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VILLAS \*\*\*

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# **FLORENTINE VILLAS**

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# FLORENTINE VILLAS

BY

JANET ROSS

WITH REPRODUCTIONS IN PHOTOGRAVURE  
FROM ZOCCHI'S ETCHINGS  
AND MANY LINE DRAWINGS OF THE VILLAS  
BY NELLY ERICHSEN



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MDCCCCI

To

MARGARET

COUNTESS OF CRAWFORD AND BALCARRES

THE OWNER OF ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THE

FLORENTINE VILLAS

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

IN MEMORY OF

OLD FAMILY TIES AND FRIENDSHIPS

BY HER COUSIN

JANET ROSS

## PREFACE

VISITORS to Florence are more or less intimately acquainted with the history of her churches, galleries and palaces, but there are few books dealing with the villas which crown the hills surrounding the lovely city. For years friends have asked me to write some account of them and the first beginning was made in an article in the *National Review* (May 1894) called "A stroll in Boccaccio's country," dealing chiefly with the two villas described by him in the *Decameron* in language of matchless grace and charm. Becoming interested in the subject I collected what information I could about the Florentine Villas and the families to whom they had belonged, and coming across Guiseppe Zocchi's rare work *Vedute delle Ville e d'altri luoghi della Toscana* published in 1744, it was thought that reproductions of his beautiful etchings would enhance the interest of my book. Zocchi, about whom but little is known, was born near Florence in 1711 and died in 1767. Frescoes were executed by him in the Serristori and Rinuccini palaces and he was commissioned by the people of Siena to decorate their city with painted tapestries and hangings for a visit of Leopoldo, Grand Duke of Tuscany. This he probably owed to his patron the Marquis Gerini to whom the volume of engravings of the Villas was dedicated.

In early times the great Florentine families lived in their strong castles like robber chieftains, waging incessant war on each other and on the adjacent villages and towns, and when later they went to dwell in the walled city they built their palaces like strongholds. High towers and thick walls defended Guelf against Ghibelline, and as one party or the other obtained supremacy the beaten rivals were driven to seek refuge in their hill-castles. "The nobles," writes Macchiavelli, "were divided against each other and the people against the nobles.... And from these divisions resulted so many

deaths, so many banishments, so many destructions of families, as never befell in any other city.”

Life became more luxurious under the Medici; famous Master Builders, such as Michelozzi, Ammannati and Buontalenti were charged by the rich Florentines to design, or to enlarge and beautify, the villas which are still the pride and glory of Florence. In the country houses of the Medici, artists, poets and learned men met together and discussed literary subjects with their princely hosts; others were used, much as is the custom now, for summer retreats when the dust and heat of the town made life irksome. The “villegiatura” still plays an important part in the life of an Italian. The head of the family, his sons, their wives and children, install themselves in the huge villas, and even those who can afford to cross the Alps, hurry back to their country places in September for the vintage—always a time of merriment—when music and dancing recall the gaiety of olden days.

My work has been rendered pleasant by the kindness and courtesy of the owners of the Villas described in these pages, and I have to thank H. E. Prince Corsini for much valuable information, and for obtaining permission from the Società Colombaria, of which he is the President, to have the interesting and hitherto almost unknown deathmask of Lorenzo the Magnificent, in their possession, photographed for my book. To Cavaliere Angelo Bruschi, Librarian of the Marucelliana library, I am indebted for unceasing kindness in suggesting and obtaining for me rare pamphlets and manuscripts which illustrated the manners and customs of bygone times. My thanks are also due to Mr Temple Leader for allowing me to use the illustration out of his book, of Sir Robert Dudley’s curious instrument for the measurement of tides; to my kind friend Dr E. Percival Wright for reading the proof-sheets; to my niece Lina Duff Gordon for visiting and describing some of the more distant villas to which I was unable to go; to Colonel Goff for his drawing of Countess Rasponi’s beautiful villa Font’ all’Erta; to Miss Erichsen whose charming drawings of the villas and gardens as they now appear add so much to the beauty and interest of the book, and lastly to the Dowager Countess of Crawford for lending me Zocchi’s volume of etchings for reproduction.

JANET ROSS.

POGGIO GHERARDO,  
FLORENCE.



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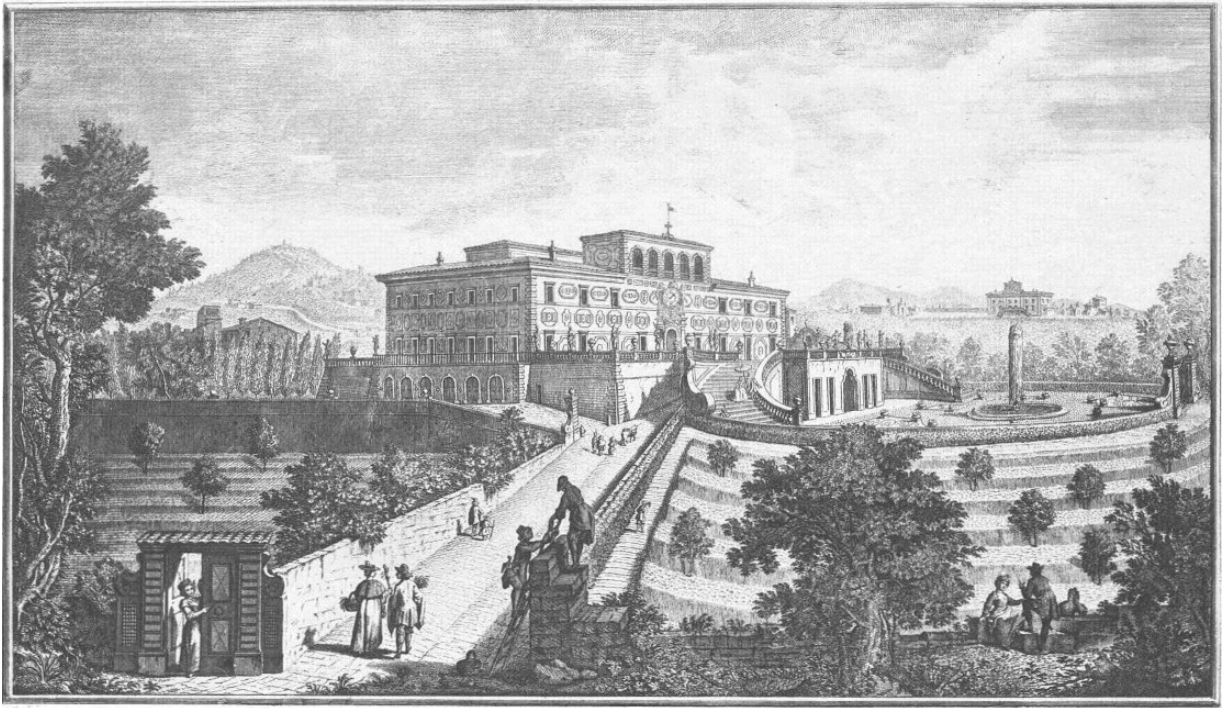
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**VILLA PALMIERI**



Palmieri and made a new carriage road up the hill of Schifanoja to San Domenico; he closed the old one which passed under the Arco de' Palmieri, so now the brethren of the two confraternities meet and rest in the little garden at the entrance gate.

