, it may be recollected, visited Sforza's camp after the challenges that had passed between the two rival generals near Gedo—his partial successes in the late war had shown that he was not destitute of talent; and since Sforza had become a sovereign, he was looked upon as the first of the hireling condottieri of Italy. But he now began to act a part little better than that of a captain of the bands of the marauders who, during the preceding century, had infested the peninsula. In the words of Muratori, he lived at the expense of all who were not his subjects, and gained the affections of his soldiers by allowing them to commit with impunity robberies and crimes of all sorts. After he had been dismissed by the Venetians, he collected together a force of three thousand horse and one thousand foot, to resume the trade which had been begun by Guarnieri. At first he seemed likely to threaten Bologna, a place to which he might have laid some claim in right of his father, but he was prevented by the presence of the Milanese troops from making any attempt thereon. He then proceeded to the mountainous districts of Tuscany, and began laying waste the territory of the Siennese. As Alphonso owed this people a grudge on account of the resistance they had offered him in his preceding campaigns, and as the poet Porcelli had managed to predispose him in a wonderful manner in favour of his hero, he is supposed by many to have secretly instigated Piccinino to this attempt.

Thus attacked, the Siennese sent to beg the protection of the powers of Italy. The pope sent Ventimiglia, (Sforza's former general,) and the duke of Milan sent his brother Conrad and Robert Sanseverino, with sufficient forces to defend them. Piccinino made a sudden attack upon his enemies in the Val d' Inferno before they were well united; but after a partial success, in which he made prisoner the pope's general, Ventimiglia, he was checked by the rapid concentration of his adversary's forces, and finally obliged to retire with loss. Unable to make head against all those that were now brought against him, he retired to Castiglione, where his supplies were cut off, and his army was wasted by pestilence and famine. In this extremity his forces must have either perished or surrendered, had not Alphonso, in direct violation of his former engagements, sent them a few ship-loads of biscuit from Naples. But these supplies were too scanty in themselves, and too irregular in their arrival, to afford sufficient support to a large army, and Piccinino, in the agony of distress, sent word to the Milanese ambassador that he would be willing to abide by whatever conditions his master prescribed. To this Sforza replied, that he would make no treaty whatever except in conjunction with the other allied powers of Italy. Alphonso then made another effort for his unfortunate friend, and proposed that he should be made generalissimo of the forces of the Italian league against the Turks, at a salary of one hundred thousand ducats per annum. But this proposal was at once negatived by the influence of the duke of Milan, who scouted the idea of a wretched bandit (as he now called his old rival) being appointed to such a situation.

Piccinino remained in this situation till the following year, probably finding the difficulties of supporting his army in the meantime decrease in proportion to the diminution of its numbers. After this, the

Siennese and the others, weary of keeping watch on him, requested the mediation of Alphonso, who arranged that he should quit their territory, and restore all the places he had taken, on receiving twenty thousand florins of gold. It is even said by a contemporary writer, that the Siennese as well as the pope agreed to pension him, on the condition of his not molesting them for the future. He then entered the service of the king of Naples, who allowed him to take up his quarters at Chieti, and allotted him to the pay of one thousand two hundred horse and six hundred foot.

After this affair of Piccinino's, the land had perfect peace for a year. The pontiff, indeed, tried to get up a crusade against the Turks, and might have done so, had not the news of their having been defeated near Belgrade by the Hungarians quieted the apprehensions they had formerly excited. But though the peninsula was not disturbed by the wickedness of man, it seemed to be the special object of the fury of the elements.

The appearance of a comet during the months of June and July made many think that some terrible calamity was at hand. As if in accordance with their expectations, the country shortly afterwards witnessed a hurricane which, if the descriptions are not greatly exaggerated, must have been one of the severest that Europe has ever seen. A mass of black clouds, issuing from the sea near Ancona, passed over the land between that city and Pisa, at a distance of about ten yards from the earth, and, when it came into contact with the Apennines, burst forth into thunders, lightnings, and whirlwinds of extraordinary severity. The thunder was so loud, and the lightning was so terrible, that many thought that the day of judgment had come. Neither buildings, trees, or living creatures were spared. Fragments of the roofs of private houses and churches were found at the distance of a mile from the buildings whence they had been taken; the stems of trees which had at first resisted the wind were broken across and carried far from their roots; even cars and mules, with their drivers, are said to have been carried from one place to another through the air. It was most furious in the country between Florence and Sienna, which in the preceding year had suffered so much from Piccinino and his marauders. Fortunately, its devastations were confined principally to the rural districts; for if, says Machiavelli, it had entered a town, where houses and human beings are crowded together, the amount of distraction and misery which it must have caused would have been almost beyond the power of man to conceive. And at the end of the year an earthquake took place in the south of Italy, which is said to have caused the death of one hundred thousand people, and the destruction of several churches, in the cities between Benevento and Naples. If this number be not exaggerated, the loss of life must have been much greater than would have been caused by many years of such wars as were carried on in the fifteenth century. If, says the annalist of Italy, it be not impious in man to judge of the ways of the Almighty, it would almost seem as if the wrath of God had been poured out upon the unoffending people of Naples for the transgression of their king.

It is the opinion of some philosophers that war is the natural state of man, and that, though nations are frequently obliged to live in peace when their resources are exhausted, they will generally find something to quarrel about as soon as their means are recruited. Whether this proposition be universally true or not, its advocates might certainly appeal to the history of the different states of Italy in support of it. The wars which ended by placing Sforza on the throne at Milan were succeeded, if not by a regular peace, at least by a two years' cessation from hostilities. After this the different powers of Italy, though they really had nothing to fight about, as if by a sort of natural instinct were again in arms, which they seemed by an equally natural instinct to lay aside as soon as they had got tired of them. Two years and a half after the peace of Lodi they seemed to have had sufficient repose to allow their bellicose propensities again to break out. As regards Sforza himself, the wars that followed are remarkable as exhibiting him at the head of the party opposed to that of which he and his father had been the principal supporters, and putting him in possession of a city which had once been the principal entrepot of the commerce of the Mediterranean, the Levant, and the Black Sea.

It has already been remarked that the clause of the Italian alliance, by which Alphonso reserved to himself the right of attacking Sigismund Malatesta and the Genoese, contained in itself the seeds of future hostilities. These seeds began to develop themselves about the end of the year 1457. Genoa, since the expulsion of the Milanese in 1436, had taken but little part in the general politics of Italy, but had, in the meantime, suffered much from the rivalries of two great parties, at the head of which were the Adorni and the Fregosi. The dissensions so caused had continued with various success for twenty years, and they now afforded Alphonso, who regarded the Genoese with all the hereditary dislike of his countrymen—which had been in no small degree increased by the part they had taken at the battle of Ponza—a specious excuse for interfering in their affairs. Under pretence of expelling the reigning doge, Pietro Fregoso, and of restoring the Adorni—who, it was suspected, had promised to make the city over to him—he directed a simultaneous attack against it by sea and by land; and being desirous, at the same time, to take vengeance on Sigismund Malatesta for having commanded the armies of the Florentines employed in defence of their country, he ordered Jacobo Piccinino and the duke of Urbino to invade their dominions. This last expedition was not attended with any results worthy of notice; but the attack upon Genoa produced consequences of a more serious nature to his family than it had entered his head to conceive.

The doge, Pietro Fregoso, despairing of being able to keep the city against such a powerful assailant as Alphonso, determined to make it over to some one who would prevent it falling into the hands of his enemies, and who might possibly confer on him some favour in return. Accordingly, he transferred his own rights over Genoa to the king of France. That monarch hesitated not to accept his offer, and selected John, the son of René of Anjou, as being tolerably conversant with the ways of the Italians, to take possession of the city for him. At the same time, it must doubtless have occurred to him that the establishment of that prince in Italy would afford him or his countrymen no small facility in following up his claims on the kingdom of Naples. John of Anjou, on his arrival at Genoa in the middle of May, was immediately put in possession of the city and the fortress, and received by all classes with the greatest acclamations.

If the Genoese had hoped for peace under the impression that Alphonso would not dare to enter the lists against so formidable a monarch as the king of France, they found themselves woefully mistaken. The difficulty of accomplishing his design seems only to have whetted his ambition, and imparted force to his energy. Determined to make a vigorous effort to get possession of the much-coveted city, he sent against it an expedition of twenty ships laden with all sorts of bellicose instruments, along with ten well-armed galleys, and gave directions that twenty more should follow them as soon as they could be got ready. At the same time the Adorni and the other exiles were collecting a considerable force, with which they were preparing to attack it by land. The Genoese, being animated by a hereditary dislike of the Aragonese, prepared to resist to the last; and John of Anjou, as well as Pietro Fregoso, took the most skilful measures for putting the city in a proper state of defence.

The blockade of Genoa had already commenced: the besieged were expecting, and had got themselves ready to resist, a combined assault by sea and by land—a terrible strife appeared to be at hand—when all parties were surprised by the news of the sudden death of Alphonso. That monarch expired on the 27th of June 1458, of a disease supposed to have been aggravated by the anxiety of the moment. After having detailed the part he played on the drama of Italian politics, it would be useless to say anything in praise of his genius, or in condemnation of his ambition. If the accounts given of his private life and of the internal administration of his kingdom be true, he is to be blamed for immoderate debauchery, and for grinding his subjects by taxes and imposts of every description. His removal from the world was the signal for the dispersion of all the forces assembled at Genoa: the marines retired to their respective homes at Naples or Barcelona; and the land forces, which had been composed principally of exiles, did not tarry after their departure. The two heads of the family of the Adorni are said to have died of vexation at seeing all their hopes blighted by the untimely death of their ally. The Genoese, though freed from the immediate danger of an assault, suffered in no small degree from an

epidemic, supposed to have been caused by privation and excessive labour undergone in preparing for their defence.

Up to the present moment Sforza had remained a passive though not an unobservant spectator of what was going on so close to his own dominions. But now matters had come to a state in which he could not possibly remain inactive. Alphonso having left no legitimate children, his hereditary dominions passed by the law of succession established therein to his brother, the king of Navarre; but as he had acquired the kingdom of Naples in no small degree by his own talents and bravery, he had thought himself at liberty to bequeath it to whom he pleased, and he persuaded the parliament of Naples to accept his natural son, Ferdinand, as his successor. Though such successions were not uncommon in Italy, Ferdinand's illegitimacy afforded a fair pretext to other parties to urge their claims, more especially as he had not the talents nor the resources of his father. The hopes of the Angevin party at Naples had been in no small degree revived by the promises which Sforza himself had made to René, when that monarch crossed the Alps to his assistance; and now that Alphonso was dead, and that the heir of the house of Anjou was established at Genoa, they thought themselves sufficiently strong to dispute the succession; besides which, the new pope was determined to assert at least the claims which his predecessors had always made to the kingdoms of Apulia and Calabria. He even went so far as to send his envoys to the different cities and great men in the kingdom, requesting them to return to the allegiance of the Holy See, and threatening them with ecclesiastical censures in the event of their refusal; and well knowing that he could do nothing without Sforza, he sent a special ambassador to him, requesting his assistance, and promising him, in return, not only his paternal fiefs, which had been taken from him by Alphonso, but even a considerable portion of the kingdom of Naples.

The son of the peasant of Cotignola had now risen so high, that not only did the destiny of the fairest provinces of the peninsula seem to hang on his decision, but a way was opened to him by which he might make a considerable addition to his dominions, and possibly hope to unite in his own person the sovereignty of the two finest states in Italy. Had he been twenty years younger, or had he been so long in possession of the duchy of Milan as to be relieved from all apprehension about the undisputed succession of his son, it is possible that he would not have had the wisdom or the desire to refuse the offers of Callixtus. But he had now come to an age when most men are aware how much better it is to make sure of what they have, than to run the risk of losing everything in their insatiable desire for more. He therefore turned a deaf ear to the solicitations of the pope; and, for the reasons that had induced him to form a strict alliance with Alphonso of Aragon, he was now determined to give a most vigorous support to his son. For this purpose he sent two of his most intimate friends to the chief men and citizens of the kingdom, with authority to make his intentions known among them, adding that he was ready to risk his dominions, and his very life, in support of him whose part he had espoused. By this timely declaration he so strengthened the timid, and confirmed the wavering, that for a time all the former subjects of Alphonso seemed ready to offer their allegiance to his son. Only a few of the principal nobles, who had, perhaps, even before affected a species of independence, openly declared their preference for his rival.

At the time that the new duke of Milan was thus endeavouring to secure the succession of Naples for his friend, he took upon himself to administer a species of rebuke to the pontiff for his interference. After upbraiding him with the injustice of his attempt, and requesting him not to meddle any further in the matter, he warned him of the amount of danger and difficulty in which he must involve himself should he persevere. He reminded him that, even if Ferdinand were unsupported, he had no means of making head against, such a powerful monarch. Much less could he do so against the united arms of all Italy, who, at the request of his excellent predecessor, Nicholas V, had bound themselves to maintain the existing order of things. If the others were to fall short of their engagements, he himself would fight to the last in support of Ferdinand. Even if he had never been a party to the league of Italy, regard to his father, and the iniquity of the attempt that was now made to set him aside, would have induced him to do so. The refusal of Sforza to cooperate in the ambitious designs of the pontiff is said to have been the cause of the fever which not long afterwards carried off the latter.

Callixtus was succeeded by Aeneas Silvius, under the title of Pius the Second. He was a man of great learning, eloquence, and ability; and, from having been constantly employed in public life, had acquired no small knowledge of mankind. The mention of a few of the leading circumstances of his former career will show his dexterity and tact. At the council of Basle, he had so distinguished himself by his opposition to the court of Rome that the anti-pope appointed him his secretary. Having been sent by the Emperor on diplomatic business to the court of Rome, he managed to reconcile himself with Eugenius, and received from him the appointment that he had held under his opponents. He was afterwards made bishop of Trieste by the same pontiff. By his successor he was elevated to the See of Sienna, the place of his education, and he received the dignity of a cardinal's hat from Callixtus. He now ended by occupying the seat of those whom he had once declared to be heretical.

