

TWO MEMOIRS

OF

RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

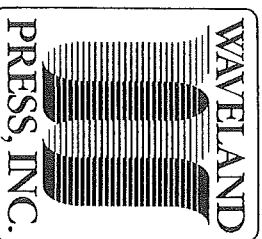
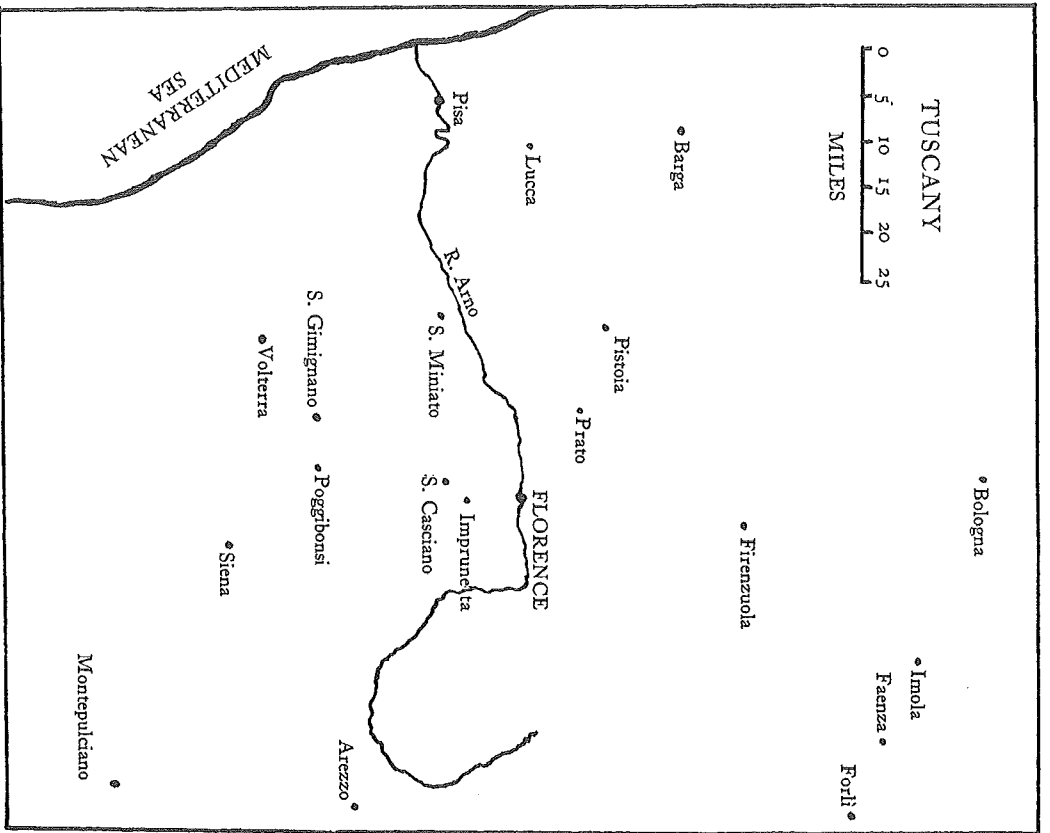
The Diaries of

Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati

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Money (and wives!)



Prospect Heights, Illinois

Valencia, where he is to form a business partnership with Simone for as long as we shall decide. We will supply the goods they require and our firm will put 1,000 florins cash at their disposal. One half of whatever profits they make will be ours, and the other half is to be divided between them, so that each will have one quarter of the total profits. Giovanni went to Valencia in May 1396, but only stayed there a short time as he did not get on with Simone. Simone came to Florence on 12 December 1396 and reached an agreement with myself and Michele whereby they were to keep whatever profits, good or bad, they might manage to make in Valencia, without giving our firm any share in them, and to pay us whatever they owed us on the usual terms.

Simone left here for Valencia on 3 January and, having set sail from Pisa on the 8th, was captured by one of King Louis's admirals, Messer Giovanni Gonsalvo of Seville, who took him as a prisoner to Naples. When he had been held there for three months, he was taken to Gaeta and released for a ransom of 200 florins. This was paid for him by Doffo Spini, whom we reimbursed, and debited to the Valencia account with a number of other expenses. On 3 April, he left for Majorca on the *nave dipungiana*,⁸ May God grant he get there safely and that we recover our losses. Giovanni and Simone continued to wrangle andicker even more than before, until finally Giovanni resolved to leave for Barcelona and settle there. They continued, however, to be partners. Then of their own accord they dissolved the partnership, agreeing that Simone should keep whatever profits he had made in Valencia and Giovanni should have what he had made in Barcelona. God grant His grace to each of them.