The legendary derivation of the name of the old owners of the Villa is poetical and pretty. When Otho I conquered Berenger IV Pope Agabetus II sent a palm branch with a congratulatory message to the Emperor, who appointed his favourite young cup-bearer to carry the branch before him, and thus show the world how highly he had been honoured by the Pope. The handsome lad came to be called *il Palmiero* (the palm-bearer), and his own name was forgotten. Some years later Otho gave him a castle in the Mugello, and his grandson, who inherited the family good-looks, won the heart of the only daughter of Latino, Lord of Rasoio. Thus, according to the old legend, did the Palmieri become powerful and possessed of great wealth. Their real story is more prosaic. Vespasiano da Bisticci, bookseller and scribe, a biographer of rare merit who was a contemporary of Matteo, writes: "The Florentine Matteo di Marco Palmieri, born of parents in a humble condition of life, founded his house and ennobled it by his singular virtues." They were of the guild of pharmacists, and in the State archives is the note-book of Matteo, with entries of the different sources of the family income. He often laments bitterly how little the pharmacy of the Canto alle Rondine brought in, and how taxes increased every year.

Matteo Palmieri was born in 1405, Sozomeno of Pistoja instructed him in grammar and rhetoric, and two great scholars—Ambrogio Traversari, General of the Cistercians, and Carlo Aretino (Marsuppini), Chancellor of the Republic of Florence, taught him Greek and Latin. Matteo was appointed to pronounce the funeral oration in Santa Croce in 1453 of Carlo Aretino, and his eloquence was such that he drew tears from all present. A friend of Cosimo de' Medici, and of all the famous humanists of that period, he was an able scholar and an accomplished author at a time when learning stood high, and when all Florence was ringing with the praises of Pico della Mirandola, Poggio Bracciolino, and Marsilio Ficino.

By his wife Cosa Serragli, to whom he was passionately attached, Matteo had no children, so he adopted his brother Bartolomeo's two orphan sons, the younger of whom succeeded him in the family pharmacy. In 1437 Matteo became Gonfalonier of Florence together with Adonardo Acciajuoli;

in 1445 he was elected Prior of the Commune, and again in 1468. In 1453 he was Gonfalonier of Justice, and was sent at various times as ambassador of the Republic to King Alphonso of Naples, to Siena, Pisa, Perugia, Bologna and Rome.

His book *Della Vita Civile* was translated into French by de Rosiers; *De Captivitate Pisarum*, and the Life of the Grand Seneschal Acciajuoli, written in Latin, were translated into Italian and published in a more or less mutilated form. But *Città di Vita*, the poem which made the name of Matteo Palmieri celebrated, was never published, and probably has not been read by a score of persons since he wrote it. No doubt the Platonic philosophy, then so popular, had taken a strong hold on him. Written in *terza rima*, it is one of the last poems to have been inspired by the spirit of Dante, and describes how the Cumean sybil leads the author to the Elysian fields through Tartarus, and finally to the City of Life. Lionardo Dati, a pious canon of the cathedral of Florence, who became secretary to the Pope, and Bishop of Massa, to whom Matteo showed the work, pronounced it to be "almost divine," while Marsilio Ficino hailed him as *Poeta Theologicus*. In spite of such praise Palmieri sealed up his manuscript, and gave it into the care of the Pro-Consul of the Guild of Notaries with strict orders that it should not be opened till after his death. In 1475, at his funeral in San Pier Maggiore, it was placed upon his breast, and Allemanno Rinnuccini in his funeral oration spoke of it as "the glory of Matteo." But when the contents of *Città di Vita* were known, the fury of the tribunal of the Inquisition knew no bounds; they declared that the heresy of Origen contaminated its accursed pages, and wanted to dig up the corpse of old Palmieri and burn it and the poem in one fire. Fortunately the Republic had the strength of mind to resist, and the manuscript was returned to the care of the Pro-Consul of the Notaries. Several pages were damaged in 1557 when the Arno flooded the city, and then with other precious documents it was removed to the Laurentian Library. There it was locked up in a cupboard, of which the librarian was not allowed to have the key lest his soul might be contaminated by the odious heresies contained in its pages. The heretical manuscript, with its dainty, imaginative illuminations of the signs of the Zodiac, is now one of the treasures of the library, and on its last page is the portrait of the author, showing a strong, bony and clever face of true Florentine type.

According to Vasari, Sandro Botticelli painted a picture for the altar of the Palmieri chapel in San Pier Maggiore “with an infinite number of figures, being the Assumption of our Lady, with the zones of the heavens, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Evangelists, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Doctors, the Virgins and the Hierarchies; all after the design given him by Matteo, who was a man of letters and of learning: and he executed the work after a masterly fashion and with extreme diligence. He portrayed Matteo and his wife kneeling at the foot of the picture. But although this work was most beautiful and ought to have been above envy, there were some malicious and evil-speaking persons who being unable to abuse it in other ways, said Matteo and Sandro had fallen into the grave sin of heresy; let none expect an opinion from me as to whether this be true or not; enough that the figures painted by Sandro are in truth worthy of praise for the great work he had in designing the circles of the heavens and fitting foreshortenings and landscapes in divers different ways between the figures and the angels; everything being excellently well drawn.”<sup>[1]</sup> Eventually the picture was carried to Villa Palmieri and walled up until the beginning of this century when it was taken out of its hiding-place and sold. At length it passed into the collection of the Duke of Hamilton and in 1882 was bought for our National Gallery. Father Ricca in his exhaustive work on the churches of Florence devotes a whole chapter to this “much-to-be-praised” picture and to the *Città di Vita*. “In these cantos,” says the Jesuit father, “when talking of the angels he [Matteo] follows the condemned opinions of Origen, more from a poetic license than from any theological bias, and supposes that our bodies are inhabited by those angels who are falsely thought to have remained neutral when Lucifer fell; and that God, desirous to try them once more, obliges them to adopt our human bodies. This is the real story of Matteo’s book, which has been altered and corrupted by malevolent and ignorant persons, whose calumnies and lies have been believed even by ultra-montane writers, so that Germany, France and England, were filled with the rumour thereof.”<sup>[2]</sup>