Whatever might have been Pius's wishes with regard to the kingdom of Naples, he had not the means of asserting the claims that had been made by his predecessor. As Callixtus had devoted whatever he could lay hands on to the aggrandisement of his nephews, the pontifical treasury was quite empty at the accession of Pius. Besides this, he now beheld himself in danger of losing part of his dominions in consequence of the acts of his predecessor. It has already been mentioned that Jacobo Piccinino had been engaged by Alphonso and had been sent by him shortly before his death against Sigismund Malatesta. The claims which Callixtus made to the succession of the son of Alphonso had given him an excuse for attacking the dominions of the Church, of which he continued to avail himself even after Callixtus' death. In a very short time after his accession, Pius beheld himself stripped of three of the fairest cities of his patrimony, and was without the means of resisting the further encroachments of his aggressor. He was forced to cry out to the duke of Milan in his distress.

Sforza now beheld himself, for the third time since his accession, called upon to adjust the differences of his contemporaries. Indeed, his authority and his influence appear to have become so great that the simile with which one of England's greatest statesmen illustrated her position in 1825 might almost have been applied to him. As king Aeolus kept the winds in restraint, he was able to restrain the jarring powers in Italy, to moderate their animosity, and to soothe their anger. On more than one occasion, if it had not been for his interference, they would have spread havoc and desolation around. With Piccinino, whom he affected to regard as little better than a common brigand, he dealt in a very summary manner. He sent him a message, in which he began by suggesting to him that it would appear much better in him to give up at once, and as it were of his own accord, the cities that he had taken from the Holy See, than to be compelled to do so, as he certainly would be, in the event of his refusal. Let him bear in mind that the Italian allies were all of one mind in maintaining the integrity of the dominions of the Church, and that he, for one, would take care that their wishes on this head were carried out. Let him take warning from what had occurred two years before, when he invaded the territory of Sienna; and let him now do as he was told, lest a worse punishment should befall him. As even Ferdinand, who of course would not do anything displeasing to Sforza, showed Piccinino no countenance, he was forced to comply.

The duke of Milan requested Pius, in return for the protection he had afforded him, formally to invest Ferdinand with the kingdom of Naples. This he promised to do, merely stipulating for the restoration of Benevento and Terracina, which had been taken from his predecessors. At the same time Pius arranged a marriage between his own nephew, Antonio Piccolimini, and Maria, the natural daughter of Ferdinand. When these things had been arranged, the cardinal Ursino was despatched to Naples to place the crown on the head of the son of Alphonso. Thus had the son of the peasant of Cotignola managed to have all things settled according to his wishes.

Though pope Pius was not without the ambition of his order, on this occasion he certainly showed more zeal for exciting Italy against the Turks than for extending his dominions. For this purpose he arranged that a congress should be held in Mantua, which all the leading powers of Christendom were invited to attend.

He left Rome on his way thither on the 22d of January 1459, and, after making long halts at Perugia and Sienna, for which last place he had always shown the most patriotic affection, he arrived at Florence on the 25th of April. He was met there by Galeazzo Maria Sforza, then only fifteen years old, who had been sent thither with a long train of soldiers and of the nobles of the land, who were in many cases accompanied by their families, to kiss the feet of his holiness in the name of his father. The young man was received at Florence with all the respect due to the son of an illustrious prince; in the words of the annalist of Italy, the citizens spared no expense in getting up amusements and shows for his diversion, and made every profession of regard and attachment for his family. On the 9th of May, the pope, accompanied by the young prince, took his departure from that city. After having been received with all due honours on the road, he arrived in Mantua about the end of the month, where he was met by deputies from the principal states in the peninsula and the Levant, as well as from the Emperor and the king of France.

Though Sforza, by sending his son to accompany Pius from Florence to Mantua, had given token of his friendship and support, yet the pontiff thought it necessary for the dignity of his congress that he should attend it in person—a circumstance which bears no small testimony to the eminence both of his position and his reputation. In obedience to the summons of the head of the Christian religion, the duke repaired promptly to Mantua. It is incredible, says a contemporary, with what honour he was received, as well by the holy pontiff and the college of cardinals as by the marquis of Mantua. When the assembled deputies were ready to attend to him, one Francesco Philelpho, a most consummate orator and poet, delivered a most weighty and eloquent speech in his name, in the presence of his holiness, the cardinals, the clergy, and ambassadors, from all the states, not only of Italy, but of Christendom. After having duly praised the proposition of the pope, he promised that, as far as in him lay, he would assist him against the Infidels. Hippolyta Sforza also, the betrothed bride of the son of Ferdinand, is said to have complimented the pope in a Latin oration that would have done credit to the best scholar of the day.

Though the diet at Mantua had been opened with great pomp, and was numerously attended, and though various resolutions were unanimously passed, and magnificent promises were unhesitatingly made, it did not produce any practical result. The real cause of this appears to have been the peculiar circumstances of the Venetians. Their own situation, and their extensive colonies and commerce in the Levant, naturally made them more than any others desirous of really repressing the encroachments of the Turks; but for these very reasons they would be the first object of their attack in the event of a declaration of war, and they refused to expose themselves to this danger till they saw that others had assembled their forces, and were ready to fight in good earnest. And when this was proposed to them, all, as before, began to make excuses. Some, indeed, had taken measures for increasing their armies or strengthening their fleets; but these augmentations were generally destined for objects nearer home, in which they imagined themselves more immediately interested. Thus, at the end of the year 1459, the diet separated without having arranged anything for the defence of Christendom; and, in the meantime, events had occurred which claimed the attention of the different sovereigns of Italy.

CHAPTER XXVI

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN COSMO DE' MEDICI AND SFORZA.—RETREAT OF ALEXANDER SFORZA
AFTER THE BATTLE OF SANFABIANO.

FERDINAND, though placed on the throne of his father by the support of Sforza, and crowned king of Naples by the pope, had never been popular with his subjects. Even the warmest partisans of the house of Aragon would have preferred for their monarch Don Carlos, the son of the king of Navarre, who, however, turned a deaf ear to the overtures that were made to him. It was not long before Ferdinand embroiled himself with Antonio Orsini, prince of Tarento, one of the most powerful barons of his kingdom. The cause of their quarrel was soon settled, but the resentment of the prince of Tarento continued, and he took care to have it intimated to John of Anjou, the governor of Genoa, and the titular duke of Calabria, that the time had come for his reasserting the claims of his ancestors.

John of Anjou had not been free from troubles since his arrival at Genoa. He was frequently without money to satisfy his partisans, and was occasionally obliged to borrow from the duke of Milan; and the duke, though he did not refuse to aid him in his difficulty, and wished to keep up the appearance of being on good terms with him, was supposed to wish the French well out of Genoa. Moreover, the ex-doge, Pietro Fregoso, who had made over the city to him, being now discontented with his reward, was endeavouring to get up a party against him. But the hints which he had received from the rebellious Neapolitan barons cast all these troubles into the shade. His first step was to endeavour to gain, by the most liberal promises, the assistance of Sforza. After reminding him of the friendship which had subsisted between their families for two generations, the assistance that his father René had given to him only a few years previously, and the engagements they had then made, he went on to promise him the sovereignty of fiefs and provinces, in the event of his succeeding by his assistance. He then proceeded to say that as both his father and himself intended to live principally in France, they would be only sovereigns in name, while he himself would be the virtual ruler of the kingdom of Naples. He further proposed that his daughter, Hippolyta, who had been betrothed to a son of the present king of Naples,

many years younger than herself, should be given to him. If he would not actually support them, he hoped that he would at least remain neutral, and endeavour to persuade Pope Pius to do so likewise.

All John's arguments and promises were thrown away upon Sforza. He briefly replied that he wished to live on good terms with the son of the duke of Anjou, as well as with his other neighbours, but that he was bound to act up to the terms of the Italian alliance, which guaranteed the throne of Naples to Alphonso and his descendants; and that he, for one, would do his best to oppose any attempt that was made to infringe it. That as for the proposed marriage, it was quite sufficient for him to say that he had promised his daughter to the son of Ferdinand; that at the time of his making his engagements he was as well aware of the difference between their ages as he was then; that he therefore could not deem that any reason why he should break his word, and that he would sooner suffer death than be guilty of such gross prevarication and deceit.

In the meantime Ferdinand, having been duly informed of the negotiations between his insurgent subjects and the duke of Anjou, sought to retaliate on the latter by raising him up enemies at Genoa. He sent to counsel the ex-doge, Pietro Fregoso, who, as has already been mentioned, had become dissatisfied with John of Anjou, to make an effort to expel him from Genoa. To enable him to do this, he furnished him with money that he had managed to borrow in the cities of the duchy of Milan, and with troops who had served under Tiberto Brandolino, a general who had formerly fought under, and was commonly thought to be much attached to, Sforza. What part Sforza himself had in advising or assisting Fregoso does not appear, but he was generally supposed to have been uneasy at the establishment at Genoa of the French, from whom alone he dreaded any rival claims to his duchy; and the fact that the money of his subjects, and the troops of his captain, were employed in the expedition, seemed in some degree to implicate him.

Viewing the matter in this light, John of Anjou sent to remonstrate with the duke for allowing these things to take place, and to say that he must complain of his conduct to the king of France, who, he had no doubt, would speedily send a force sufficient to protect him. However much Sforza may have disliked this allusion to the king, he was quite unmoved thereby in his reply. He said that he was not bound by engagements to any party except the members of the Italian alliance, and that, as he was at peace with all the world, the right of entry into his dominions was open to everybody. He could not understand why anyone should blame him, if the king of Naples had borrowed money from the bankers at Milan, or if Fregoso had raised troops in his dominions with Ferdinand's money. John of Anjou might do just the same if he wished. He cared not one jot for his threats of complaining to the king of France, nor would he be induced thereby in any way to alter his conduct. The king, if the truth were told him, would see at once that he had done nothing that was not fair and honourable.

The undertaking of Fregoso turned out a failure. On setting out, he was joined by Antonio Filippo Fiesco, a Genoese of high standing, who was peculiarly hostile to the French. Having crossed the Apennines without opposition, he encamped within two miles of the city. He was disappointed, however, at finding that the inhabitants made no demonstration in his favour; and as the duke of Anjou remained within the walls, he could do nothing against him, except endeavour to reduce the city by siege or blockade. At the same time it was reported to him that the French general, Rinaldo, was advancing upon him from Asti. An accident afterwards caused the dispersion of part of his army. Fiesco was killed in a dashing attempt to effect an entrance into the city; and as he had great possessions, and as his relations and friends were more anxious to look after the goodly heritages that might be coming to them than to reinstate the ex-doge in Genoa, they very soon quitted his camp. Fregoso, not deeming it prudent to await an attack with his remaining forces, retired and took Chiavari, Sestri, and one or two other places of some importance on the coast. But after he had been compelled to relinquish these by the Genoese fleet, he recrossed the Apennines into Lombardy. A victory which the same fleet not long

afterwards gained at Noli, over one that had been sent against them by Ferdinand, emboldened the Angevin party at Genoa to take measures more decidedly offensive than before.

The support which Ferdinand had given to Fregoso made the Genoese, who never liked either the Aragonese or their monarchs, most bitterly hostile to him. After the affair at Noli, John called together the leading men of the city, laid before them his plans and pretensions to the crown of Naples, and requested their aid. He reminded them that he had originally come from France at their own entreaty, in order that he might save them from the great misfortune of being enslaved by Alphonso of Aragon. In return for this, he now asked their assistance in regaining the kingdom that had belonged to his family; but, ardently as he desired this, he would take no step towards the accomplishment of his wishes without their concurrence. Before they came to a decision, however, they should recollect the dangers with which they had been threatened both by Ferdinand and his father, and with which he had no doubt they would continue to be menaced as long as a member of the house of Aragon remained on the throne of Naples. Finally, let them reflect on the great advantage it would be to them if the ports of Gaeta and Naples, and the fertile provinces of Apulia and Calabria, were under the same government as themselves.

It did not require much to persuade the Genoese, in their present temper, to aid in an attempt to expel Ferdinand from Italy. After no long consultation, they promised the duke of Anjou their support; they resolved to place at his disposal their fleet, consisting of ten galleys and two transportships, and voted him a subsidy of sixty thousand ducats. He was further strengthened by a fleet of twelve galleys from his father, and by a considerable sum of money from the king of France.

Thus supported, the duke of Calabria was about to sail for the coast of Naples, when news came that Fregoso was making another expedition against him. The latter, in fact, had crossed the Apennines, and stationed himself at Provenza, within four miles of Genoa. As before, John resolved not to give him battle in the open country; but, trusting to the loyalty of the inhabitants, he had the fortifications well guarded, and remained within the city. Meantime, as had already been determined, the fleet sailed for the Neapolitan coast with a numerous force. The subtraction of such a number of men from the garrison emboldened Fregoso to make an attack, and he succeeded in getting over the walls by night, and opening one of the gates, so as to admit the main body of his army. There was, however, a second line of fortifications within the city, which had been originally built as a protection against the Saracens, and had been completed in the time of Frederic I. Thither the French and their adherents, as soon as they had recovered from the consternation caused by finding an enemy within their outer walls, retreated. At the same time, word was brought to Fregoso that the Adorni, who were more influenced by their ancient dislike to him than by any other feelings, were coming by sea to the support of the French. On this he determined, before their arrival, to make one desperate effort to gain possession of the old city, in which he was in great hopes that he would be joined by several of his countrymen. But as they, contrary to his expectation, remained faithful to the French, he was driven back after his first attack with considerable loss. Not long after this, however, he rushed in, followed by only three of his attendants, and regardless of the consequences, through a gate of the old city which had been inadvertently left open. The gate was immediately closed on him. For a time he overcame all opposition, and galloped from one gate to another seeking for the means of egress. But all exit from the city had been cut off, and, as missiles continued to be showered on him, both by the soldiers and from the houses, he at last fell mortally wounded. He was taken up by his enemies speechless, and in a few hours afterwards departed this life.

His death was the signal for the retreat and dispersion of his army. From the circumstance of their having been within the old city, several prisoners were made, including Sigismund, the son of Tiberto Brandolino, and some of the leading citizens who had joined Fregoso. A few of the latter paid the penalties of traitors; but the majority of them were dismissed, on the condition of their promising never again to bear arms

against the king of France. The son of Tiberto was thrown into prison, as it seemed contrary to the law of nations that lie should have joined in a war while his father was in the service of a sovereign who still professed himself neutral. And there is no record of the duke of Milan having made any remonstrance whatever on the subject.

