

TWO MEMOIRS

OF

RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

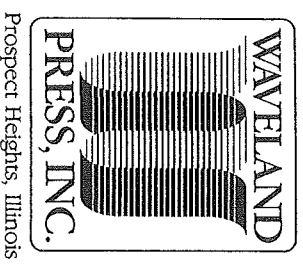
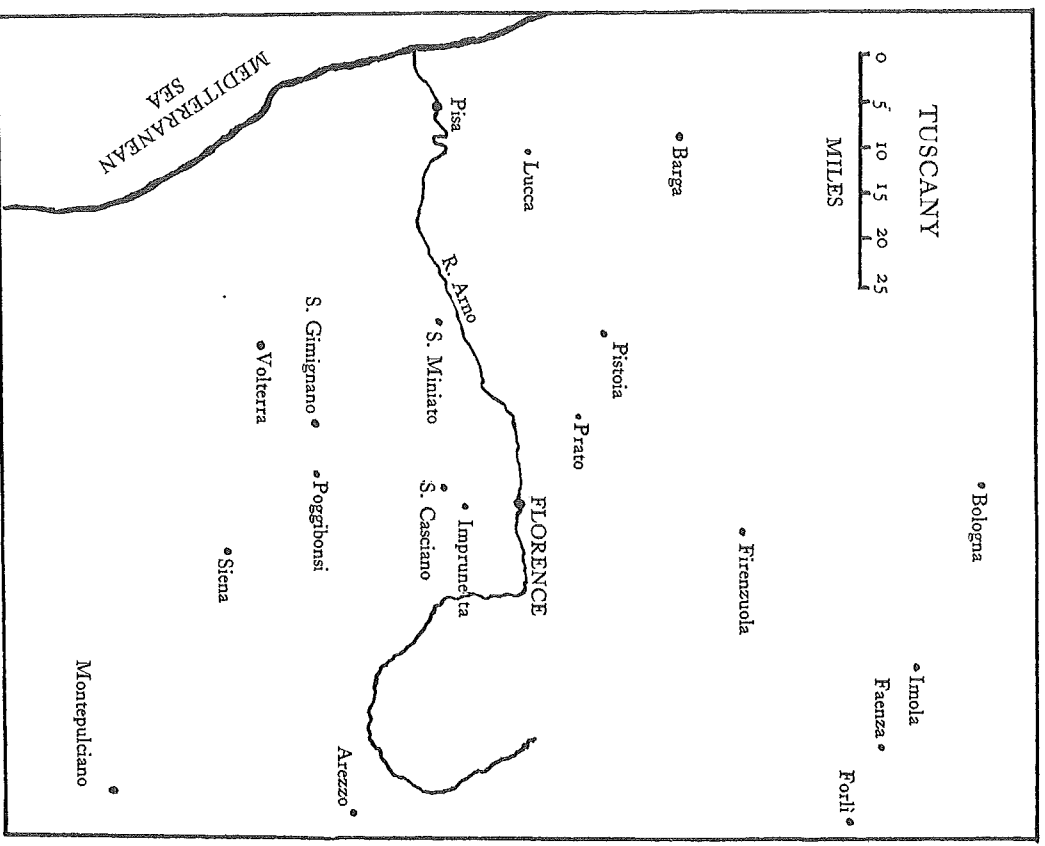
The Diaries of

Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati

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"Delt collection"



rights, and would not violate these without their consent. After consulting together for a while, they told me with tears and sighs, that they would always be grateful for what I had done but that, as the Signoria was clearly determined to override their rights, any further resistance on my part could only lead to danger for me and possibly greater harm for themselves. And thus the lesser evil seemed to be that I should send the thief to Florence—which I did.

In 1400 I set out for Savoy to try and collect the accursed money I had lent the Count. On reaching Padua, however, I found, when I had informed the local lord of my errand, that I could not cross into Savoy without written authorization from the Duke of Milan. The Duke, I was told, had issued orders to this effect and had received promises of obedience from the lords whose territories I would have to cross. I resolved to turn back and was not sorry to do so, for it was with the greatest reluctance that I had left my brothers and their families in Sorbigliano, where they had taken refuge from the plague then raging in Florence.

I went to Bologna and from there dispatched horses and muleteers with letters to my brothers telling them to join me with our families. They came and, about a week after their arrival, I rented the Bianchi family palace and gardens about a mile outside Bologna and installed my brothers and their families there, with the exception of Piero who stayed with his family in Montughi. By God's grace we were all safe and sound but for a son who was born to me there and died. Between ourselves, our immediate families and other relatives who came for visits, there were never less than twenty-five people staying in the house. We spent about four months there and our expenses by the time we got back to Florence amounted to 480 florins.

That year, while many citizens were away in Bologna for fear of the plague, the political exiles seized the opportunity to foment a conspiracy against our government among some young men captained by Salvestro di Messer Rosso de' Ricci. The plotters were betrayed by Salvestro di Messer Filippo

Caviccioni. Samminiato d'Uguciozo de' Ricci and a member of the Davizi family were sent to the block. Many were exiled; many more were pardoned and calm returned to the city.