In 1766 Villa Palmieri was inhabited by Lord Cowper who had come on a visit to Florence and found the place so attractive that he refused to return to England. He married the beautiful Miss Gore who was most popular in her Tuscan home, and the Villa was the scene of many brilliant entertainments, as the Grand Duke admired the young and lovely Countess and was a frequent guest. That dear old gossip, Sir Horace Mann, tells us

“the birth of her son [the late Lady Palmerston’s first husband], diffused a riotous joy among the common people who have expressed it for three days by little bonfires and lights at their paper windows.” He also informs us that at a dull Court dinner “the Comptroller of the Table has pleased the Grand Duke much by his giving Lord Cowper and Lord Tylney beer and punch, which he thinks is the constant beverage of the English.” The ambition long cherished by Lord Cowper to be created a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire was at length gratified in 1778, though his desire to be Prince Overkirk was frustrated by the Nassaus, who, as Sir Horace writes, “objected to his bearing their name with the title of Prince. The Emperor [Joseph II.] therefore thought he had found a medium by substituting Overquerque<sup>[3]</sup> but his cousins of that family have likewise put their negative to that; so that it is now reduced to plain Prince Cowper, for which he must pay ten thousand zecchins (about £5000). The heralds of the Empire have objected to his bearing the arms of Nassau. They don’t allow such a right from females, and more particularly when there is any male branch of the family. Neither the Emperor nor my Lord seem to know what they were about, when it was asked and granted, and I believe that both now repent of it.” Horace Walpole in a letter to Mann criticising Zoffany’s well-known picture of the Tribune in the Uffizzi (now at Windsor) sneers at Lord Cowper’s title of Prince. He says “it is crowded by a flock of travelling boys, and one does not know nor care whom. You and Sir John Dick, as Envoy and Consul, are very proper. The Grand Ducal family would have been so too.... I do allow Earl Cowper a place in the Tribune; an Englishman who has never seen his Earldom, who takes root and bears fruit in Florence and is as proud of a pinchbeck principality in a third country, is as great a curiosity as any in the Tuscan collection.”

Though eccentric, Lord Cowper was a patron of men of letters and had a passionate admiration for Niccolò Macchiavelli; he subscribed large sums to the erection of the great secretary’s tomb in Santa Croce and to the publication of a complete edition of his works; while his generous, hospitable character gained him great favour among the Italians, who are generally inclined to quote the old proverb “an italianised Englishman is a devil incarnate.”

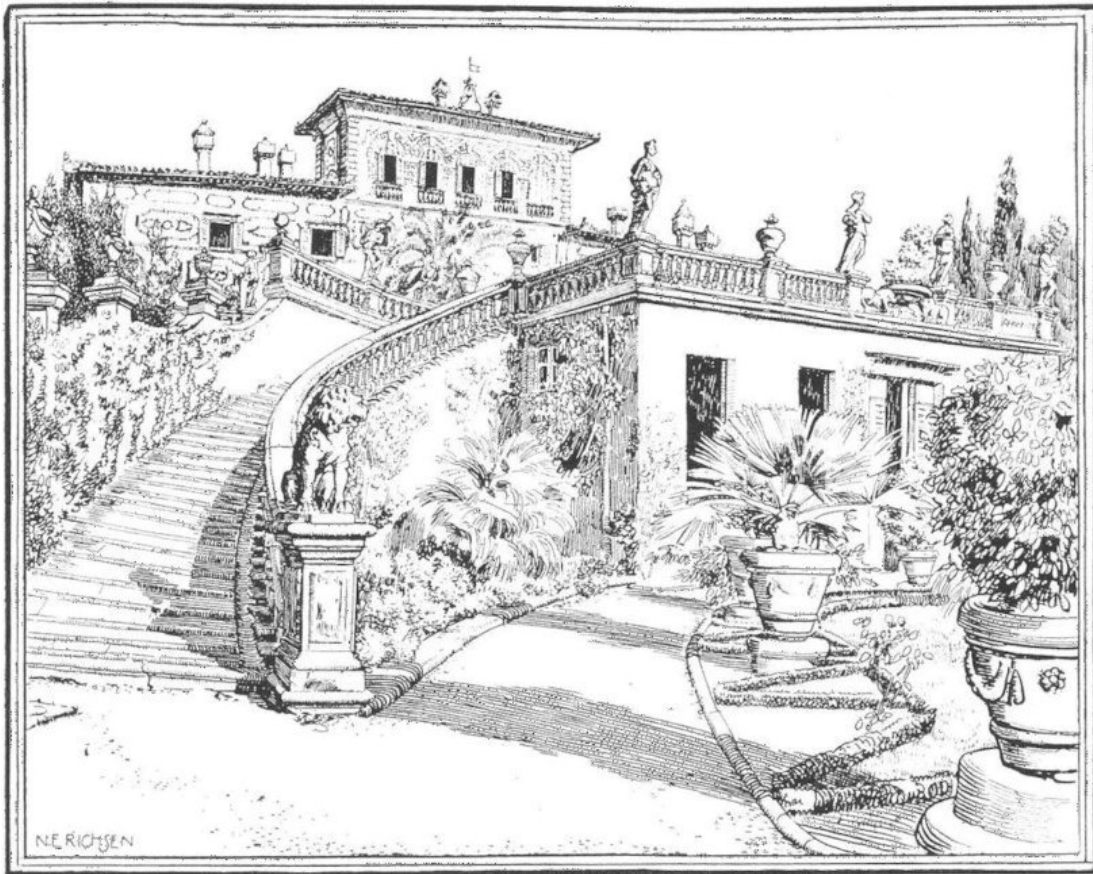
In 1824 Villa Palmieri was bought by Miss Mary Farhill from the executors of the last of the Palmieri. She was an odd woman, but the

Florentines appear to have liked her, and she was a favourite of the Grand Duchess Marie Antoinette to whom she left her villa, and who sold it in 1874 to the Earl of Crawford. He planted the hillside behind the villa and made the gardens once more resemble the impassioned description in the *Decameron*. As a scholar and a student his name stands high, and he will long be remembered in his Tuscan home for many a kindly and charitable act. In 1888 and in 1893 Lady Crawford lent her beautiful villa to H.M. Queen Victoria.