The defeat and death of Fregoso set John at liberty to follow the armament that had already started to the Neapolitan coast. On his way thither he touched at Porto Pisano, where the Florentines, though bound by treaty to the son of Alphonso, received him with every demonstration of the friendship that had so long subsisted between their republic and his family. “For”, says M. Sismondi, “it was not with them as with the duke of Milan—they were not able to keep all their feelings in subjection to their policy, and they were more influenced by the character of the individual combatants than by any considerations of arresting the progress of the French arms in Italy”. After his arrival at Gaeta, his success was so rapid as to attract the serious attention of all the powers of the peninsula. Though Ventimiglia (now marquis of Crotona, the same whom Sforza, before the surrender of Milan, had cast into prison at Pavia) had already been arrested by Ferdinand for carrying on a correspondence with John of Anjou, several of the leading nobles soon flocked to the standard of the latter. Almost all Campania revolted to him. When he went into the Abruzzi, its inhabitants did the same. Thence he passed into Apulia, several of the principal cities of which submitted to him almost without resistance. While in that province he was joined by Hercules of Este, whom his brother, the duke of Modena and Reggio, had sent to his assistance.

After an ineffectual attempt to recover his lost ground, Ferdinand sent to the parties who, four years before, had signed the Italian alliance, requesting them, in virtue of the arrangements entered into on that occasion, to assist him in driving a foreign enemy from his territories. His first appeals were made to the pope and the duke of Milan, by whose influence he had been placed in the kingdom bequeathed him by his father, and who had several times, during the course of the year, called the attention of the congress that still continued to sit at Mantua to the affairs of his kingdom. In reply, they still expressed their determination to stand by him; but as they naturally wished a part at least of the expense of supporting him to devolve upon others, they ordered him to apply to the rich republics of Venice and Florence.

These two states now viewed matters in a very different light from what they had done at the time they signed the Italian alliance. They were then exhausted by a long war, and glad to come to terms with a powerful rival; and the predecessor of Ferdinand, whatever might have been his faults, had talents to make himself feared, and address to acquire friends. But Ferdinand was neither talented nor popular, while his rival was both; and as the tide of fortune had now turned against him, few were willing to expose themselves to it merely for his sake. The Venetians, therefore, at once declined supporting him, saying that, though they still adhered to the stipulations of the Italian alliance, his father had excluded his family from the benefit of it by the support he had given Piccinino in his marauding expedition against the Siennese. The Florentines, too, had their own reasons for refusing to assist him. It has already been mentioned, that John of Anjou had been received by them with all the affection due to the representative of a family by whose assistance their ancestors had been enabled to maintain their independence; the royal standard of the Lily was still endeared to them by many associations, and both Ferdinand and his father had given them much annoyance, and sought to do them much evil. Thus, so far from acceding to the demands of Ferdinand, they could not at first be prevailed upon to remain neuter; and, under the influence of their feelings, they voted a subsidy of eighty thousand florins to the duke of Anjou.

The leading man in Florence, Cosmo de' Medici, had lived long enough in the world, and was sufficiently well versed in its ways, to know that, in managing the affairs of states, men must not be ruled by their feelings. He therefore thought it prudent to consult Francesco Sforza, the most intimate of his friends, and the greatest of living generals and politicians, before allowing his countrymen to carry out the vote which they

had so unanimously passed. For this reason he sent an ambassador to him, to state the resolution to which they had come, and to explain to him that the feelings of the people of Florence, which were always friendly towards the French, had been raised to such a pitch of enthusiasm by the recent successes of John, that he did not think they could possibly be induced to act otherwise. He requested him, therefore, to weigh this circumstance well before deciding which part he would take. On the whole, he thought he could not do better than join him in expelling the Catalan pest, as he termed Ferdinand's party, from Italy. After alluding to the many injuries which they had both of them in times past received from Alphonso, and the connection of his father with the Angevin party, he left no arguments untried to convince him that his real interests would be best promoted by their success. Let him but reflect on the many fiefs that his father had held in the kingdom of Naples—all of these, and probably several others, would be his, if he would join them in placing John on the throne. Desirable as these possessions would be for any one, they were peculiarly so for him, who had such a numerous offspring to provide for: in short, they would enable him to establish a family connection which would make him the most powerful man in Italy. And let him not fear lest John should be so much irritated by the part he had already taken as to retract his offers: in fact, if he would but give him permission, he would undertake to arrange all differences between them; and he would manage matters so, that John himself would be the first to make overtures of reconciliation.

When an astute politician like the duke of Milan has once made up his mind how to act, he is seldom swerved from his determination by any representations of his friends. After he had attentively listened to the proposals of Cosmo's ambassador, and apparently given them all due consideration, he dictated a letter to him to the following purport. He was surprised and grieved to hear that the Florentine people, forgetful of the conditions to which a few years before they had subscribed, had determined on assisting the opponent of Ferdinand; but his astonishment and sorrow were still greater when he was told that Cosmo de' Medici and other wise men had done the same as the fickle and easily-excited multitude. They at least ought to have had the courage and the honesty to oppose the violation of the most solemn engagements. To these engagements, let others act as they might, he for one was determined to adhere. He must once more remind them that they were bound thereby not only not to oppose, but even to assist, the son of Alphonso. He therefore begged that Cosmo would exert his influence, which he well knew was paramount, to induce them to do so; or, if he could not carry this point, let him at least persuade them to remain neuter. With respect to their relations to the rival candidates, he of course recollected the ancient friendship of his father and himself with the house of Anjou, and the many causes of complaint which they both had against Alphonso; but he had been taken off, he might say, by the judgment of Providence, and the character and the circumstances of his son were essentially different.

Alphonso, indeed, had boundless resources, and could neither tolerate an equal nor keep faith with a friend. So great was his pride, that wherever he went he seemed almost to expect that the very buildings and trees should do him homage. It was, of course, impossible to enter into any agreement or form any alliance with him. But Ferdinand had no dominions out of Italy, and was without the power, even if he had the inclination, to do them injury. Let them beware, however, how they allowed the French to obtain any further footing in Italy. The great object of that nation was territorial aggrandisement at the expense of their neighbours: they were already in possession of Asti and Genoa; if, in addition to these, they were established in the kingdom of Naples, he for one would tremble for the independence of the peninsula. Their next object would be the conquest of Lombardy, after which they would be the virtual rulers of the country south of the Alps. He thought, however, he could answer for Ferdinand always acting as their common interests required; and though his fortunes seemed now at a low ebb, he had no doubt but that, with their joint assistance, they would be easily re-established in the following spring.

Cosmo de' Medici and the other statesmen at Florence were influenced either by these arguments, or by their desire of pleasing the duke of Milan. It does not appear whether they ever tried to induce their

countrymen to do anything to support Ferdinand, but they persuaded the assembly to abrogate the vote which they had made of giving a subsidy to his opponent. Nevertheless, the wishes of the Florentines for the success of the Angevin party were so great, that many of the citizens are supposed to have made large contributions out of their private fortunes for its support.

The circumstance of Sforza having been able to change the policy of a great republic like Florence, is no small proof of the degree of power and authority he had attained. But what he was able to do with the great men by whom its councils were directed, he could not effect with one who was, for the time being, regarded as little better than a common marauder. It has already been mentioned that Piccinino had been obliged, sorely against his will, to restore several cities that he had taken in the Dominions of the Church. After this he invaded the territories of Sigismund Malatesta, against whom he had been previously despatched by Alphonso, under the hopes of enriching himself at his expense. These expectations, however, were frustrated by the conclusion of a peace between Malatesta and Ferdinand. Anger resulting from this disappointment, and the hopes of getting something for himself by joining the side that appeared to be winning, induced him to leave the service of the latter for that of his opponent. On hearing of his intentions, Sforza did his best to prevent his carrying them into execution, and he was able, by donations of money, to induce several of his soldiers to remain with Ferdinand. To Piccinino he also offered at once to give his daughter Drusiana in marriage, and promised that he himself would immediately send him a present of money, and arrange with the pope and the king of Naples to put him in possession of some goodly fiefs, if he would but remain faithful to the latter. At first, indeed, he pretended to lend a willing ear to these offers, and requested Sforza to send a friend along with the money to Borso of Este. But this appears to have been merely a trick to gain time, for Borso detained the Milanese ambassador disputing about the most trifling particulars, till the intelligence arrived that Piccinino had gone over to the enemy.

The duke of Milan, on finding that his attempts at mediation were vain, requested the duke of Urbino and his brother Alexander, the possessor of Pesaro, to prevent Piccinino passing through their dominions into the Neapolitan provinces. To assist them in so doing, he sent his brother Borso with a force of two thousand horse; but either because they were unable to oppose him, or unwilling to make their own dominions the scene of war, Piccinino was allowed to pass through them unmolested. However, they lost no time in marching after him, with the whole of their forces, into the disputed territory of Naples; and at the same time Pius, as some think at the instigation of Francesco Sforza, sent two generals, Simoneta and Rinaldo Ursini, with several squadrons of cavalry, to act under the directions of Ferdinand.

The annalist of Italy makes mention of an attempt that was made about this time by one of the insurgent barons, the duke of Sessa, to terminate the contest by the assassination of Ferdinand. He says that the latter, being desirous of effecting a reconciliation with him, agreed to meet him in a certain place, where he was set upon by the duke and two others, but that he was so well skilled in the use of his sword as to be able to keep them at bay till some of his own attendants came to his assistance. Be this as it may, Ferdinand took the field as soon as he had been joined by the forces which had been sent by the pope; and such was the impression of his superiority, that many of the cities which in the preceding year had revolted to his rival now returned to their former allegiance. John himself did not dare to attack him, and retreated to a strong position in the mountains near the Sarno, a river that flows into the sea a little to the south of Naples. As Ferdinand was sufficiently strong to have blockaded his rival there, he might have starved him into a surrender—a course which his leading generals strongly advised him to take. But either because his youthful ardour was so great, or because, as is said by some, his soldiers refused to remain with him unless their arrears of pay were immediately discharged, he determined on attacking. His men, having gained some advantages in the first outset, were allured into the mountain passes, where his cavalry, which constituted his chief strength, were unable to act, and where they were set upon by the whole force of the enemy's infantry, who had all the advantage of the upper ground. The retreat of the assailants was cut off by the river which flowed at the foot of the mountains. The result was, that

Ferdinand sustained a complete defeat, the pope's general, Simoneta, was killed, nearly all the baggage was taken, and the king himself arrived, attended by only twenty horsemen, at Naples.

Ferdinand was now without either an army or money, and it is probable that his cause would have been irretrievably lost, but for the devotion of his wife Isabella. To procure him supplies, she did not hesitate to go about Naples with a begging-box in her hand, soliciting aid, by which means she managed to obtain for him a sum of money sufficient to re-equip himself to a certain extent. It is generally supposed that she was the means of preventing the duke of Anjou following up his victory by marching directly to Naples. Had he done this, it is probable that the contest would then have been once for all decided in his favour. But he, in accordance with the advice given to him by the queen's uncle, the prince of Tarento, stopped to make himself master of the other places of less importance in the vicinity, before marching to the capital, "not knowing", as Machiavelli says, "that in kingdoms the extremities are governed by the head, and not the head by the extremities". And it was currently reported that the prince had tendered this advice in consequence of the intercession of his niece, who made her way into his camp, disguised as a Franciscan friar, and, throwing herself at his feet, entreated him, if he did not wish to be the means of depriving her of the regal position to which he had assisted to raise her, to prevent John from consummating her husband's ruin.

Time was thus given to Ferdinand to make his distress known to the staunchest of his supporters, the duke of Milan. The constancy of the latter was in no way shaken by the misfortunes of his friend. After slightly reproaching him for his rashness at the Sarno, he rallied him on his prospects, and said that he, for one, would support him to the last. As an earnest of his good wishes, he sent him a sum of money and a body of two thousand horse and one thousand foot, under the command of his friend; Robert Sanseverino. He also persuaded Pope Pius, whose friendship does not appear to have stood the test of adversity as well as his own, not to desert his cause.

In the meantime, matters did not proceed better with Ferdinand in the other parts of his dominions. The brothers Sforza, after various manoeuvring, made an attack on an intrenched position which Piccinino had taken up near San Fabiano, in the Abruzzi. After a severe contest, which lasted till darkness separated the combatants, the Sforzas found they had suffered so severely that they retired during the night. Piccinino then advanced into the dominions of the pope, where he did such mischief as to cause panic and disaffection within the walls of Rome. And it again required all Sforza's influence and address to prevent Pius detaching himself from the alliance of Ferdinand. He had sent word to Milan, that reasonable regard, as well for his own safety as for that of the holy church, would require him to do so, if he did not receive sufficient reinforcements to protect him from such annoyance. In reply, the duke sent him a bantering message, complaining that he was causing him more trouble by his timidity than the enemy had done by all their victories. But at the same time Alexander Sforza marched into the Territories of the Church, so considerably reinforced that Piccinino retired before him into the Abruzzi. The receipt of his friend's message, and the timely arrival of the army of his brother, confirmed the pontiff in his former allegiance.

Before the end of the year Ferdinand recovered much of the territory which he had lost after the battle of the Sarno. He retook Castellamare, and many other places in the vicinity of Naples. Cosenza, the capital of Calabria, was captured and barbarously plundered by his troops. He also managed to effect a reconciliation with several of his barons who had either been lukewarm in his cause, or given an actual support to his adversaries. In settling these affairs he was much benefited by the assistance of his wife, who, in addition to the advantages of great personal charms and graceful eloquence, derived considerable influence from her being a native of that part of Italy—a circumstance of no small import in exciting the people against the French. Thus, in spite of the disasters of the Sarno and San Fabiano, Ferdinand stood before the end of the year almost on an equality with his adversary.

