

# TWO MEMOIRS

OF

# RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

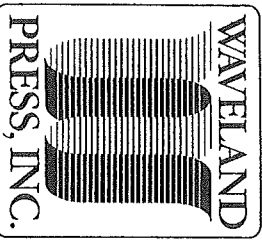
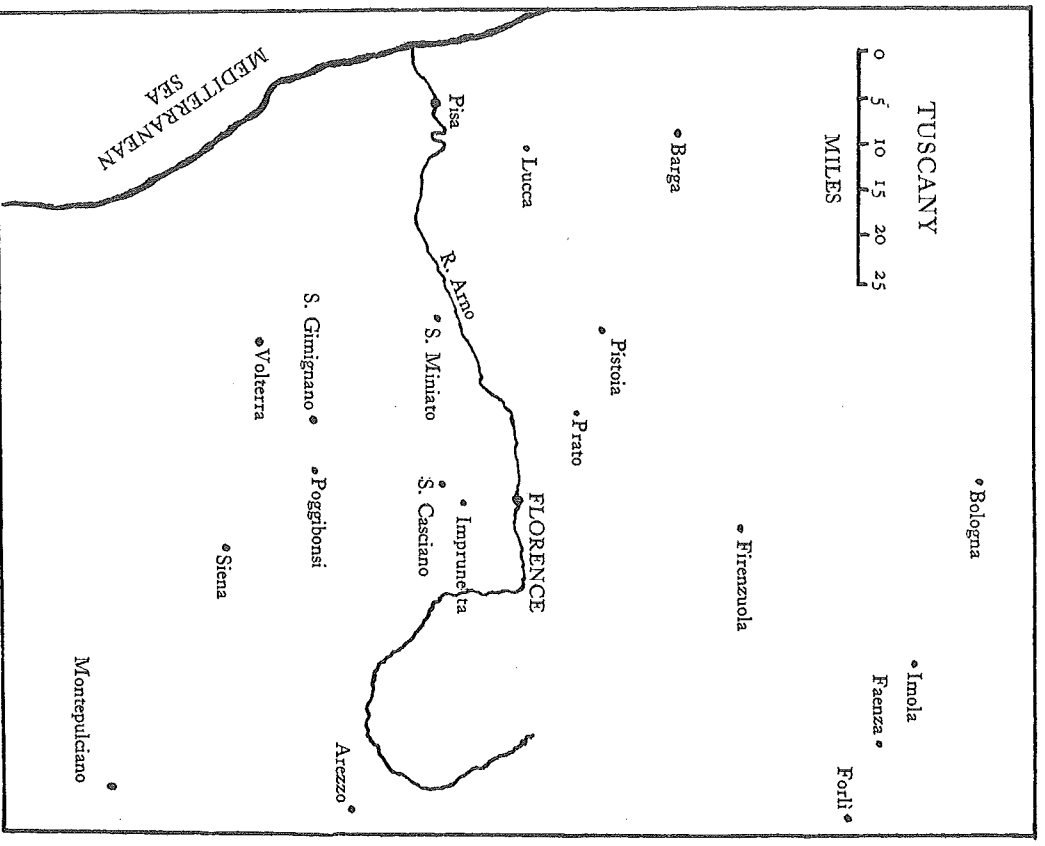
The Diaries of

*Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*

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*u* Marriage *u*



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~~Guido di Messer Tommaso di Nerio del Poggio was the most respected and influential man in the city, I decided to put the matter in his hands and leave the choice of bride up to him, provided he picked her among his own relatives. For I calculated that if I were to become a connection of his and could win his good will, he would be obliged to help me obtain a truce with the Corbizi family. Accordingly, I sent the marriage-broker, Bartolo della Contessa, to tell Guido of my intentions. He sent Bartolo back with the message that he would be happy to have me as a kinsman and was giving the matter thought. A few days later he sent him a second time to say that if I liked I might have the daughter of Luca, son of Piero degli Albizzi, whose mother was a first cousin of his own. I sent back word that I would be very happy and honored and so forth. I was betrothed to her at the end of July 1391 and married her on 12 November of the same year.~~

One day before my marriage, while I was a member of the Eight on Security,<sup>19</sup> I was in the palace with some companions when lightning struck the palace tower and grounded not far from where I was sitting, so that the fire touched the calves of my legs. When I tried to stand up I collapsed on the ground. I was paralyzed from the knees down and my legs felt as though they were on fire. They removed my stockings which stank of sulphur, for the lightning had missed me by a hairsbreadth. All the flesh of my legs was covered with weals; the skin was bleeding and the hairs were singed. They rubbed my legs which were as cold as those of a dead man and I, thinking I was dying, asked for a priest. Yet half an hour later, I stretched my legs, put on another pair of stockings and walked home on my own two feet.

The wool I had bought in England arrived in two ships before my marriage. The insurance for the consignment unloaded in Genoa was nine per cent of the cost; on the

<sup>19</sup> The Eight on Security ( *Otto di Guardia* ) was the communal commission for state security.

one that came to Pisa I paid fourteen. When the wool was sold and the money collected, I found that in sixteen months I had made 1,000 gold florins on the venture. I deposited this money with Luigi and Gherardo Canigiani to whom, upon arriving in Florence, I had already entrusted 4,000 gold florins, for which I accepted bills of exchange. This money greatly improved the credit enjoyed by the Canigiani. Before getting married, I spent about 2,000 gold florins on building and furnishing, and over the years I have had so many restorations and improvements done on this place that, to date, the upkeep of vineyards and plant nurseries alone have cost me more than 2,500 gold florins.