Shop Accounts, 1403

When the partnership with Michele di Ser Parente expired, I set up shop on my own under the name of Goro

⁷ Louis of Anjou, claimant to the Kingdom of Naples.

⁸ *nave dipungiana*. The phrase should perhaps be translated: "the ship owned [or captained] by Pungiana."

Stagio and company. My partners are Piero and Jacopo di Tommaso Lana who contribute 3,000 [florins] while I contribute 2,000, and Nardo di Lippo who contributes his services. The partnership is to start on 1 January 1403 and to last three years. The clauses and articles of agreement and the amounts invested by each partner will be entered in a secret ledger covered with white leather belonging to our partnership.

On my own account and with my own money, I paid 75 florins to the heirs of Simone Vespucci and their representative, Lapo Vespucci, for the goodwill and licence to exercise my profession in one of the shops of Por Santa Maria.⁹ The brokers were Andrea di Bonaventura and Niccolai Niccoli. On 6 March 1403, Isau d'Agnolo and Antonio Manni, a silk merchant who was in the shop, received 25 florins from me. The broker was Meo d'Andrea del Benino. The fixtures and repairs cost me about 100 florins, so altogether, between the goodwill and the fixtures I paid 200 florins out of my own pocket, in God's name, for myself and my heirs. The site of the shop belongs to the Carthusian monks, from whom I am to rent it on the usual terms for 35 gold florins a year. Ser Ludovico of the guild drew up the lease, which is to run for five years from the beginning of February 1403.

As already stated, I have undertaken to put up 2,000 florins. This is how I propose to raise them: 1,370 florins and 25 *soldi a fiorino* are still due to me from my old partnership with Michele di Ser Parente, as appears on page 118 of my ledger for stock and cash on hand. The rest I expect to obtain if I marry again this year, when I hope to find a woman with a dowry as large as God may be pleased to grant me. If I do not marry, I will find the money some other way.

The partnership with Piero was set up and formally notarized several months ago. Voluntarily and of his own accord, he asked me to see to the investments and the dividing into shares, leaving all this in my hands. The articles

⁹ Por Santa Maria was the guild of the silk manufacturers.

of our agreement are entered in my long ledger on page 163 and the sums I have received or am to receive from him are entered on page 164 and the following pages. I intend to transfer this entry to the secret ledger which I plan to keep of our partnership's affairs, so that it may not be mentioned or entered in any other registers. I think I will get as much as 3,000 florins from him so as to avoid having to divide our profits with too many others. I hope to put his investments and my own to good use if our trade with Valencia is successful, which may God grant. Piero and I are agreed that Nardo di Lippo should be a partner and have a share in the profits to which he is entitled, although he need not invest money in our enterprise, as he has not got any. He is to pay me the money which he has coming to him from Michele's shop and more.

After the last entry, on 4 July 1403, I invested Ginevra's dowry in our company. As appears further on on page 8, it came to 671 florins. I entered this in the secret ledger. At the beginning of January 1404, I examined my accounts and found that I had made excellent profits. However, I did not close our accounts as a large shipment of goods was at sea on its way to Simone.

In that year, 1404, Simone and the King of Castile became involved in the business of the Venetian customs. He needed a great deal of goods from us and much of what we sent him we had to buy. Later, as a result of the King of Aragon's laws directed against anyone shipping goods to the King of Castile,¹⁰ this merchandise was held up in Barcelona. Antonio Gucci, who was there for the Serristori and was also looking after our interests, had a run of bad luck and tried to make us suffer for losses which were not ours, so that we found ourselves involved in litigation over this with the Serristori in Florence. The case went to the Merchants' Court, and consequently, I lost credit and suffered much damage. Nonetheless, I drew up a fresh balance sheet in January 1405, and found that I had earned

¹⁰ The quarreling monarchs were Martin of Aragon (1395-1410) and Henry III of Castile (1390-1406).

good profits thanks to Simone's credit. Once more we did not close our accounts as there were only two of us, but the lawsuit over the dissensions begun in September 1405 went from bad to worse for us.

My Wife Ginevra's Accounts—1403

In the name of God and of the Virgin Mary, may His help be with us at the beginning, middle and end of every enterprise. I shall write here about my third wife and her affairs.