CHAPTER XXVII

RENÉ OF ANJOU.—SCANDERBEG

AFTER the influence and the constancy of Sforza had placed Ferdinand in almost as good a position as he had been before his losses in the field, events occurred in Genoa which gave him a decided superiority. The people of that city, like most who have acted in the same manner, found that they had gained nothing by a change of masters. Their treasury having been exhausted by the expenses both of their own wars and of the expeditions which they had equipped to assist the duke of Anjou, it was found necessary to impose new taxes to raise money for the ordinary expenses of the state. The French mode of taxation, which exacted nothing from the nobles and everything from the citizens, was intolerable to a people who had been accustomed to some species of self-government; the national prejudices of the Italians of all parties were much offended by an impolitic attempt to subject to these new burdens a number of citizens who, for past service, had been promised an immunity from all taxation; and it is probable that, in the words of Muratori, the duke of Milan, who could not but be uneasy at beholding a nest of Frenchmen in his immediate vicinity, secretly blew a cherishing breeze upon these seditions.

For some time the people continued pleading, remonstrating, and murmuring to no purpose. At last, on the 9th of March, they assembled in a tumultuous manner to discuss their grievances with the magistrates of their own order. On this occasion, many painted in glowing colours the injustices and hardships to which they were subject, but satisfactory remedies were proposed by none. At last a young man, apparently of a humble station in life, rose up and said, "This was not the time for debating; by the sword alone could these complaints be remedied"; and, having said this, he rushed forward and called on them to take arms. But his words, though they were not forgotten, produced no effect at the moment; and it is the opinion of contemporary historians that, if severe measures of repression had been adopted at the time, the sedition might even then have been quelled.

During the remainder of the day, and the whole of the night, armed masses of people continued to assemble in different parts of the city. At first the French tried to put them down by conciliatory promises; but it was now too late for measures of this sort. Every moment the tumults became more formidable. Paul Fregoso and Prosper Adorno, the heads of the old rival factions, whom a common hatred of the French had for a time

reconciled, entered the city by different gates, each at the head of a considerable body of armed men from the country, and the French fled for safety to the citadel. But scarcely had the two old rivals driven their common enemy before them, when the spirit of discord began once more to show itself: though their hatred lay in the same direction, their interests were widely different, and they now began to dispute among themselves which was to be governor. A large number of the citizens, who might otherwise have been indifferent by which of their countrymen they were ruled, feared that, if Fregoso should obtain the upper hand, he would avenge the death of his brother. This circumstance for a time greatly increased the power of the Adorni; and a prevalent rumour that they were about to join the French in an attack upon their rivals, whether true or not, caused Fregoso to withdraw from the city. But people who seemed to have been sent thither on purpose made it their business to reconcile the citizens of the opposite parties, and they found no difficulty in persuading them that these jealousies had been caused entirely by the intrigues of the French and of their adherents, who, in order that they might make an easy prey of the Adorni, wished first to drive away all the friends of the Fregosi. Thereupon was formed a provisional government of eight citizens, who began by ordering the head of the first-named party to depart from Genoa. But, after a time, both Prosper Adorno and Paul Fregoso were allowed to return; the former was elected doge without any opposition from his rival, and all parties agreed to unite heart and hand to expel the French from the citadel.

As the difficulty in raising money to defray the ordinary expenses of government had been the original cause of the discontent of the Genoese against the French, it could not be expected that they could continue a contest against one of the most powerful monarchs in Europe entirely out of their own resources. Accordingly they sent to Sforza, with whose real wishes they must have been tolerably well acquainted, to beg for assistance; and he was now able to interfere, in the contest with much less detriment either to his honour or to his interest than on any former occasion. In the first place, the attempt of the Angevins to drive Ferdinand from the throne of his father had placed him, as a member of the Italian alliance, in direct hostility to them. In the next place he had been carrying on negotiations, by means of the duke of Savoy, with Louis the Dauphin of France, and he had received an intimation from him, who, like many other heirs-apparent, was in opposition to his father, that he would not view in an unfriendly light any attempt that might be made to drive his countrymen from Genoa. Therefore, throwing off the disguise of neutrality which he had so long affected, he sent a force of about a thousand men, along with a considerable sum of money and several pieces of artillery, to assist the citizens in the siege of the inner city.

The capture of a place like the inner city, strongly fortified by nature and by art, must under any circumstances have been a tedious operation; and in the present instance it was protracted for a considerable length of time by the constantly reviving dissensions between Adorno and Fregoso. Though they had the greatest difficulty in preventing the French making murderous sallies from their stronghold, and though shells were continually discharged upon the city, which frequently destroyed entire houses with their inmates, the sense of their common danger did not make them, for any time at least, restrain their animosity. It required all the influence of Sforza to prevent the cause of their countrymen being ruined by their dissensions, and he at last, fearful of what might be the consequences if these two rivals continued in the same camp, persuaded Fregoso to come to him to Milan.

In this manner the siege was continued till the beginning of July, when the Genoese received the startling intelligence that they were about to be attacked by the combined forces and fleets of the king of France and the duke of Anjou. The terror excited by this intelligence might possibly have proved fatal to them, if it had not been for the firmness of Sforza and the confidence reposed in him by all. Though he did not send them any further assistance from his own troops, lest he should not have an army sufficient to repel any attack that might be made against himself by the forces that had just come from France, he engaged one Marcus Pius, the signor of the neighbouring town of Carpi, to march with a small body of horse to their assistance; and he in no small degree strengthened their position by persuading Fregoso again to act in obedience to Adorno. One of Fregoso's

first deeds was to seize and retain thirty of the richest citizens, for the purpose of getting money from them. Some thought that he was instigated to this act by his rival, who wished to make him unpopular; at all events, it could only have produced that effect, for he failed in extorting anything from his victims. It was finally arranged that the command of the force which was to defend the city against any attack that might be made on it by land was to be intrusted to Fregoso, while that of the besieging force in the interior remained, as before, with Adorno.

Shortly after these preparations had been made, the French troops, commanded by Rene in person, disembarked at Voragine, and advanced, experiencing scarcely any opposition, to within five miles of Genoa. In the opinion of most contemporary writers, if they had immediately proceeded to attack the city, both by sea and by land, they would have met with but *a* feeble resistance. But either because the troops needed repose, or in deference to the wishes of the Genoese nobles in the French camp—who, anxious to save their native city from being sacked, still hoped that matters might be arranged by accommodation—the opportunity was allowed to go by, and time was given to the citizens to rally their spirits and their forces. However, after some skirmishes, in which it was ascertained that the French were not invincible, René, on the 17th July, ordered his whole army to march forward, and to carry the heights by which the city of Genoa is overlooked. He himself, being now too old to be of much service in the field, remained at sea, immediately beneath the hills where the action was to take place. The foremost division of the Italians was driven back at the first onset, but it was soon rallied, and remained, along with the main body of the army, firm on the summit. The French, by the time they approached them, were in no small degree exhausted by having had to climb up a mountain under a burning Italian sun and the weight of their heavy armour; while the Italians, who had not undergone anything like the same amount of fatigue, had the advantage of fighting under a climate to which they were accustomed, and had their strength recruited by a constant supply of refreshments from the city. Thus they were enabled to offer a protracted resistance to their once much-dreaded opponents.

The battle continued for some time without any decided result, till three horsemen, known to be in the service of Sforza, came in haste to the scene of action, and gave out that a considerable force, which had been despatched by their master, was already at hand. To insure credit to their assertion, they directed the attention of the combatants to a large body of men whom they had collected from the neighbouring towns, and ordered to assemble together in the distance. The actual appearance of the duke of Milan with the whole of his troops could not have produced a more decided result: the Genoese, raising a cheer in honour of Sforza, renewed the attack with fresh vigour; while the French, already exhausted by fatigue, taken aback by the rapidity of the attack, and auguring evil tidings from the cheer, immediately gave way. They were then driven with great precipitancy down the mountain which they had ascended so full of hope in the morning.

When, from his position in the ship beneath, Rene beheld the fine army of six thousand men, whom he had expected to enter Genoa in triumph, flying in confusion to the shore, he immediately put out to sea, hoping that, when they beheld their retreat cut off, despair might make them rally. But the nature of the ground rendered it impossible to restore order. The Genoese continued the pursuit as far as the sea, and no choice remained to the fugitives but to encounter the risk of the element, or to submit to their enemies. The havoc was increased by the number of peasants who, from desire of rapine or revenge, had joined the pursuers. Some of the fugitives perished in an attempt to swim to the ships in their heavy armour, and all the others fell into the hands of the Genoese; so that, of the force which only a few days before had disembarked at Voragine, scarcely one vestige was saved. As the French, being at that time, as Muratori says, a beastly nation, did not give any quarter to the Italians, the latter now paid them in the same coin. Many of them, nevertheless, were taken alive, and reserved to be ransomed. The number of the French slain has been variously estimated at from two to four thousand—a strange contrast to some of the almost bloodless battles which have lately been described. Of the Genoese only three or four were killed in the field.

The defeat of their common enemy revived the dissensions between Adorno and Fregoso for the third time since the commencement of the revolt. The former, in virtue of the authority which had been deputed to him as doge, forbade the latter to enter the city, and, after he had made his way in by stealth, attempted to expel him by force. Thereupon arose a fierce contention, in which Sforza's troops remained neutral, and the result of which was, that Adorno was obliged to give way and to depart from the city. As Paul Fregoso was already an archbishop, it was thought that the office of doge would be unfitting for one of his sacred calling; so his cousin, Louis Fregoso, was chosen to fill the place vacated by his adversary. When order was thus restored among the Genoese, René made a formal surrender of the inner city, and retired without much loss of time to his own country. Shortly after this the king of France died, as was supposed of chagrin at the success of the Genoese revolution.

As Charles's son, now Louis XI, had expressed himself averse to the retention of Genoa by his father, the succession of the latter might be supposed by many to guarantee the Genoese in the enjoyment of their liberty. But the views of that monarch, like those of most heirs-apparent who have been opposed to their fathers when living, immediately changed with his circumstances. To Sforza's ambassador, who was sent to Paris on his accession, he gave a reception not very dissimilar to that which our Henry V, on a like occasion, gave to the friends of his youth. On his requesting him that, as king, he would ratify the treaties that, as dauphin, he had made with the duke, he indignantly upbraided him with his master's having caused the destruction of his father's army at Genoa, and kept his kinsman, the duke of Anjou, from the crown of Naples. Nor was he much mollified by the reply of the ambassador, that he believed that all these things had been done not only with his consent, but to a great extent at his instigation.

While these things were going on at Genoa, the war continued in the kingdom of Naples without any remarkable result. As soon as the weather permitted, Piccinino took the field in the Abruzzi, and Sigismund Malatesta began attacking the dominions of the pope. The former was opposed by Alexander Sforza : the two armies continued to manoeuvre and to skirmish in the presence of each other; and on one occasion, Donatus, a Milanese officer of note, whose name has frequently been mentioned, was surprised and taken prisoner; but Piccinino was finally obliged to retire before his antagonist, leaving him in undisputed possession of that territory. In the March of Ancona, Malatesta gained some advantage over the pontifical troops, and was proceeding to join his forces with those of Piccinino, when he was recalled by the intelligence that a fresh army of the pope's had entered his dominions. But the most remarkable feature in the campaign was the pope's availing himself of the unsettled state of the kingdom of Naples, to take several cities belonging to his ally Ferdinand. Having heard that the inhabitants of Terracina—a town to which, it has already been mentioned, he laid claim—were discontented with Ferdinand, he ordered count Frederic of Urbino to take it in his name, and afterwards authorised him to extend his conquests over several cities in the neighbourhood. It was in vain that Sforza and Ferdinand remonstrated with him—he was determined to have some recompense for the perils to which his alliance with the latter had so frequently exposed his own dominions; and both the king and the duke were too well aware of the importance of having him on their side to take occasion to quarrel with him. He excused himself by saying that he had no hand in promoting the discontent of the inhabitants of Terracina, but that, if he had not taken the city, it would most certainly have gone over to the French, and that surely it was better for their common cause that it should belong to him than to their enemies. At the same time, in order to soothe Ferdinand, he sent him a considerable reinforcement under the command of his nephew Antonio. But as he was inferior to none of his order in their distinguishing quality of nepotism, he invested his said nephew Antonio with the fiefs he had conquered in the kingdom of Naples, and requested Ferdinand to fulfil his promise of giving him his natural daughter Maria for his wife. The monarch, anxious to gratify the pope, not only did this, but also created this same Antonio duke of Amalfi, and grand justiciary of his kingdom.

Towards the end of the year, Ferdinand received no inconsiderable accession of strength from a new ally brought to him, as was thought, by the good offices of the pope. George Castriot, celebrated in history

under the name of Scanderbeg, landed on the eastern coast of Apulia with a force of eight hundred men, designed for his assistance. This singular personage was the son of a sovereign in Albania, who had been forced into alliance with the Turks. When, on the death of his father, he beheld the hereditary dominions of his family appropriated by the sultan, he formed the project of regaining them; and though he had been forced to profess the religion and to serve in the camp of the Mussulmen, he continued to watch his opportunity. After the defeat of the Turks near Sophia in 1442, he passed over, and managed by a bold stratagem to do signal service, to the victors. Having collected under his banners all the Christians that were scattered throughout Epirus, he succeeded ere long in freeing the whole of the mountainous districts of that province and of Albania from their barbarian invaders. From that time he was noted as the most persevering as well as the most successful of the champions of Christendom. He became known to the Italians after the progress of the Turks had begun to give them uneasiness; and some of the contributions which had been levied for the fitting out expeditions, which were never sent, against the Turks, were placed at his disposal. It now gave no small disgust to many to behold the resources which had been given to him, to be used against their common enemy, turned against a prince whom they wished to succeed.