I was elected ambassador that year and sent to Germany to the newly elected emperor, Rupert, Duke of Bavaria and Count Palatine. My mission was, first of all, to convey our congratulations on his election; secondly, to entreat him to come to Rome for his coronation; thirdly, to persuade him to defend his imperial prerogatives, in particular those usurped by the Duke of Milan; fourthly, to assure him that, if he were to engage to do this that very year—1401—we would give him 100,000 gold florins; fifthly, to solicit his confirmation of the imperial privileges delegated to ourselves and to extend our vicariate to Arezzo, Montepulciano and all the other imperial cities then in our possession.³²

On 15 March I left Florence in the company of Ser Piero da S. Miniato and, following the instructions I had received, went through Padua where I informed the Lord of Padua of my mission. He sent an ambassador of his own with us whose name was Dorde. We went by way of Friuli, Salzburg, Munich, and Ingolstadt to Hamburg, where we found the Emperor. I presented the compliments and homage of our Commune and told him that I was ready to expound my embassy either publicly or for his private ear, whenever and however it should best please himself. He received us eagerly and said he would hear our message later. Meanwhile we were lodged at his expense in a very fine house where we were waited on by his own servants. On the second day he sent for us and asked me to deliver my message in the presence of about eight members of his

³² In theory, Florence was subject to the Holy Roman Emperor, although in fact the Commune was independent. While permitting no imperial interference in her affairs, foreign or domestic, the Commune occasionally was willing to pay for the grant of an imperial vicariate, a license for self-government.

Council. I did so but, although I alluded to the gift of money our Commune might be prepared to make, I did not name a figure. The Emperor said he would appoint delegates to negotiate with us and so he did. These in the course of our negotiations questioned us about the amount our Commune was likely to donate. I asked them how much would seem adequate to them and they replied that if the Emperor were to come to Italy that year he would need 500,000 florins from us. I said I wanted to reply to this point in the Emperor's own presence. He received us and I said: "Your Majesty, your delegates have asked for a sum which seems so extraordinarily high to us that we can only conclude this request to be a polite way of refusing to come to Italy, for you must surely know that such an amount is beyond the means of our Commune." He said I was right in thinking he did not want to come that year for he had not the money to do so. The 300,000 florins he had received before his election had all gone to pay for the two sessions of the Diet he had held since then. Another year when he had more money he would not ask us for so much, but if we wanted him to come that year he would be obliged to let us bear most of the expense.

We earnestly exhorted him to come and I finally revealed the figure agreed upon by our government. He replied that, if that was the extent of my message, I should write to Florence what he had told me—that he had no money. I did so and sent duplicate letters by my own couriers. I got a reply to the effect that I should try to convince him by pointing out that the situation at the moment was propitious but might well change if he were to delay. I was authorized to offer him up to 200,000 florins and the promise that once he was in Italy we would do everything in our power to help him. After receiving this, we had several prolonged audiences with His Majesty, during which I kept increasing the amount of our offer until finally, having reached the limit I had been set, I had to tell him that was as high as we could go. He said then that he would summon his Electors and barons to Nuremberg, which was a two-day journey

from where we were, and deliberate with them before giving us a reply.

While we were still waiting for the answer from Florence, we dined with him in one of his gardens and I, noticing that he took no precautions against poison, said, "Your Highness, you don't seem to realize the villainy of the Duke of Milan. If you did, you would be more careful of your safety, for you may be sure that when he hears you are resolved to cross into Italy, he will make every effort to have you murdered by poison or by steel." At this he grew very perturbed and made the sign of the cross, saying, "Could he be so villainous as to try to kill me before I have declared war on him or he on me? I find this hard to believe, yet I will take your advice and be more careful." And so he did, and one result of the suspicion I had aroused in him was that whenever he saw a stranger he immediately inquired who he was and what was his business.

Once, when he and we, who were with him all the time, were staying for the hunting in a fine castle he owned, a short day's ride from Hamburg, he stepped out one morning to hear mass and, noticing a man dressed as a courier, summoned and questioned him. The man said he was on his way to Venice and had come to have a look at the Emperor so as to be able to give an account of him when he got there. The Emperor told one of his knights to take the man to his room and keep him there until after mass. When mass was over, the man confessed that he had come from Pavia with a letter for the Emperor's physician from Master Piero da Tosignano, the physician of the Duke of Milan, and that he had brought such letters before. The Emperor read the letter and sent for his physician, whose name was Master Herman, and who was a former pupil of Master Piero da Tosignano. And in short the physician confessed that he was to have poisoned him and was to have received 15,000 ducats for the deed, 5,000 to be paid in Mainz and the other 10,000 in Venice. When we left for Hamburg, the courier and the physician were brought along under heavy guard. As we were riding back, the Emperor called