I record that on 8 May 1403, I was betrothed to Ginevra, daughter of Antonio di Piero Piuichese Brancacci, in S. Maria sopra Porta. The dowry was 1,000 florins: 700 in cash and 300 in a farm at Campi. On Saturday morning, S. Stagio's Day, 20 May, we were married, but we held no festivities nor wedding celebrations as we were in mourning for Manetto Dati who had died the week before. God grant us a good life together. Ginevra had been married before for four years to Tommaso Brancacci, by whom she had an eight-month old son. She is now in her twenty-first year. Bartolo di Giovanni di Niccola promised to let me have the dowry by the end of next June.

On 4 July of that year, in the house which formerly belonged to Manetto Dati, I received the dowry from Felice di Michele Brancacci who sent it to me by Ser Giovanni d'Andrea da Linari. It consisted of 700 gold florins in cash and a farm, of which the value was not assessed, situated in Campi, at a place called *a P'Oliva* or *al Trebio*, of about 52 *staiori*.¹¹ It is bounded on three sides by the road and on the fourth by the monastery of S. Giovanni, which is attached to S. Felice in Piazza.¹² I, Monna Ghita, Stagio di Manetto, Nardo di Lippo and myself a second time as Simone's legal representative, declared and insured the

¹¹ A *staiora* was an area of land that could be sown by one *stajo* (approximately a bushel) of grain.

¹² S. Felice in Piazza was a monastery of the Sylvestrine Order (after 1413, the Camaldoli) located in Florence on the south side of the Arno.

dowry and I got the money from Bartolo or rather from his company, that of Lorenzo di Dimozo, through the bank of Averardo. It amounted to 671 florins in cash and a trousseau worth 29 florins.

1 January 1404.

~~I know that in this wretched life our sins expose us to many tribulations of soul and passions of the body, that without God's grace and mercy which strengthens our weakness, enlightens our mind and supports our will, we would perish daily. I also see that since my birth forty years ago, I have given little heed to God's commandments. Distrusting my own power to reform, but hoping to advance by degree along the path of virtue, I resolve from this day forward to refrain from going to the shop or conducting business on solemn Church holidays, or from permitting others to work for me or seek temporal gain on such days. Whenever I make exceptions in cases of extreme necessity, I promise, on the following day, to distribute alms of one gold florin to God's poor. I have written this down so that I may remember my promise and be ashamed if I should chance to break it.~~

Also, in memory of the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ who freed and saved us by His merits, that He may, by His grace and mercy preserve us from guilty passions, I resolve from this very day and in perpetuity to keep Friday as a day of total chastity—with Friday I include the following night—when I must abstain from the enjoyment of all carnal pleasures. God give me grace to keep my promise, yet if I should break it through forgetfulness, I engage to give 20 *solli* to the poor for each time, and to say twenty Paternosters and Avemarias.

~~I resolve this day to do a third thing while I am in health and able to, remembering that each day we need Almighty God to provide for us. Each day I wish to honor God by some giving of alms or by the recitation of prayers or some other pious act. If, by inadvertence, I fail to do so, that~~

~~day or the next day I must give alms to God's poor of at least 5 *solli*. These however are not vows but intentions by which I shall do my best to abide.¹³~~

~~3 May 1412. On 28 April, my name was drawn as Standard-bearer of the Militia Company.¹⁴ Up until then I had not been sure whether my name was in the purses for that office, although I was eager that it should be both for my own honor and that of my heirs. I recalled that my father Stagio had held a number of appointments in the course of his life, being frequently a consul of the Guild of Per Santa Maria, a member of the Merchants' Court and one of the officials in charge of gabelles and the treasurers. Yet he was never drawn for any of the Colleges during his lifetime, though shortly after his death he was drawn as a prior. I recalled that I had aroused a great deal of animosity eight years ago because of my business in Catalonia, and that last year I only just escaped being arrested for debt by the Commune. On the very day my name was drawn for this office, only fifteen minutes before it was drawn, I had taken advantage of the reprieve granted by the new laws and finished paying off my debt to the Commune. That was a veritable inspiration from God, may His name be praised and blessed! Now that I can obtain other offices, it seems to me that, having had a great benefit, I should be content to know that I have sat once in the Colleges and should aspire no further. So, lest I should ungratefully give way to the insatiable appetites of those in whom success breeds renewed ambition, I have resolved and sworn to myself that I shall not henceforth invoke the aid of any or attempt to get myself elected to public offices or to have my name included in new purses. Rather, I shall let things take their course without interfering. I shall abide by God's will, accepting those offices of the guilds or Commune for which my name shall be drawn, and not refusing the labor but serving and doing what good I may. In this way I shall~~

¹³ Dati meant that these obligations were not to be considered legally binding.

¹⁴ A member of one of the Signoria's advisory Colleges. Dati's district (*gozzalone*) was Ferze, in the quarter of S. Spirito.