It was evident that, as matters now stood, John of Anjou had but little chance of maintaining his position, unless fortune should take some unexpected turn, in his favour. Some hope now began to dawn on him from a new quarter. In the month of August of the present year, Sforza was attacked by a dropsy, which many thought would be incurable; and it was evident that, if he were carried off by death, or if his capacity were to be weakened by disease, the main stay of his adversaries' cause would be gone. But though his body was doubtless debilitated by illness, he showed that his constancy was as unshaken and his judgment as discerning as ever. He, as well as the Venetians and Florentines, sent ambassadors to Paris to treat of various matters; and the king, though gracious to all, received Sforza's with the most marked attention. It turned out that Louis's great object was to induce him, as well as the pope, to withdraw their support from Ferdinand. After having used the arguments which had been so many times resorted to in vain, he went on to say that, even if his cousin, John of Anjou, were expelled from the peninsula of Italy, he would do his best to maintain him in Sicily. But Sforza's resolution was as unshaken as ever; and he declared in a positive manner, that neither the prospect of advantage or loss to himself, nor respect for the wishes of the king, should induce him to relinquish the part he had taken. His family and friends tried in vain to alter his resolution. Even Bianca Maria, who in general had great influence over him, and who thought that, in the event of her husband's disease proving fatal, it would be better for her son to be found on the same side with the king of France, failed to effect anything; and when he became annoyed by her frequent solicitations, he forbade the mention of the subject in his presence.

Sforza's unswerving constancy produced its due effect on the pope. When Louis sent him a message to the same effect as he had done to the duke of Milan, and even threatened, in the case of his refusal, to summon a general council to discuss the propriety of his former conduct, he replied in public, that he was bound by every obligation of justice and honour to continue acting as he did. At the same time he secretly intimated to Sforza that he would do exactly as he wished, and it was thought by many that he was in hopes that his death would soon leave him at liberty to act more in accordance with his wishes. It required a little decided language, and some actual threats from the duke, to keep him true to his obligations.

The many-tongued strumpet, Fame, had spread such exaggerated accounts of Sforza's illness, that it was commonly believed in Italy, as well as in Europe, that he was at the point of death, if, indeed, he had not actually expired. And now many petty states which had licked, however they might have loathed, his hand, while in the plenitude of power, rose, like the meaner animals, anxious to have a kick at the old lion in his decrepitude; while others, who had never been beholden to him for aught, showed their constancy by standing by him, as they believed, in the hour of death. The owners of the soil around Piacenza rose up in a mass, and made an onslaught on Sforza's magistrates while they were actually engaged in the discharge of their duties. The inhabitants of the town, who had remained perfectly faithful since the terrible lesson they had received

fourteen years before, were uncertain what part to take. Tiberto Brandolino, who, since Sforza's accession to the duchy of Milan, had been among the most honoured of his generals, now that he believed his patron was about to depart from the land of the living, did not hesitate to join his enemies. On the other hand, the governor of the place, though at first obliged to make a pretence of giving in to the insurgents, remained faithful to his trust; and having seized some of the ringleaders, he retained possession of the city. The Florentines sent ambassadors to Lombardy with orders to assure the duke of their continued friendship, and to stand by his family in the event of his death.

As soon as the duke heard what was going on at Piacenza, he sent thither the same Donatus who has so frequently been mentioned already as having done him good service. The insurgents were soon dispersed by him, and their ringleader cast into prison, after a vain attempt to escape to Genoa. Tiberto Brandolino, who hoped that the part he had taken in the rebellion was as yet unknown to his master, asked leave to go to the scene of active operations in Naples; but as evidence of his guilt transpired before he took his departure, he was arrested, and confined at Piacenza. Sometime after his captivity he was found dead in his dungeon. It is related by Sforza's secretary and biographer, and was generally circulated among his friends, that Tiberto had killed himself; but a report prevailed among the duke's enemies that he had been murdered by assassins sent thither by his order. A story so derogatory to Sforza found ready acceptance with the rebellious but subjugated Piacenzans; and the vulgar, ever ready to accommodate their superstitious imaginations to their prejudices, gave out that, when Brandolino's remains were carried from the prison to the grave, the devil was seen in the shape of a great mastiff sitting on his bier, snarling like Minos in the *Inferno* of Dante, and vowing vengeance against his murderers.

It is probable that Piccinino, if he could have followed the bent of his inclinations, would not have remained an inactive spectator of the revolt at Piacenza; but he was this time obliged to devote all his energies to the conduct of the war in the southern provinces of Italy. In spite of the formidable accession of strength which had been received by his adversaries, he managed to make head against them; and being joined by John of Anjou in person, he even retook several cities in the Abruzzi and Apulia which had fallen into their hands. His partial success, indeed, appears to have given some uneasiness to the duke of Milan, who complained much of the inactivity of his brother Alexander, and of the manner in which the resources which he had supplied to him and Ferdinand had been squandered away. At last, by dint of remonstrances and subsidies, they were persuaded to take the field by the beginning of July. Their first act was to march to the relief of Orsaria, a fortress that was then besieged by Piccinino. After some skirmishing on both sides, the besieging army was obliged to fall back upon Troia, where they were closely followed by their enemies. Here a general action took place, which, as it was fought in the presence of both the sovereigns, and as it was likely, in consequence of the exhaustion of the resources of both parties, to be decisive of the fate of the kingdom, was most obstinately contested. At the end of the day the Angevins fled in disorder, leaving their camp to be pillaged by their enemies. Piccinino, when from the walls of Troia he beheld the victors dispersed through his tents in quest of booty, sallied forth upon them at the head of a select body of men. But all his attempts to repair the disaster were in vain. Though he managed to recover several prisoners, and even to cause some panic among the conquerors, it was not long before Ferdinand and Alexander Sforza collected together a body of cavalry, with which they drove him and his followers back to the city.

Fortune seemed now to have taken a decided turn in favour of Ferdinand. John of Anjou and Piccinino retired the night of the battle, leaving Troia and the whole of the surrounding country to the conquerors. They still seem to have entertained some hopes of bringing together the scattered supporters of their party, so as to be able again to face the enemy. But they soon learned that fortune had not dealt better with their friends than with themselves. Some little time before, Sigismund Malatesta had set forth at the head of a considerable force, with the intention of forming a junction with them in the Abruzzi; but he was soon stopped by the startling intelligence that the pope, in revenge for the many annoyances he had sustained from him, had

sent an invading force into his dominions under the command of Frederic of Urbino. Sigismund, in spite of all his efforts to defend himself, in a short time beheld the fairest of his dominions overrun by the enemy; and having as yet heard nothing of the battle of Troia, he betook himself by sea to the Abruzzi, to implore the assistance of John of Anjou and Piccinino. The allies then first became acquainted with the extent of each other's disasters; and Sigismund, seeing no hope of aid in any quarter, was obliged to return to do the best for himself in what remained to him of his former dominions.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SFORZA SUBMIT TO FERDINAND.—JOHN OF ANJOU RETURNS TO FRANCE.

THE battle of Troia was decisive of the Neapolitan war. Alexander and Ferdinand began, without delay, to profit by their victory. The city of Troia itself did not hold out long—the inhabitants soon sent word to Alexander Sforza that they were willing to surrender to him in the name of his brother, the duke of Milan; but that they would submit to any extremity before putting themselves again under a sovereign of the house of Aragon. To facilitate matters, Alexander consented to take the city in the name of his brother, but at the same time he gave Ferdinand to understand that it should be given to his son as a part of Hippolyta's dowry. Not long afterwards, Foggia, Ascoli, and other places in the neighbourhood, submitted; and in order that the soldiers might not be without their due share of the fruits of the victory, some towns of minor importance were sacked and made over to them.

It was now that many of the rebellious barons, seeing that the chief whom they had chosen had failed, began to make friends to themselves of one whose protection they were likely to need. Among the first of these was Antonio Orsini, the prince of Tarento, who was for a long time supposed to have furnished to the Angevin party the sinews of war, but who was now easily persuaded to accept the offers made by Ferdinand. The latter guaranteed him in the full possession of his fiefs, and promised him the situation of captain-general of his forces, on the condition of his joining him. But on no one occasion, perhaps, was the general dislike and distrust of Ferdinand, and the respect which was universally entertained towards Sforza, made more manifest than on this. Many of the chiefs of the Angevin party intimated to the Milanese ambassadors their willingness to submit to their duke, and earnestly begged that he would not ask them to put themselves under the dominion of the new monarch. Indeed, a less prudent man, in Sforza's situation, might have availed himself of these offers to add to his dominions the kingdom of Naples. But he was wise enough to know that on many occasions, according to the aphorism of Hesiod, "the half was more than the whole"; and he now wisely declined to endanger the security of the sovereignty he had already acquired, by a vain attempt to grasp at another, more especially as there now appeared to be every probability of his being able to place there a king who, for many reasons, would be obliged to act as he wished. Nevertheless, it required all his address to persuade those who would so willingly have been ruled by him, to trust to the clemency or promises of Ferdinand.

In the kingdom of Naples, little now remained to be done by fighting. Piccinino, indeed, brought his forces to the assistance of some of the barons who still held out in desperation; but he appeared more anxious to enrich himself at their expense, than to secure their independence. Under some pretext or other he took the

town of Celano, whence he carried off an immense quantity of booty, in the shape of gold, silver, and precious stones, along with sufficient grain and cattle to support his army for some time to come. After this he in some degree redeemed his reputation, by forcing Ferdinand to raise the siege of a small fortress in the territory of Marino. But finding himself, about the middle of August, confronted by Alexander Sforza, at the head of a considerable army, he came to be of opinion that he could no longer remain in the service of the Angevins with any hope of advantage. Alexander, at the time that he might possibly have been making preparations for an engagement, received a message from his adversary, requesting a pass for the sake of having some private conversation with him. The result of this private conversation was, that Piccinino was to leave the duke of Anjou, and take service under Ferdinand, in return for which he was to be allowed to retain possession of Sulmona, and other places he had occupied in the Neapolitan territory, and receive a salary of ninety thousand golden ducats from him and his allies. These terms are said not to have been very acceptable to Ferdinand; and, indeed, they might have been thought by many rather too liberal to be offered to a vanquished foe. But the king's allies were anxious to put a speedy termination to a war of which the whole burden, and no small part of the risk, devolved on themselves; and they compelled him to acquiesce in a measure which seemed to deprive the opposite party of their only hope of salvation.

This arrangement of Piccinino's produced the desired effects. City after city, and province after province, submitted to Ferdinand. The city of Manfredonia sustained a blockade of a few days, and had actually sent to propose terms of capitulation, when a report was spread that a vessel with the Angevin flag was approaching. A shout in favour of the duke of Anjou's name was raised by the mob, on which many of the more sober-minded of the citizens, who saw the futility of any resistance, requested Ferdinand to send a body of troops sufficient to oppose any force that might be landed from this vessel. When the gates were opened to admit them, the whole army rushed in and began the work of pillage, nor were all the efforts of Ferdinand able to save this city from their avidity.

From this time the leaders of the opposite party seemed to have thought their case hopeless. The duke of Sessa, who had been among the first to invite John of Anjou to the kingdom, and among the staunchest of his supporters, implored the pardon and sought the alliance of Ferdinand. To obtain the former, he put him in possession of several of his most important fortresses, and cemented the latter by arranging a marriage between his own son and the king's daughter. And John of Anjou, finding no rest for the sole of his foot in the kingdom he had once all but conquered, retired to Ischia, there to await any succours that might be sent to him by his father or the king of France.

Matters did not go better with the allies and well-wishers of John. The king of France, as will presently be explained, found that he had so much to do at home, that he did not care to embarrass himself by interfering in the affairs of the peninsula. The Venetians, who had always secretly supported, though they had never openly espoused his cause, were now engaged in a disastrous war with the Turks and with the Emperor of Germany; so from them he could expect nothing. In the beginning of the year, Sigismund Malatesta had made a vigorous effort to recover his lost ground, but fortune did not favour him. Fano, one of his principal towns, after a protracted resistance, surrendered to the duke of Urbino, and he was soon left with nothing except the town of Rimini itself, and a few fortresses of minor importance. In his desperation he appealed to the Venetians for succour, but they, for the reasons already mentioned, could do nothing for him but intercede in his behalf with the pontiff. Though they were joined in this by the Florentines, it was with great difficulty that Pius could be prevailed upon to leave him in possession of the only small spot in his former dominions that now remained to him, and he did so only on the condition of its reverting to the Territories of the Church after his death. This was the end of the family of Malatesta, whose representatives have already been mentioned as having been celebrated, about a century and a half before, as combining the vices of a traitor and a mastiff, and who do not appear to have become less cruel or treacherous in the course of generations.

Before the end of the year Ferdinand's good fortune was crowned by his succeeding to the wealth and dominions of a man who, if he lived, might have been a thorn in his side. On the 15th of November expired Antonio Orsini, the prince of Tarento. Though he had arrived at an age when nature has generally run its course, there were not wanting those who insinuated that he had been strangled by order of the king; and it is certain that Ferdinand was not scrupulous in such matters. After his death was found a will, suspected by many to have been forged, leaving Ferdinand heir to all his states and his treasures. These treasures, as he had been given to hoarding in his old age, were considerable, and were said to have amounted to a million florins of gold. Thus did Ferdinand become possessed of almost the only spot in his kingdom which might have afforded to his enemies a basis for the recommencement of their operations, and also of money sufficient to maintain an army to secure him in the possession of his dominions.

Since the beginning of the fifteenth century the Genoese had shown themselves as restless, under any form of government, as the Florentines had been one century before. Being jealous of the elevation of, or discontented with the protection afforded them by, their native rulers, they had at different times put themselves under the Visconti, or the kings of France, and when they found that they had gained nothing by the change, they had recalled their former governors. Even while they were ruled by their countrymen, the spirit of party generally ran so high that it was seldom that the same man could maintain for any time the chief place in the republic. After they had called in and driven out the French in the manner described, and after the rival factions had fought for supremacy almost beneath the cannon of the enemy, they submitted for a time to the government of the Fregosi. In the space of two years they made trial of three different members of the family, some of whom they elevated and deposed more than once; and they found their tyranny or their incapacity alike unendurable. The former caused all those who had the means of living elsewhere to take their departure; and in consequence of the latter, several of the subject cities in the neighbourhood refused any longer to acknowledge their authority. Many of them made secret overtures to, and some of their own accord actually hoisted the standards of, the duke of Milan.