Villa Palmieri has always been identified with the second villa visited by the seven maidens and the three youths in the *Decameron*. Baldelli, in his *Life of Boccaccio*, tells us that “owning a small villa in the parish of Majano, Boccaccio took pleasure in describing the surrounding country, more especially the lovely slopes and rich valleys of the Fiesolean hills near his modest dwelling. Thus in the enchanting picture he has drawn of the first halting-place of the joyous company we recognise Poggio Gherardo, and in the sumptuous palace chosen by them afterwards, in order not to be disturbed by tiresome visitors, the beautiful Villa Palmieri. His fairy-like description of the tiny circular valley into which Elisa led the lovely ladies to disport themselves and bathe in the heat of the day, brings that small flat meadow before us, through which the Affrico, after having divided two hills and abandoned their stony ledges, meandering unites his waters in a canal in the adjacent plain under the cloister of Doccia at Fiesole.”

Villa Palmieri will live for ever in Boccaccio’s exquisite and untranslatable *Decameron*. “The Queen,” he writes, “led them to a most beautiful and sumptuous palace situated somewhat above the plain on a small hill. They entered and went all over it, and seeing the large halls, the cleanly and well-decorated bed-chambers, completely furnished with all that pertains thereunto, their praise was unstinting and they reputed the owner to be rich and magnificent. Then descending and seeing the vast and pleasant courtyards of the palace, the cellars stocked with most excellent wines, and the copious springs of coldest water, they commended the place yet more highly. Desirous of repose they then seated themselves in a loggia overlooking the courtyard (every place being covered with flowers pertaining to that season, and with greenery), and the courteous steward came forward to welcome them and offered rich and dainty sweetmeats and rare wines for their refreshment.” The lovely gardens with *pergole* of vines

laden with bunches of grapes, the hedges of jasmine and crimson roses, the carved marble fountains, whose overflow of water was conducted by cunningly devised underground channels down to the plain, where it turned two mills “to the great profit of the lord of the villa,” are all described by Boccaccio in his inimitable poetic prose.



The mills mentioned by Boccaccio were almost entirely destroyed by a flood of the Mugnone in 1409. Two years later they were rebuilt, and a third mill, nearer the town, was erected after the siege of Florence in 1529, and bestowed upon the Foundling Hospital as compensation for damage done to some of its farms. The arms of the Hospital, a swaddled baby, are still to be seen on one of the walls near the mill.

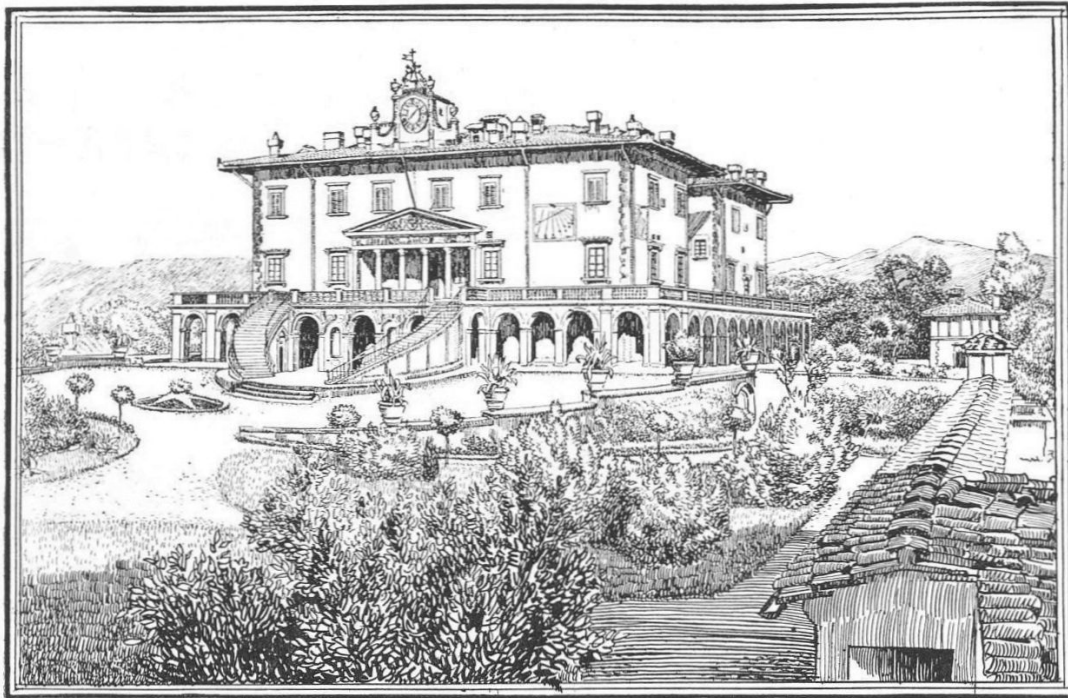
### FOOTNOTES:

[1] G. Vasari. Tom. III. p. 314. Firenze, 1879. Vasari states that in addition to the Palmieri altarpiece Botticelli “painted two angels in the Pieve of Empoli on the

same side where is the St Sebastian by Rossellino” (ed. 1568, I. 474). These two angels form the lateral panels of a tabernacle containing St Sebastian by Rossellino, now in the museum of the Pieve at Empoli. In the same museum is another tabernacle formerly over the High Altar of the church. From documents in the State archives of Florence it appears that the commission for this second tabernacle was given on 28th March 1484 to Francesco Botticini, and it requires but little acquaintance with Florentine art to see that both are by the same hand, as Signor Milanese long since hinted. From these two works our knowledge of Botticini as a painter is derived, and the Palmieri altarpiece is evidently, from analogy of manner, by the same master. It is remarkable that though Botticini fell under many influences, no direct influence of Botticelli can be traced in any of his works. Vasari, no doubt, misread the name *Botticelli* for *Botticini*, just as he confused the name *Benozzo* with *Melozzo*. Vide ed. Sansoni, III. 51-2. I am indebted to Mr Herbert P. Horne for the above information.