Before I got married, having decided to deal generously with the wretched steward, I gave him 300 gold florins although I only owed him 200. I also entrusted a further 700 to him and yielded to his request that I let him go to Paris to engage in any profitable business he might find. We were to share the proceeds for three years, and if he lost the entire 1,000 gold florins, it was agreed that I was to repay him his own 300. He went to Paris where my brother Francesco set him up in partnership with Luigi, son of Bartolomeo Giovanni, our kinsman. Since Bartolomeo had stayed in my house and worked for me collecting debts (in particular I had sent him several times to Savoy where he twice succeeded in getting 1,000 francs from the Count), I gave him 300 gold francs on my departure from Paris. Having arranged this ill-starred association, Francesco left the pair in Paris and returned to Florence in April. I found him a wife and he got married in June. In September he went back to Paris taking with him our brother Bartolomeo. That December I took Antonio Canigiani with me to Milan and from thence to Pavia and Genoa. Departing on 2 February, I travelled by land and reached Florence on the 5th at the hour of none.

In March Francesco came back to Florence, leaving Bartolomeo in Paris. He told me that the steward had lost everything except the house and its furnishings, which were

worth 1,000 francs in all. Thus, of the 3,000 I had left them, between cash and the value of the house and furniture, they had lost 2,000.

In May I took horse and set out for Avignon and Paris. While I was stopping at an inn in Pavia, I happened to be leaning on a banister at the head of a flight of stairs when a servant, running down, startled a sturdy horse which had been tied to a lower part of the banister. The beast gave it such a tug that the whole thing collapsed and I, falling into the yard below, hit my head against a bin of oats and lost consciousness. No bones were broken and there was no blood. I lay two hours on a bed before I recovered consciousness. When I did, I opened my eyes and asked whether I had broken an arm or leg. Then I became aware of a pain in my head and another in the side on which I had fallen. I asked, "What happened? Who hit me?" For I could not nor ever did remember my fall, although I did remember how the horse had reared when the servant startled him. The Duke of Milan sent all his doctors to me. They drew a lot of blood from several veins, kept me in the dark with the windows closed for nine days, gave me medicines and applied ointments and poultices to my head. On the tenth day I got up and went to thank the Duke.

On taking leave of him, I went to Avignon and Paris where I found Bartolomeo sick. He had contracted about 600 gold francs' worth of debts, since Francesco's departure, between expenses and gambling. I also saw the other two sorry partners in mismanagement who told me, truly or falsely, that they had lost or spent everything. I kept my temper and restored order to my affairs. By the winter of 1393, I had repaid the 600 francs owed by Bartolomeo and given the 300 francs to the steward as I had promised. I also satisfied Luigi and had about 500 gold francs left. I forbade Luigi, the steward, and Bartolomeo to gamble any more before my return and, leaving them in my house, departed for Florence in May 1394.

The following October I left Florence again for Asti, taking my brother Luigi with me, on an embassy from the

Signoria [of Florence] to the Sire de Coucy who was staying there. When I had received a reply, I sent it back to Florence by Luigi, whom I had brought along for that purpose. The Sire de Coucy kept me on in Asti until 22 November, when he entrusted me with a secret embassy to deliver to the King's brother, the Duke of Orleans, whose equerry I was. The matter was of importance for the Duke's honor, and urgent since a rival embassy had been dispatched from Savona a week earlier, whose aim was contrary to our own and which would be successful if it reached the Duke in Paris before I did. Accordingly, as soon as I had received credentials on the 22nd, I set off from Asti and was in Paris, 450 miles away, on the eve of St. Andrew's Day [29 November]. On the last two days of the trip I covered the twenty-four leagues (each league being about three miles) between Chanceaux and Troyes in Champagne in a single day, and the thirty-four leagues (two and one-half miles to the league) between Troyes and Paris in another. I ruined several horses on that journey and received compensation for them from the Duke.

In April 1395 the Dukes of Orleans, Berry, Burgundy, and Bourbon went to Avignon with a number of other lords to negotiate with Pope Benedict about healing the schism.<sup>20</sup> I went in the retinue of my lord, the Duke of Orleans.

A month before we left, being owed 600 gold francs by the Duke of Burgundy for three horses he had had from me (which had cost me 260 gold florins in Florence), I found a Burgundy wine merchant from whom I bought 110 casks (or, as they call them there: *caves*) containing 100 gallons apiece for which I gave 400 in cash and the Duke of Burgundy's letter of credit for 600 francs. I had the wine put in two cellars and, as no one would offer me more

<sup>20</sup> Pope Benedict XIII, the Aragonese Pedro de Luna, was the successor of the Avignon pope, Clement VII, whose election by a group of dissident cardinals in 1378 had precipitated the Great Schism. The kingdoms of France, Naples, and Scotland gave their allegiance to Avignon; the remainder of Latin Europe either adhered to the Roman pope, Urban VI, or remained neutral.