A man of Sforza's sagacity could not be an inattentive observer of the events that might put him in possession of a strip of country that was necessary for the consolidation and the security of his own dominions. But he was much too prudent to involve himself in direct hostilities with the king of France; for though he had, in opposition to his wishes, stoutly maintained the cause of Ferdinand in the kingdom of Naples, and assisted in expelling the forces of his rival from Genoa, the Italian alliance had afforded him a pretext for these acts, which were very different from a direct attempt to take for himself any portion of territory to which that monarch laid claim. But while the above-mentioned events were taking place at Genoa, others had occurred in France which made Louis prefer the friendship of one of the most influential of his neighbours, and the most politic prince of the day, to the nominal possession of a few cities in a foreign country. During the reign of his predecessor, the power of the feudal aristocracy had grown to such a height as to threaten the dismemberment of his kingdom, and it was now his object to humiliate and to subject the barons, though he had formerly supported them when they were opposed to his father. Being skilled beyond the other princes north of the Alps in what may be termed the science of politics, he clearly perceived and appreciated the genius of Sforza; and he was determined that his enemies should not have the benefit of his friendship or of his counsels. The town of Savona, the only place still in his possession on the coast of Italy, so far from yielding him any revenue, was actually taxing his resources for the maintenance of a garrison; and he had too much on hand to think of making any attempt to regain Genoa and its other dependencies. He therefore determined to purchase the friendship of Sforza, by making over to him those claims and rights, which, though a source of embarrassment to himself, would be invaluable to the owner of Milan.

The king of France knew the value of public opinion far too well to do anything which should lead others to suppose that he was seeking to purchase the support of an Italian prince by any sort of concession. But he authorised his ambassador at the court of Rome to drop to Sforza's friends some hints of his altered

sentiments with regard to his Italian possessions, and to insinuate that, if the duke would make overtures of friendship and alliance to the king, they might make some arrangement advantageous to both. These hints, having been duly made, were not lost upon Sforza, and the ambassadors that he sent thereupon to the court of France found no difficulty in settling everything according to his wishes. The king of France and his friend, the duke of Milan, entered into a treaty, which, it was agreed, was in no way to effect the engagements of the latter with the Italian alliance. The former made over to his new friend the possession of Savona, and all his claims to the sovereignty of Genoa, and sent formal intimation of this clause in the treaty to the Venetians and the other potentates of Italy, threatening them with his hostility in the event of their interference. Sforza immediately sent a body of troops to Savona, under the command of his brother Conrad Foliano, who entered the citadel amidst the acclamations of the inhabitants. At the same time a marriage was arranged between Galeazzo Sforza and a princess of the house of France. This gave such offence to the marquis of Mantua, one of whose daughters had been betrothed to Galeazzo, that he entered the service of the Venetians in disgust, and became the chief captain of their forces.

To get possession of Genoa, Sforza had now only to arrange matters with the present ruler and inhabitants of the city. It seemed impossible, indeed, that it could long continue in its present state. Many who had fled from it in fear or disgust had established their headquarters at Savona, whence they ceased not to entreat the duke of Milan to put an end to their troubles by giving to their country the benefit of his government. It was generally supposed, too, that those who remained at Genoa, though compelled by fear to submit to, were far from being content with, their present rulers. Sforza; thus finding that the rights he had derived from his treaty with the king were backed by the wishes of the people, endeavoured to persuade Fregoso, by promises and by threats, to give up possession of the city to him. But on the latter refusing to be thus ousted from his possessions, he entered into a league with the head of the opposite faction, and even with some of the coadjutors of the reigning doge, who, as they held fiefs in his dominions, were obliged to act as he wished. It was agreed they were to form a junction with the exiled nobles, many of whom owned fortresses in the surrounding mountains, and that, after receiving a reinforcement from Milan, they should march upon Genoa. It was also settled that Sforza's faithful officer, Donatus, was to come to their assistance with a part of the garrison that had been left at Savona.

Paul Fregoso, beholding himself thus menaced on all sides, determined to resist to the uttermost. Having put the city in a state of defence, and left a considerable garrison in the castle, he departed with three triremes, hoping to collect all his adherents in some point on the coast, and to return with a large force. In the meantime, the enemy advanced with but little opposition, and they soon got possession of one of the gates, which admitted them into the outer city. The people, who at first remained neutral, now declared in favour of the Milanese; and being joined by a great crowd of exiles and malcontents who returned with the army, they did obeisance to Sforza's officers as the representatives of their doge. Vigorous preparations were then made to storm the citadel with all the artillery that could be sent from Milan. Among those who had been left in the citadel by the fugitive doge was Bartolomeo, his brother Peter's wife, and owner of some cities in the neighbourhood. That lady, frightened at the prospect of the cannon being directed against her, sent privately to treat with the besiegers, but endeavoured to protract the negotiations as much as possible, hoping that time might be given to her brother-in-law to collect his forces, and to come to their relief. But the Milanese officers, determined to show her that, if she meant to save her own possessions, no time was to be lost, attacked and took possession of several of her cities. On hearing of this, she did not delay any longer, and agreed to make over to them the inner town, on the condition of being allowed to retain her own possessions, and of receiving fourteen thousand florins of gold. The Milanese soldiers were admitted by night, and the garrison of Fregoso, being taken by surprise, offered no resistance.

Both Sforza and his friends were anxious that he should appear to have got possession of Genoa, more by the wishes of the great majority of the citizens than by right of conquest. Accordingly, preparations

were made to invest him with his new dignity, in a manner that might attract the notice of all Italy. Twenty-four people, taken from different orders of the citizens, were chosen to go as ambassadors to Milan, for the purpose of doing honour to their new duke, and of arranging with him the form of their government. Two hundred more followed in their train. As soon as it was known that they were approaching Milan, they were met by the sons of Sforza and the chief men of the state, who had been ordered to conduct them with all dignity into the city. The first-born of the sons, Galeazzo Maria, having taken the right hand of the one who appeared to be entitled to precedence among the ambassadors, proceeded by his side; the other sons of the duke and the Milanese nobles having done the same with the remaining ambassadors, followed, in the order of their ages and rank: they then entered in a procession of two and two into the city, amidst martial music and the shouts of the populace. The ambassadors were brought to a palace that had been prepared for their reception. Three days were spent in festivals of the most magnificent nature, and on the fourth it was settled that they were to be received by the duke.

When the appointed time had come, Sforza appeared on an elevated platform in the chief hall in the Curia, with Bianca Maria by his side, and the princes and princesses, and the great officers of state, around and behind him. On the platform was a throne, above which were hangings of wonderful texture and many colours. All were clad in their state apparel: the appearance of the duke was rendered, if possible, more imposing than usual, by the silver embroidery at the bottom of his robe, and by a pearl of great price which he wore on his head. Many of the other nobles appeared on a less elevated platform, on each side of which the fairest of the Milanese matrons and maids added by their presence to the beauty of the scene. Seats were provided for the ladies as well as for the most dignified of the courtiers and nobility, and the floor of the great hall was strewn with Oriental tapestry, flowers, and garlands. Free ingress was allowed to the people, while bars were fixed across the hall in such a manner as to prevent them trespassing on the space allotted to the ambassadors. In due time the ambassadors themselves appeared, attracting, it is related, the admiration of all, both by their apparel and their gait. It might almost be fancied, without exaggeration, says a contemporary historian, that they were the chief of the Roman Senate of yore, having full powers delegated to them on some important occasion. As they appeared before the duke, with bended knees and heads uncovered, he, as well as the duchess, took them in the most gracious manner by their hands, and ordered them to arise. Leave having been given them to speak, they stepped back a few paces from the ducal throne after which one of them, by name Baptista Goanna, a lawyer by profession, who seemed, both in dignity and in age, to take precedence of the others, addressed the son of the peasant of Cotignola as follows :—

“Most magnanimous and invincible of sovereigns, the republic of Genoa, which, after years of suffering from anarchy and discord, has been considering long and anxiously how it can be ruled with immunity from these evils, and with the greatest advantage to all, has come to the resolution to seek out some prince who is superior to all others in wisdom, justice, and honesty. Experience, indeed, has shown us that a country can no more be ruled by a multitude than a ship can be steered by many pilots, or an army led by many generals. For we, who are renowned from East to West for our victories, our colonies, and our commerce—we who have conquered so many kings, princes, and free states, have not been able to keep ourselves in subjection. We see plainly that, if we do not alter our system, we shall not cease to be torn by discord. As heaven, the common country of all the good, is ruled by one God, it is necessary for us to be under one prince, who can rule and manage everything by his wisdom and virtue. Casting our eyes over all Italy, and thence over all Europe, we see no one so worthy to fill this post as yourself. Consider, we beseech you, the greatness of the offer that we now make to you; consider that, if you accept it, you will have most ample opportunity of exhibiting your talents and your virtue to all nations, and that so you will acquire great and imperishable fame. Think what a noble work it will be for you to heal the wounds of our bleeding city, to extinguish the fire of faction, to see that equal justice is rendered to all men. In return for this, you will have the rule over the whole coast of Liguria down to the territory of Pisa, along with the noble island of Corsica. In addition, you will have in the East the islands of Thasos, Lesbos, and Chios, besides the town of Amacosto, the largest and richest in the island of Cyprus,

Amassa and Caffa on the coast of the Black Sea, besides the region of Tana, as far as the Don in Scythia, In all these great cities, the foundations of which have been laid by the Genoese in the most distant parts of the world, will your victorious standards be unfurled, and your great name be celebrated. To be brief, you are looked upon by all Christians as one sent to them from heaven at the present time, and worthy to be adored by them and by barbarians alike”.

After this very complimentary address, the standard, the sceptre, and the great seal of the republic, along with the keys of the city, were presented to him by Giovanni Sierra, another lawyer, who at the same time made a speech, in which, however, the flattery must have appeared too glaring to be acceptable. After saying that it would require another Livy or another Xenophon duly to commemorate all the great deeds that he had done, for that they surpassed the powers of all living historians, he added, that a still greater deed remained for him to do—to restore peace to their distracted city. The glory arising from military achievements, he said, must be shared in by others, while that resulting from the task last mentioned would belong to him alone. He concluded by describing the glory that would accrue to him therefrom in three of those lines of Virgil, written in praise of Augustus, in a style sufficiently adulatory to justify the expression applied by Tacitus to the prose writers of the period, “donec gliscente adulatione deterrentur”.

When all the insignia of the state had been duly delivered, Sforza, holding the sceptre of Genoa in his own hand, having placed the standard in that of Galeazzo, and given over the keys and seal to his two next sons, made the following gracious reply :—

“Pleasing to us, O men of Genoa, was your arrival; most pleasing and most agreeable has been your speech. We have always had an affectionate regard for your interests, and wished for that which was most conducive to your dignity and your tranquillity. Many things, indeed, appear to us to make it advisable for all parties that both Milan and Genoa should be under the same governor. The long line of frontier between the two states, and the commercial intercourse that is constantly passing between them, renders it impossible that prosperity or adversity can ever happen to one without in some way affecting the other. Wherefore we avail ourselves of your offer, not so much for the sake of adding to our own empire, which the Almighty has already made sufficiently extensive and powerful, as for that of benefiting both you and our own subjects. Of course, we are duly aware how much we are increasing our own dignity and power by so doing, and we are also sensible of the responsibility which thereby we are entailing on ourselves; wherefore we shall strive to perform, in the best manner possible, the duties that you have committed to us. If we have any qualities which fit us for undertaking these duties, to God be the glory, whom we are also to thank for whatever fortune we have enjoyed during our life”.

The speeches being ended, the Genoese ambassadors took the oaths of perpetual allegiance to Sforza and his descendants on behalf of themselves and their fellow-citizens, and in due time the assembly dispersed.

The delegates, after their return to Genoa, found that the archbishop, Paul Fregoso, who at one time thought that the accepting the office of doge might be incompatible with his sacred character, had turned pirate. As he was unable to collect a sufficient force to make a descent on the city, he avenged himself on his countrymen by making attacks on their argosies, wherever they could be found trading on the waters of the Mediterranean. His first attempt was against four of their vessels, just as they were about to enter the port of Villafranca; but they gave him such a warm reception that he was induced to change his quarters, and to hover around the coast of Sicily. It could hardly, however, be expected that the Genoese, who had conquered mighty kingdoms, and extended their empire into remote and formerly unexplored regions, would long continue to put up with annoyances of this description. One of their first acts, after peace and tranquillity had been restored to them under the government of Sforza, was to send against the pirate archbishop four vessels, under the

command of Francesco Spinola. These vessels fell in with his holiness near the island of Corsica, where they took all his ships, after he himself, with all his crews, had made their escape in small boats. After this, Genoa had rest from its troubles for fourteen years.

About the same time, also, John of Anjou came to the resolution of abandoning all further attempts to make himself king of Naples. In the beginning of the year J.464, his father Rend had sent him a fleet of ten galleys from Marseilles, hoping that he might once more be put in a state to take the field; but on hearing of the death of Antonio Orsini, in whom, notwithstanding his treaty with Ferdinand, he seems to have placed some hopes, as also of Sforza's alliance with the king of France, and of the revolution of Genoa, he abandoned the enterprise in despair. In the sixth year after he had departed from France with such high expectations, he returned thither with all the anguish of mind that is usually caused by blighted hopes and the fruitless expenditure of energy and resources.

BOOK EIGHTH.

CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER XXIX

STATE OF AFFAIRS AT FLORENCE.—REMARKS ON SFORZA'S CHARACTER.

It must be acknowledged that few military adventurers ever succeeded better than Francesco Sforza. Forty years before the event just narrated, he had inherited from his father the uncertain possession of some isolated fiefs, and the confidence of a number of mercenary soldiers. He was now lord of the most fertile, if not of the fairest, of the lands of Italy. His dominions comprised two cities, to which the names of Grande and Superba had been given, and one of which commanded the commerce of the seas between the Pillars of Hercules and the mouth of the Don. His colonial empire was inferior to that of the Venetians alone. As he had succeeded in carrying out to his heart's desire the stipulations of the Italian alliance, as the chief man in the republic of Florence was the most intimate of his friends, and as neither the pope nor the king of Naples dared do anything against his wishes, his influence may be said to have been paramount in the peninsula. Moreover, his alliance was eagerly sought after by one of the most powerful of the monarchs north of the Alps.