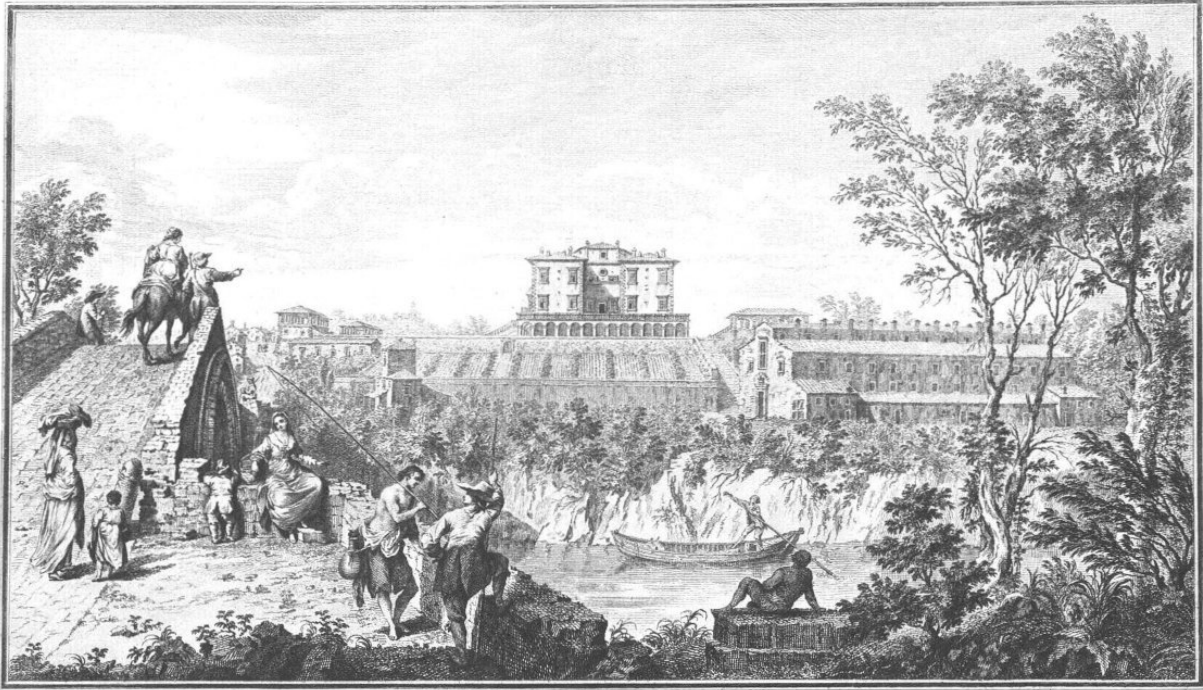
[2] Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese Fiorentine. G. Ricca. Tom. I. p. 155. Firenze, 1754.

[3] Lord Cowper’s mother was the youngest daughter and co-heiress of Henry de Nassau d’Overquerque, Earl of Grantham, an illegitimate descendant of Maurice of Nassau.



## VILLA DI POGGIO A CAJANO

THERE is an old tradition that a Roman citizen named Cajo once owned a villa at Poggio a Cajano, hence the name Villa Caja, Rus Cajana; but the present royal villa, about ten miles from Florence, dates from the time of Lorenzo the Magnificent. He bought the old castle and the estate from the powerful family of the Cancellieri of Pistoja, and ordered Giuliano da San Gallo to design the imposing pile now towering high above the little village nestling at its feet, and which was built on the foundations of the ancient castle. From afar with its bastions, it looks so like a great fortress, that when the Emperor Charles V spent a day there in May 1536, he remarked that such walls were not meet for a private citizen, and before leaving for Lucca he created the bastard Alessandro de' Medici Duke of Tuscany.



### VILLA DI POGGIA A CAJANO.

Lorenzo the Magnificent desired to have a large hall, vaulted with one arch of huge span in his villa, so Giuliano da San Gallo constructed a room according to Lorenzo's idea in a house he was building for himself in Florence, and this being a success he carried it out on a large scale at Poggio a Cajano. Vasari writes "There is no doubt this is the largest vault ever seen till now." Later, by order of Leo X, Andrea del Sarto, Franciabigio and Pontormo decorated the hall with frescoes allegorical of the glories of the Medici. Del Sarto represents the gifts sent by Egypt to Cæsar—metaphorical of the presents given by the Sultan to Lorenzo; Franciabigio, under the guise of Cicero returning from exile, illustrates the return of Cosimo de' Medici to Florence in 1434; Pontormo, in the banquet given by Syphax to Scipio, figures the one given by the King of Naples to Lorenzo; while Titus Flaminius, rejecting the ambassadors of Antiochus (also by Pontormo), is illustrative of Lorenzo defeating the ambitious designs of Venice at the Diet of Cremona. But the finest fresco by far is seldom pointed out by guide book or guide—Pontormo's exquisite lunette at one end of the hall. I am proud to find my opinion ratified by Mr Berenson, who writes, "Pontormo, who had it in him to be a decorator and portrait painter of the highest rank, was led astray by his awe-struck admiration for Michelangelo, and ended as an academic constructor of monstrous nudes.

What he could do when expressing *himself*, we see in the lunette at Poggio a Cajano, as design, as colour, as fancy, the freshest, the gayest, most appropriate mural decoration now remaining in Italy.”<sup>[4]</sup> The fine external staircase, up and down which horses can easily walk, was the work of Stefano d’Ugolino da Siena, and the frieze is by one of the Della Robbia.

Beautiful are the gardens sloping down to the little river Ombrone. Trees and shrubs grow luxuriantly, thanks to the moist soil. The fields are intersected with small canals which in spring are fringed with tall yellow iris, purple loosestrife and feathery meadowsweet, and decked with white water-lilies. In the time of the Medici the whole plain was cultivated with rice, which made it very unhealthy, and it is still feverish. The little streamlet Ambra, flowing into the Ombrone close by, has been more honoured in song than many a larger river. Poliziano writes in his introduction to the study of Homer, “We also, therefore, with glad homage dedicate to him this garland of Pieria’s flowers, which Ambra, loveliest of Cajano’s nymphs, gave to me, culled from meadows on her father’s shore, Ambra, the love of my Lorenzo, whom Umbrone, the horned stream begat—Umbrone, dearest to his master Arno—Umbrone, who now henceforth will never break his banks again.”<sup>[5]</sup>

On a small island, also called Ambra, Lorenzo planted rare flowers and shrubs, and raised dykes round it to ward off the sudden floods of the Ombrone. But one day “the horned stream” rose and carried away the islet. Lorenzo vented his grief in that charming poem *Ambra* in which the Florentine love of, and delight in, the country is vividly portrayed in idiomatic style by a thorough Tuscan, who knew and loved his Ovid without servilely imitating him. After describing the flight of Zephyr to Cyprus, where he dances with the lazy flowers amid the joyous grass; and Boreas tearing the mist off the old white-headed Alps, only to fling them back again, he continues, “Auster leaves hot Ethiopia, dipping his dry sponges into the Tyrrhenean sea as he passes; then heavy with water and girdled with clouds he squeezes his tired hands when he reaches his destination, and the rivers joyously burst forth from their ancestral caverns to meet the friendly waters. They give thanks to Father Ocean, whose temples are adorned with rushes and flowering reeds, conches and crooked horns joyfully resound, and his wide bosom swells yet more; the fury

conceived days ago against the timid banks at length breaks forth, and foaming he bursts through the hated dykes.”