After he had thus established his influence and added to his dignity, he did not complete any enterprise of importance in Italy. He talked at one time of sending his son, Ludovico Sforza, in command of an expedition against the Turks; and in the following year he despatched his heir, Galeazzo Maria, along with some of his best captains, and a considerable force, to assist the king of France against his refractory barons. But he never sent the former, and did not live to witness the return of the latter. Little now remains for his biographer but to notice the simultaneous departure from the great stage of human existence of many of those who had played the most conspicuous parts in the drama narrated.

The first that was called away was the oldest and staunchest of Sforza's friends, Cosmo de' Medici. During the first twenty-one years after his return from exile, the presence and popularity of Neri Capponi had operated as a salutary check upon himself and his friends; it prevented him from abusing his power, and kept them from quarrelling among themselves. At the death of Neri Capponi, in the year 1455, Cosmo had arrived at the age of sixty-seven, a time of life when men seldom change their habits, by whatever means they may have been formed. But as he began to wax old, his friends were without either a rival or ruler to keep them in order; their evil passions broke forth unrestrained, and the citizens, having become disgusted at their conduct, refused any longer to intrust the chief management of their affairs to their committee of dictators, which had been denominated *Balia*. For some time great confusion and discontent continued to prevail among all orders. Cosmo was in vain solicited to use his influence to have another *balia* appointed, till at last one of his former adherents, Lucas Pitti, filled the palace with his armed retainers, and forced the people to intrust the government

to a committee of his own creatures. The *balia* so chosen made the most violent use of their authority, and they hesitated not to torture, to banish, or to kill, those whom they thought likely to be troublesome opponents. Lucas Pitti himself took presents from all those who had anything to hope or to fear, and with the funds so raised he began building the palace which still bears his name. To facilitate its erection, he constituted it an asylum for all those who for any reason were afraid to show their faces in Florence.

To Cosmo, who had always been careful not to make any display in the city that he thought likely to attract the observation or excite the jealousy of others, not only was Pitti's general mode of proceeding offensive, but the building of the palace itself was peculiarly so. Disgusted at the turn that affairs were taking, and beginning to feel the infirmities of age, he retired to his country seat at Careggi, and gradually withdrew himself from political life. In his latter days he is said to have felt much regret that he had not succeeded in his oft-tried conquest of Lucca, more especially as his friend, Francesco Sforza, had often held forth promises of aiding him in the same, should he ever attain the sovereignty of Milan, but had afterwards, like Lucullus's soldier in Horace, determined to leave such enterprises to those who had their fortune to make. The disappointments and the infirmities of age were aggravated by the death of his favourite son, which took place about the end of the year 1463. He felt this blow the more acutely, as it was to him that he principally looked for maintaining the position of his family, the other being unfitted through ill health for public business. It is related that, on being carried through his house a short time after his bereavement, he said with a sigh, "This is too large a house for so small a family!" alluding, probably, to the incapacity of his other son to fill his position. He himself did not long survive the shock, and he departed from this scene on August 13, 1464, in his seventy-seventh year.

Though Cosmo's last years were not the brightest of his life, he had even then but little to complain of beyond the cares and disappointments which must be felt by every party-leader whose existence is prolonged to old age. His griefs, such as they were, cannot be said to have in any way either diminished his glory among his surviving contemporaries, or tarnished his memory. There is, perhaps, no other instance in history of a citizen having attained so much power in a free state, and having afterwards so little abused it. Almost all the potentates of Christendom sent to condole with his son, and the regrets of his countrymen were manifested by the number who attended his funeral. By a public decree, the words "Padre della patria" were inscribed on his tomb.

The next public character of the day that made his exit was Pope Pius. After the retreat of the duke of Anjou to Ischia, he was exceedingly anxious to get up a vigorous crusade against the Turks, perhaps with a view to wipe out the imputation that had been made against him of misappropriating the resources that had been intrusted to him for that purpose. The champions of Christendom were summoned to meet him at Ancona; and though many doubted the sincerity of his promises, and all must have thought him unwarlike and infirm, he declared his intention of embarking with them himself, and sharing in the perils of the expedition. The call, however, was but feebly responded to; though the Venetians had promised to send a fleet, and the dukes of Milan and Burgundy had each engaged to furnish an army, the head of the Christian religion found few at the place of rendezvous but pilgrims and adventurers.

Many of those who had gone there before him had already departed, on beholding neither ships to transport them nor captains to lead them against the enemy; and the ardour of those that remained was soon damped by finding that the pope had nothing but spiritual rewards to give them. The countenance of the old man, as he was borne to the city on a litter, betrayed marks of grief and disappointment not to be mistaken; and though he relaxed not in his endeavours to get the promised forces brought together, the failure of his expectations proved too heavy a blow for his already shattered constitution. The Venetian fleet arrived on the 14th of August, but disease and vexation had already done their work with Pope Pius; and on the succeeding

night he expired, amidst the tears, it is said, of his cardinals and attendants. His character has been painted in the most flattering colours; but on a calm review of his history, it must be acknowledged that, if he had many excellent qualities, he was also tainted with several of the faults incident to his order and age. The praise to which he is well entitled for his sagacity, must be tempered by the blame so justly due to his nepotism.

Piccinino was not long suffered to survive the success of Ferdinand and the aggrandisement of Sforza. Whatever may have been his faults, the circumstances attending his death, forming, as they do, one of the dark passages of the history of Italy, invest his end with a melancholy interest. After the departure of John of Anjou from Ischia, Ferdinand showed by his conduct that it was not without reason that the insurgent barons had feared his tyranny at the commencement, and mistrusted his sincerity at the termination of the rebellion. The majority of them had, partly, as has already been related, by the persuasions of Sforza, and partly from the despair of doing better, submitted to him; but no sooner had the king got them completely in his power than he began to find divers excuses for breaking his word. It has been mentioned that many suspected that the death of the prince of Tarento had been accelerated by foul play. After this event the duke of Sessa, who was the next most powerful baron in the kingdom, and who had been the next to give in his adherence to Ferdinand, felt the vengeance of the conqueror. The king, as he was one day enjoying the recreation of the chase near the duke's castle, expressed a desire to see his faithful subject, and to behold his son, to whom his own daughter had already been betrothed. The duke, who had previously been prepared by Alexander Sforza for the interview, hesitated not to go forth to meet his sovereign; and when he had come into his presence, he was seized, placed on a mule, and conducted to a dungeon in Naples.

This, and other deeds of a like nature, showed Piccinino that the kingdom of Naples was no safe resting-place for him. Perplexed and disturbed, he wrote to Sforza to request his protection, and he received from him the most assured promises of support, and an invitation to come to Milan forthwith, to celebrate his nuptials with the long-promised Drusiana. Attempts to dissuade him from taking this step were made by his friends, who thought that Sforza, though endowed with many great and good qualities, was, when his interest clashed with his feelings, no better than his contemporaries. It was insinuated by some that he had been privy to the murder of the duke of Sessa—an opinion which, in some degree, gained ground from the circumstance of his brother Alexander having assisted to bring about the interview between him and the king. And it is certain that Piccinino's power at this time was sufficient to excite apprehensions that he might one day become a formidable adversary. He was in great reputation for valour and military skill; he commanded some of the best troops in Italy, and he was in possession of several important fiefs in the kingdom of Naples. He was allowed to retain the surnames of the houses of Aragon and Visconti—a privilege which in no small degree augmented his dignity in the eyes of the vulgar, and might be of some advantage to him, should he ever aspire to the rank of a sovereign. It is probable that he himself was not without misgivings with respect to the step that he had been invited to take; but he mistrusted Sforza less than Ferdinand, and was assured by the Bolognese and the Florentines that he had nothing to fear.

When he entered Milan, the people seemed to vie with the duke in honouring him. His presence caused many to reflect on the times when his father had fought for the last of the Visconti, with all the fond regret that the memory of bygone events usually inspires—a regret which, perhaps, might in this instance have been heightened by comparing the parentage of their present with that of their last duke; it also recalled their attempts, vain though they were, to establish their independence, and drew forth the feelings both of those who were discontented or disappointed with their present ruler, and of those who fancied that they perceived any seeds of incapacity or violence in his successor. Even those who were attached to Sforza—and there is no reason to suppose that they were not numerous—were anxious to show respect to a brave but unsuccessful opponent. The consequence was, that his appearance in the city drew forth a burst of enthusiasm, which may possibly have astonished or alarmed the duke; and many suppose that the shouts of “Braccio!” which were everywhere heard in the crowd, made him reflect on the danger that might accrue to his family from the surviving

representative of the party which had so long been a formidable rival to his own. But, whatever his feelings might have been, he did not suffer any symptom of jealousy to escape, and he received Piccinino with all the cordiality that could have been expected from the most generous and least suspicious of mankind.

Shortly after Piccinino's arrival at Milan, he obtained the hand of Drusiana; but the wedding was held in as quiet a manner as possible, in consequence of the recent death of Cosmo de' Medici. In the beginning of the following year Ferdinand sent an ambassador to Milan, for the purpose of bringing to Naples Hippolyta, the destined bride of his son Alphonso. Shortly afterwards, Piccinino, either by his own desire or at the instigation of Sforza, or at the request of Ferdinand, (all of which are stated in the different accounts,) left Milan for Naples. Just before his departure, Sforza sent an ambassador to Ferdinand to guarantee him security and a reception due to his station, and ordered his confidential secretary, Pietro Postula, to accompany him. The king received him with every possible honour, and entertained him in his court for twenty-seven days. In the meantime his wife Drusiana was sent from Milan to his town of Sulmona. He was preparing to leave Naples on the twenty-eighth day after his arrival, when the king requested him to come into the castle to see his treasure; and when he had thus enticed him in there, he detained him as a prisoner. It was said that on the same day guards were stationed on all the roads leading from Naples, to prevent his departure. A few days after his incarceration he expired. It was generally given out at the time that he had broken his neck by having fallen down while attempting to climb up a window to get a view of what was going on outside; but it was shrewdly suspected that he had been strangled by the royal orders. At the same time his territories were all seized, and his soldiers stripped of their accoutrements and disbanded, by order of the king. The unfortunate Drusiana returned to Milan, where she not long afterwards brought a son into the world.

Such were the principal circumstances, as agreed upon by all historians, relating to the death of Piccinino. A strong suspicion prevailed, both at the time and afterwards, that he had come to his untimely end by the connivance of Sforza, if not at his instigation. As many of the details from which a presumption can be raised in favour of innocency or guilt are given differently by different historians, it will be necessary, in order that the reader may form an impartial judgment, to lay the different versions of them before him. The account that seems to leave the impression most unfavourable to Sforza is that given by Christoforo Soldo, a contemporary writer, the author of the *History of Brescia*, which is as follows :—"When the time fixed for the betrayal of the poor condottiere had come, after he had ratified his agreement with the duke, he said to him, 'That it was time for him to go and ratify it also with the king of Naples'. This the duke continued to urge him to do, which he for some time declined. 'I beseech you, my good lord and master', said he, 'send me not to Naples, for, if I do go there, I shall never leave it alive'. But the aforesaid duke continued to press him, saying, 'Go, for I swear by my head that nobody shall hurt you'. Thus the poor condottiere took his departure, having been ordered for execution; and while on the way, he left his wife at Cesena with one of his sons, and brought the other with him to Naples. It is worthy of remarking, that while he was on his way thither, a son of Ferdinand's set out with three hundred horse to bring Hippolyta to his brother. In the meantime Piccinino arrived at Naples, and was received by the king with all the honours with which the Jews received our Saviour before they took him and crucified him". After mentioning the manner in which he was seized, the writer goes on to say that there was for some time great uncertainty and anxiety through all Italy as to his fate, which was followed by a burst of indignation when there could no longer be any doubt of it. In the meantime the destined bride "remained at harbour at Siena for two months and a half, and then proceeded to her affianced husband. Throughout the whole of Italy it was said that the duke of Milan had sent Piccinino to execution, and that the king of Naples had been his executioner".

This account of Christoforo Soldo is confirmed in the main, and his opinions are also participated in by Corio, who was alive at the time, and wrote his history about twenty years afterwards. He says that "Piccinino's departure from Milan was entirely brought about by the duke, who dreaded lest his great valour, military skill, and popularity throughout Lombardy, Italy, and even in the town of Milan, should operate

prejudicially to his children after his decease". Corio does not in general speak evil of Sforza, nor does he, indeed, relate this transaction as if any great blame was due to him for thus providing for the security of his family. Machiavelli says that the honours that were paid to Piccinino, on his entrance into Milan, hastened his ruin, as they increased the desire of the duke to put an end to him; and he seems to think that the favours which he continued to bestow on him were merely a mask to conceal his real intentions. And Muratori, an impartial writer, who had doubtless well weighed all the evidence, is inclined to decide against Sforza.

Notwithstanding the unfavourable opinion of so many contemporary historians, it must be allowed that there is great semblance of truth in the account given by Simoneta, which will go far to exculpate Sforza. According to that historian, Piccinino went to Naples quite of his own wishes, and Sforza never either urged him to do so, or attempted to dissuade him from it. After Piccinino had been thrown into prison, Ferdinand sent letters to Sforza, in which he stated that, though he had been willing to pardon all the past, and had loaded him with honours, he found out that he was at that very instant holding communications with his enemies; so that a due regard, as well for the safety of his own kingdom as for the peace of the peninsula, compelled him to act as he did. Sforza, on the receipt of this letter, expressed great indignation, and said that he thought it hard that his son-in-law should be arrested in the presence of his ambassador on mere suspicion. He is also said to have foreseen fully how his own character would suffer if Piccinino came to a violent end. He therefore sent his son Tristanus to Ferdinand, requesting him as a favour to himself to pardon and liberate his son-in-law; and at the same time he gave directions that Hippolyta should not proceed any farther on her way to Naples till matters were settled. In the meantime, it was formally notified that Piccinino had been killed by the accident reported above, on which Sforza said that he doubted not the fact of his death, but that he was incredulous as to the manner in which it was reported to have taken place. Tristanus, on his arrival at Naples, demanded that the body of his brother-in-law should be shown to him, in order that he might be convinced as to the mode of his death. On its being produced for his satisfaction, it appeared so utterly decomposed, that he came to the opinion that he must have died some time before he was reported to have met with the accident. Sforza himself was reported to be so indignant at the whole transaction that he debated for some time whether he should not break his alliance with Ferdinand, and the projected marriage of their families; and it is certain that Hippolyta was obliged to halt for two months at Siena. It was said that he was strongly urged to this course by Bianca Maria; but he finally came to the decision not to alter his policy, or to drive a king from a throne where it had taken so much trouble to place him, in consequence of an act for which the practice of the times afforded too many precedents.

Thus, in spite of what is said by Corio, Machiavelli, and others, whose opinions are doubtless entitled to deference, it must be acknowledged that there is much in Simoneta's evidence sufficient to raise a reasonable doubt of Sforza's guilt. His chief justification appears to rest on the account given of his conduct after he had been informed of Piccinino's arrest. M. Sismondi, who cannot be suspected of any partiality towards the man who crushed the attempts of the Milanese to re-establish their independence, justly remarks that, if he had been really guilty, his secretary, who has undertaken his defence, would have laid more stress on the conspiracy which Ferdinand pretended to have discovered; or that, at all events, he would have affected to have believed the story of his having accidentally broken his neck. Besides, that if he had been determined to get rid of him, he would, in all probability, have availed himself of a false witness or an assassin, while he was sojourning at Milan with only one hundred of his followers; that one can hardly suppose Francesco Sforza guilty of such imprudence as to allow his intended victim to escape to his fortresses and his soldiers; and it is probable that he would not have incurred more obloquy by despatching him at Milan, than that which he fully foresaw Ferdinand's conduct would entail upon him. So well aware, indeed, was he of the imputations to which he would be subject that he exclaimed that not all the water of the Po could efface from his character the stain that would be left upon it.

Simoneta's defence of Sforza is further confirmed by a modern historian, who has lately brought to light several interesting documents of the history of Milan. On the whole, it must be allowed that there is much

to clear him from the suspicion, which seems to rest on no better foundation than the evil practices of the times, - and the calumnies of his enemies. Those who may hesitate to acquit him of all evil intent in allowing Piccinino to go to Ferdinand, may perhaps concede that, whatever he may have expected others to do, he himself was in no way accessory to his murder. His conduct after hearing of the imprisonment of his son-in-law, though perhaps irreconcilable with actual participation in the crimes of Ferdinand, may be thought to betoken the indignation or the remorse really felt by many men, after the secret object of their guilty wishes has been attained.

The character and conduct of Jacobo Piccinino cannot appear to advantage in a biography of Sforza. He was frequently opposed to, and almost always defeated by, that great man in the field; as neither his nor his father's career was crowned by such success as that of their rival, he occasionally did actions which must have appeared ignominious or petty, when compared with those of a sovereign who was able to guide the policy of the peninsula. Yet, withal, he is entitled to a greater reputation as a general, and certainly is not more deserving of blame as a man, than the majority of his contemporaries. Though frequently worsted by Sforza, he was often able to stay his progress; and after the duke had ceased to go forth at the head of his armies, he does not appear to have had his equal in the field. Ample proof of this is afforded by the eagerness with which his services were sought after, as well by Alphonso as by those who fought for his successor, and also by Sforza's own anxiety to secure them for his friend. There is no doubt but that his military skill would have placed John of Anjou on the throne, if the opposite party had not been backed by the resources and the influence of Sforza. The more questionable deeds of his early life were done in conjunction with his elder brother, and possibly in deference to his authority; and judging from his subsequent popularity, he appears to have done nothing outrageous to the moral feelings of his contemporaries. His tragic and treacherous murder did much to cause the evil that he did to die with him, and his good deeds to live after him in the memory of men.

Francesco Sforza did not long survive the last great general of the Braccian school. Since his accession to the ducal throne, he had never ceased to entertain a lurking suspicion that the French would some day be formidable competitors either with himself or some of his descendants. For this reason he was extremely anxious to secure the good wishes of the present monarch, and to inspire him with a due sense of the extent of his resources and the valour of his troops. An opportunity of doing both was now presented to him. Louis was at this instant sore pressed by a contest with the feudal lords, and Sforza, though unsolicited by him, sent his son Galeazzo, along with six thousand men and his best captains, to his assistance. The departure of Galeazzo on his first campaign naturally excited great interest in his parents; they both accompanied him out of the city, and his mother proceeded to Vercelli, where she obtained the duke of Savoy's permission for her son to bring his army across the Alps. The expedition produced all the effects that could possibly have been desired; in a short time Galeazzo had so completely overrun the provinces adjoining the Rhone as to make the duke of Bourbon anxious to withdraw from the confederate nobles, that he might return to look after his dominions, after which Louis found no difficulty in coming to terms with the others. And the superiority of the Milanese soldiers in military tactics, more especially in taking cities, which was the principal work of the expedition, made such an impression on the French that they were said to have been looked upon as being almost more than ordinary mortals. Galeazzo Sforza, flushed with the glory of his first campaign, was on his way home with his army, when he received the unexpected intelligence of the event which made him duke of Milan.

The death of Francesco Sforza was in this wise. The king of France had sent ambassadors to thank him for the diversion he had made in his favour; and he received them with all the honour that he could show to a powerful monarch whose friendship he courted, and with the affability that men generally display after their projects have succeeded. All things, indeed, seemed to have gone well with him; he was in undisputed possession of a great empire, and had settled the affairs of Italy and France in the manner that he had desired. For aught that appeared to the contrary, he might now have anticipated many years' tranquil enjoyment of his honours. But in the plenitude of his content he had neglected his usual regimen of diet and medicine, which he

had observed since the first appearance of his disease. On the 6th of March 1466, he experienced so sharp an attack that his physicians prescribed extraordinary remedies. He does not appear to have been much alarmed on that day, for neither his disease nor his drugs prevented him indulging in a pleasure, which now, at least, would be thought rather unbecoming in a man of sixty-five, who owed much of his good fortune to his wife. Shortly after he retired, he was attacked with such violent pains that his family and attendants were summoned. It soon became evident to all that his time was come; he lingered for upwards of twenty-four hours, and expired in the course of the following night.

Never, according to all accounts, did woman exhibit more heroic conduct than was displayed by Bianca Maria at the time of her husband's decease. She lost no time in calling medical aid, and seeing that every possible remedy was tried. But when the downcast looks of the physicians, and the failing voice and sinking pulse of her husband, showed her that all hope was gone, she bethought herself of every public measure that should be taken on such a trying emergency. Her first step was to despatch a messenger to Galeazzo, to inform him of his father's state. Though profoundly afflicted, and unable for a time to repress her emotions, she ordered the senate to assemble in the middle of the night, and particularly requested the attendance of those on whom she could most depend for keeping the people in order.

And though she bore such marks of grief that her countenance seemed almost like that of a dead person, and though she had previously been unable to restrain her emotion, and many of the senators were themselves too full to give utterance to their thoughts, she had sufficient command over herself to be able to address them in a composed and dignified manner. When her husband had finally given up the ghost, she sent messengers to the principal states in Italy to notify the event, and to request them to acknowledge her son as his successor.

After she had taken every measure that seemed necessary for the good of the public, she made no attempt to restrain the violence of her grief. At different times her shrieks might be heard through the whole of the palace. She stood long and frequently by her husband's remains, gazing on his countenance, and seeming, as it were, to doubt the power of death. She would not allow the body to be moved for two whole days after the spirit had departed. On the third day, when it was absolutely necessary that it should be taken away, neither the fear of infection, nor the utmost efforts of the attendants, could prevent her loading the already decayed countenance with kisses. After she had been torn from it with difficulty, she is reported to have made a speech, in which she expressed, in the most beautiful language, the feelings called forth on such an occasion, and evinced the keenest regret that she had ever suffered herself, even through the jealousy that excessive fondness usually inspires, to quarrel with, or in any way give annoyance to, her husband. Turning round to her ladies in waiting, she said, "Ye that are married, I entreat you, by the great God, be not troublesome to your lords. For, if you yourselves could but feel what I am now suffering in consequence, there is not one of you who would not henceforward be the most complacent of wives".

The remains of the duke, decorated in all the robes of state, were brought into the shrine of the public room, where they were suffered to lie in state during the remainder of the day. In his right hand was placed the sceptre, and on his side was the sword which he had worn in so many victories. Several of the citizens flocked thither to see whether the countenance which, in life, had been so commanding, had been much altered by death. Every mark of respect usual on such occasions was exhibited; and from the absence of any attempt at insurrection, we may infer that he had done something to gain the affections, and to merit the regrets, of his subjects.

It had been the good fortune of Francesco Sforza to unite with his political and military talents great personal advantages. On many occasions, as has already been related, his commanding appearance and his

excellent address did him good service. In stature he was about the middle height, and in activity, strength, and capability of enduring fatigue, he scarcely had any equals. In running and jumping he excelled all his contemporaries, and is said to have been able to lift and to throw heavy stones and iron weights with as great facility as if they had been pieces of wood. He was patient of hunger and thirst to an extraordinary degree, and seemed scarcely to feel the blows and the wounds that were inflicted upon him in battle. Though able to do with very few hours of rest he was never kept off his sleep by over-fatigue or anxiety; and though his repose was never broken by the clang of arms, the neighing of horses, or the other ordinary sounds of the camp, he was always the first roused by any emergency. He ate but little, and, according to his biographer, did not yield to the most delicate of young ladies in the nice and sparing manner in which he took his food. During his meals, he used constantly to admit people to his presence, and to discuss with them the most intricate questions of policy and war. He was prodigal of money, for which he was frequently reprov'd by his friend and benefactor, Cosmo de' Medici, who, a merchant himself, could make little allowances for the extravagance of a soldier of fortune. To all such admonitions he used to reply, that he would sooner die than be esteemed stingy; that, as Providence had given him a powerful sovereignty, he thought he could not make better use of his resources than to reward those by whose assistance he had succeeded; that his children would have money enough if they were honest men, and that, if they were not, they would be better without any. In private life he was singularly humane and benevolent, and if ever he thought he had offended anybody in a moment of irritation, he endeavoured to make up for it by subsequent courtesy. He was exceedingly kind to all who had been plunged into distress by vicissitude of politics or fortune, and is said to have frequently gone about in person to visit the sick and the needy. It was, no doubt, principally by these qualities that he attained that great popularity in the army which even his enemies do not deny.

Of his general character it would be superfluous to say much, after having detailed and discussed the principal actions of his life. It will not, I think, be denied, that he was endowed with all the great and most of the good qualities that generally fall to the lot of mankind. His abilities were singularly developed and displayed by the various circumstances in which he was placed. The tact by which he won his way to fame, before his marriage with Bianca Maria; the perseverance with which he struggled against adversity from that time till the death of his father-in-law; the great military skill and political sagacity by which he succeeded, notwithstanding false friends and dangerous enemies, in placing himself on the throne of Milan; the firmness by which he secured himself, combined with the moderation which he exhibited in his new position; the policy by which, after having made himself arbiter of Italy, he laid the foundation of thirty years' peace and prosperity, show a combination of active and reflective powers rarely to be found in one person. Muratori, one of the deepest read and most impartial of Italian historians, gives his opinion in the following words,—“The more we reflect on the actions of this unrivalled prince, the more readily must we acknowledge, notwithstanding the opinion of some, that, for many centuries, Italy has not produced so renowned a hero as Francesco Sforza, in whom there was a rare combination of wonderful valour with uncommon political sagacity. In twenty-two battles which he gave, he always ended by being conqueror, and he was never conquered by any. His father, Sforza Attendolo, having risen from the lowest station of life, began to build the fortune of the family; but his son, Francesco, proceeding with gigantic steps, advanced it in such a manner that he came to be at the head of the most noble duchy of Milan, and the proud city of Genoa, and to attain such a fame that he certainly deserves to be compared with the greatest captains of antiquity, and reckoned among the most illustrious people in the history of Italy.

With respect to his moral qualities, it must be acknowledged that his memory is tarnished as well by undeniable acts of treachery and intrigue, as by the suspicion of deeds that few men of the present age dare do. In palliation of these, it must be recollected that his lot was cast in an age when the arts recommended in the Prince and the Discourses of Machiavelli were by many thought to be essential to success in public life, and that the main ground of the suspicions against him is the evil practice of the times. At present, a man who holds a prominent station is not generally deemed guilty of bloodshed in the absence of strong evidence; but in medieval Italy, a public man was invariably supposed to have had some hand in a murder conducive to his

interests, if he could not prove himself innocent. Thus, the stronger the presumptive evidence of his guilt, the greater will be the excuse afforded by the ways of the age. We have the acknowledgment of M. Sismondi, that among his contemporaries he was reckoned most loyal, most generous, and most faithful in friendship. If it be true that men's characters may be known from those of their associates, his friendship with some of the brightest ornaments of the fifteenth century affords strong testimony in his favour. And there is none of his misdeeds for which he might not plead the excuse that is said to have been always in the mouth of one of the greatest heroes of antiquity—"If one must sometimes do wrong for the sake of a sovereignty, it is most glorious to do wrong; but in other things one should always act righteously".

Thus of Francesco Sforza it may truly be said, that his good deeds were his own, his evil ones were those of the age in which he lived. As Italy contained as many political organisations at that time as are now to be found in all of Europe, the number of men engaged in public life bore a much greater proportion to the rest of mankind than it does at present. Hence the crimes for which ambition was supposed to afford sufficient excuse were then of more frequent occurrence, and public opinion was more tolerant of them in Italy than it would be now in other countries of the same extent and population. It may be questioned whether this lax state of public morality did not more than counterbalance all the advantages of wealth, learning, and refinement, which the early freedom of Italy and the absence of centralisation called into existence. The opening of a career of distinction to every man of ability has always been reckoned one of the greatest advantages of republican institutions and local self-government. The life of the man who was said by the annalist of Italy to be one of the greatest heroes of his country, and allowed by his contemporaries to be just, humane, and generous, affords too many examples of the deeds which everyone who would then tread the path of fame was compelled to do. Can it be said that mankind were either better or happier by the political organisations which afforded opportunities, and held forth inducements, to enter on this career?

THE END.