The poor peasant has barely time to open the stable door and save his cattle, the housewife carries away the baby in its cradle, some of the family take refuge on the roof and “thence they watch their poor riches, fruit of their toil, their one resource, vanish below; they neither weep nor speak, for in their sorrowing hearts they fear for their lives and seem to take no account of what was once most dear. Thus a great ill drives out every other.” Ambra the beautiful nymph, flies from the embraces of the river-god Ombrone, and prays to Diana for help, who turns her into a rock.

Lorenzo, who was fond of horses and of racing, kept a large stud at Poggio a Cajano, and Poliziano, writing to Valori, mentions an invincible roan horse which, when sick or tired, refused all food save from the hand of his master. When if lying down he heard Lorenzo’s step, he would spring to his feet and neigh, rubbing his head against him with every mark of affection. “What wonder,” exclaims Poliziano, “that Lorenzo should be the delight of mankind when even brute beasts shew such love for him.”

Varchi, whose admiration for Poggio a Cajano was great, tells us “the Medici, that is the Cardinal and Ippolito and Alessandro left Florence on Friday the 17th day of May 1527 at 18 o’clock, accompanied by Count Piero Noferi and many others, (there were many who said, as the company rode down Via Larga, which was crowded with people, that they would one day repent letting them depart alive,) and went full of fear to Poggio a Cajano, their villa of marvellous size and magnificence.... Hardly had the Medici left Florence than the people rushed to rob their houses, and only with great difficulty could Niccolò [Capponi] and other good men hold them back and save the houses; and the next day (when, without knowing who set the rumour about, news spread that the Pope had come out of Castel Sant’ Angelo) people said that the Medici with a goodly following of foot and horse were returning to re-enter Florence, and Lodovico Martelli publicly affirmed under the Loggia de’ Signori that from his place Le Gore they had been seen at Careggi, their villa two miles outside Florence, and although (not so much because he was a Martelli, who are generally held to be untrustworthy, as because he was looked on as the sworn follower of his brother-in-law Luigi Ridolfi) small reliance was placed on his word, nevertheless in a few hours, this being repeated by one to the other and by

the other to another, there arose a great hubbub in Florence and the shops (this by now had become a daily custom) and doors were closed. News of the rising was taken by Nibbio, who spurred by fear left Florence in hot haste and returned to Poggio to the Cardinal and the Magnificent, besides which friends wrote to warn them and enemies to frighten them, that Piero Salviati was preparing to start with two hundred cross-bowmen on horseback; all these things so alarmed the Cardinal that he, with all the others, left at once ... and went to Pistoja.”

There were great doings at Poggio a Cajano on the 24th July 1539 when Cosimo I and his bride Eleonora of Toledo spent five days there on their way from Pisa to Florence. Twenty-six years later their son Francesco de' Medici met his bride, Joan of Austria, at the same place, where some time afterwards he died together with his second wife the infamous Bianca Cappello. Little did the poor Arch-Duchess think that the beautiful villa, where she first met her affianced husband, was to become the favourite residence of the handsome and dissolute Venetian, who rendered her life intolerable, and was suspected of poisoning her only son. In 1578 Joan died, and on her deathbed entreated her husband to give up his mistress. Sobbing he swore he would never see her again, but two months afterwards, on the 5th June 1578, Francesco I, was secretly married to Bianca Cappello (her husband having been conveniently murdered some little time before) in the private chapel of Palazzo Vecchio.

In September the Republic of Venice sent ambassadors to compliment the new Grand Duchess and declare her to be “the daughter of St Mark,” and she was solemnly crowned in Santa Maria de' Fiore.

Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, brother and heir to Francesco I, had kept aloof from the Tuscan court since the marriage with Bianca, but at last, early in October 1587, he was persuaded to come to Florence and was received by her with great demonstrations of affection. They went off immediately to Poggio a Cajano for the shooting, and on the 8th October the Grand Duke was attacked by fever, declared by the doctors to be tertian. Two days later the Grand Duchess fell ill of the same malady and the court physician called in Giulio Angeli da Barga, professor of medicine at the University of Pisa, and Giulio Cini, the doctor in attendance on the Cardinal. At first the illness of the Grand Duke and of Bianca was kept secret, but when vague rumours reached the ears of the Pope, it was

declared that Francesco had over-eaten himself with mushrooms, whereupon the Holy Father wrote him a homily about abstaining from all indigestible food. To put an end to the various rumours in circulation, a statement was sent to Rome on the 16th October, setting forth that “the Grand Duke has a double tertian fever and incessant thirst; at present everything points towards his restoration to health, as the fourth and seventh days have been easy with abundant sweats, and we hope to go from good to better. But there must be no excesses, and the approach of autumn makes us fear the malady will be a long one. Cause therefore prayers to be said, all the more that the Grand Duchess has almost the same sickness, and this increases the malady of the Grand Duke because she cannot attend on him.”

“On the ninth day,” writes Galluzzi, “the illness of the Grand Duke augmented, and the fever was not purged by two bleedings. It increased and breathlessness came on, so that he died on the night of the 19th October. He had always insisted on treating himself according to his own fashion, as to food and iced drinks, and as he was devoured by ardent thirst during the whole course of illness it was thought that he died burnt up by the heating meats and drinks in which he always immoderately indulged. In the post-mortem examination the chief seat of the malady was found to be the liver; this gave him a bad digestion and a harshness of the stomach, which led him to indulge in elixirs and such-like drinks for comfort. When the Grand Duke felt that death was near he called his brother the Cardinal to his bedside, and after begging his pardon for past events, gave him the pass-word for the fortresses, and recommended to his care his wife, Don Antonio,<sup>[6]</sup> his ministers and all his friends. Cardinal Ferdinando comforted him as best he could, but when he saw that all hope was lost he sent to take possession of the fortresses and ordered the militia and the troops to be called under arms. As soon as Francesco was dead, Cardinal Ferdinando left Poggio a Cajano for Florence in order to be on the spot if any disorders occurred, but before leaving he paid a visit to the Grand Duchess Bianca, and ordered that her husband’s death should be kept from her. He tried to comfort her with hopes of a speedy recovery and consigned her to the care of Bishop Abbioso, her daughter Pellegrina and her son-in-law Ulisse Bentivoglio. Her illness was less severe than that of the Grand Duke, but she was weakened by former maladies and by the violent medicines she had taken in the hopes of bearing children. The outrageous noise, the trampling of many feet and the tearful

eyes of those about her made her aware of what had happened, she lost consciousness and died at 18 o'clock on the 20th October.”<sup>[7]</sup>

The Cardinal Grand Duke ordered her body to be opened in the presence of the doctors, of her daughter and her son-in-law, and then to be sent to Florence with the same formalities as had been used for the Grand Duke; but he would not allow her to be buried in the tomb of the Medici, and she was interred in the crypt of San Lorenzo in such fashion that no memory of her should be left. He was moreover so irritated with her artifices and intrigues, which the ministers vied with each other in disclosing, that he ordered her arms to be effaced wherever they were quartered with those of the Medici, and the arms of his brother's first wife, Joan of Austria, to be put in their place. He also forbade the title of Grand Duchess being used before her name, and in a decree relating to the birth of Don Antonio insisted on her being repeatedly described as “the abominable Bianca.” No wonder Ferdinando hated her. She had induced the Grand Duke Francesco to palm off a supposititious son (Don Antonio) upon his heir, and had twice feigned to be with child after her second marriage.

The deaths of Francesco and Bianca were naturally attributed to poison. One version was that the Cardinal poisoned them; another that Bianca made a tart with her own hands for her brother-in-law, who, warned by the paling of a stone in his ring, refused to touch it, while her husband insisted on eating largely of it and in despair she did the same.

Little more than a year after this double tragedy Poggio a Cajano resounded to the merry-making which greeted Cristina of Lorraine, the youthful bride of the Grand Duke (late Cardinal) Ferdinando I. She arrived on the evening of the 28th of April 1589 and was met by her bridegroom and a gallant company of lords and ladies. Brought up at the French court, tall, graceful, handsome and with charming manners, the sixteen year old girl won all hearts. She does not seem to have frequented Poggio a Cajano, and people thought it an odd choice of the Grand Duke to meet his bride at the place which had been so fatal to his brother, and if report said true was near being fatal to himself.

Cosimo III, the bigoted great-grandson of Ferdinando I, also married a French Princess, Marguerite Louise, daughter of Gaston, Duc d'Orleans. Good-looking and vivacious, used to the brilliant court of Louis XIV, and

passionately in love with Prince Charles of Lorraine, she came to Tuscany determined to hate everything. Martinelli, whose father was about the court, has left an amusing description of the tom-boy games the young French Princess played, to the horror and disgust of her husband, who passed his days in reading the lives of the saints and was entirely under the influence of the Jesuits. He even tried to put an end to all love-making and courtship in his dominions, by a law forbidding young men to enter any house where there were marriageable girls.

After the birth of three children Cosimo III considered the succession to be secure and occupied himself no more with his wife. “He obliged the Grand Duchess,” writes Martinelli, “to send the French cavaliers and ladies of her court back to France, only a cook was allowed to remain.” Cosimo, entirely given up to devotion and solitude, governed his family as well as his dominions like Tiberius. He only permitted his wife to indulge in the amusement of a concert for two or three hours in the evening.... The Grand Duchess was young and found the concert tiresome, or else being born in France she did not care for Italian music, so she used to call for the cook who appeared in his white apron and cap. This cook was, or pretended to be, extremely ticklish, and the Princess knowing this took great pleasure in tickling him, while he made all those contortions, screams and exclamations of one who cannot bear to be tickled. Thus the Princess pursuing, and the cook defending himself and running from one end of the room to the other, caused her to laugh immoderately, and at last when tired she would seize a pillow from off her bed and beat the cook with it over the head and about the body while he shouted and begged for mercy, and got first under and then on the bed of the Princess, who continued to beat him, until tired out with laughing and beating she would sink down on a chair. While these games were going on between the Grand Duchess and her cook the musicians ceased playing and rested until she sat down. For a long time the Grand Duke knew nothing of what went on, but one evening the cook being very drunk shouted louder than usual, so that Cosimo, whose rooms were at some distance from those of the Grand Duchess, heard the extraordinary noise. When he entered his wife’s apartments she was beating the cook on the Grand Ducal bed. Horror-struck the Prince condemned the cook to the galleys, but I believe he was eventually pardoned, and read his wife such a lecture that she declared she would return to France....<sup>[8]</sup> She went to Poggio a Cajano and her children, dressed in deep mourning, were sent to bid her

good-bye. Touched by their tears she determined to ask her husband's pardon and his permission to return to Florence; but this was refused, and after spending some months in solitude at the villa the Princess left for Paris, where she died in September 1721 at the age of seventy-six, having spent her life in love and intrigue.

The son of Cosimo III, by this eccentric lady, made a bad husband to the pretty and amiable Violante of Bavaria. He passed most of his time at Poggio a Cajano with musicians and actors, and followed a young Venetian singer, Vittoria Bombagia, to Venice for the carnival, whence he returned desperately ill and soon afterwards died.

The beautiful villa continued to be used occasionally as a royal residence by the family of Lorraine, and the iron bridge over the Ombrone, about half a mile from the high road, was the first suspension bridge built in Tuscany (1833) by Leopoldo II.



## FOOTNOTES:

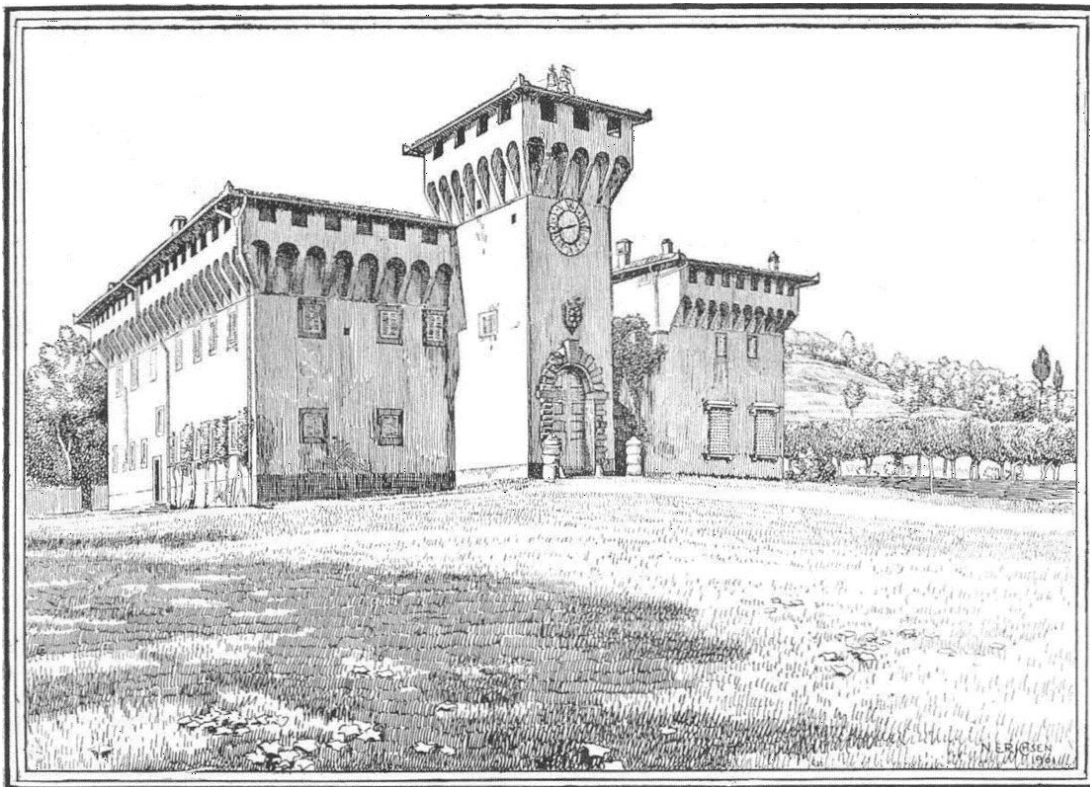
[4] Bernhard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters*.

[5] *Carmina*, etc., p. 224. Translated by J. A. Symonds.

[6] The supposititious child of Bianca. He was said to have been introduced into Palazzo Pitti in a lute, and the Grand Duke, persuaded he was his child, left him large property, and bought for him the estate and title of Prince of Capistrano in the Abruzzi. The real mother was murdered by order of Bianca.

[7] Galuzzi. *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana*. Vol. IV. p. 54 *et seq.*

[8] *Lettere Familiare e Critiche di Vincenzo Martinelli*. Londra. Presso G. Nourse, Libraio nello Strand. 1758.

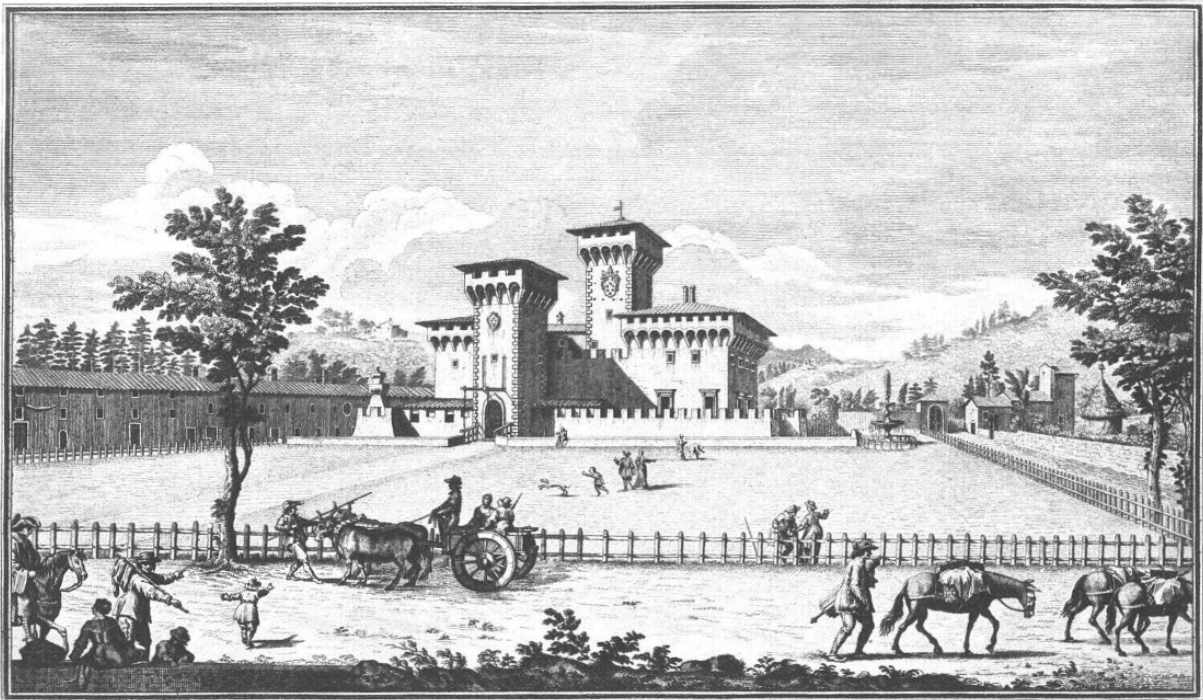


## CAFAGGIUOLO

STRICTLY speaking Cafaggiuolo, situated some eighteen miles from Florence, can hardly be called a Florentine villa; but it is too intimately connected with the history of the Tuscan city and of the Medici not to be mentioned together with Careggi, Poggio a Cajano and other well-known villas.<sup>[9]</sup>

The carriage road to Bologna climbs boldly up the hills behind Fiesole, so swiftly that the hills which towered so high above us but a while ago, now, as we look back upon them, seem to mingle with the plain; and we plunge into the Mugello, where the olive is no longer seen. As San Pier a Sieve is neared, memories intermingle of Florentine painters and Florentine tyrants, and the land itself seems strangely divided between the sense of absolute peace and of preparations for defence against neighbouring foes. Vespignano, the birthplace of Giotto, lies at no great distance, and further again the small fortified village of Vicchio where Beato Angelico passed his

earliest years. Above the Sieve, which flows so quietly and evenly through the valley towards the Arno, its pure green waters receiving a delicate shade from the tall poplar trees on its low banks, rise low rounded hills covered with oaks, while here and there a pine wood shows dark and unvaried through spring and winter months. The tower of Trebbio, rising on its hill like a castle keep, is seen in strong relief against the sky for many miles round, and tells of past centuries of insecurity and warfare. Opposite is the fortress of San Martino, now dismantled, built to guard the road to Florence through the Mugello, and far and near can be descried small watch-towers on the hill-tops; but vain seem these preparations made by nobles and princes against their foes when we look at the long line of the Apennines, scarred, rugged and woodless, stretched at right angles across the valley.



**CAFAGGIUOLO.**

Vasari tells us that Michelozzo Michelozzi designed for Cosimo the Elder “the palace of Cafaggiuolo in the Mugello in the guise of a fortress amid the woods, the copses and other matters appertaining to fine and famous villas, and two miles distant from the said palace he finished the Capuchin monastery, which is a very splendid thing.”<sup>[10]</sup>

Dr G. Brocchi, a contemporary of Zocchi, wrote a history of the Mugello in 1747, and describes Cafaggiuolo as being “built after the fashion of an ancient fortress with sundry towers, and moats round it and drawbridges. Inside is a large chapel dedicated to the saints Cosimo and Damiano, protectors of the royal house of Medici. There are likewise many halls and great rooms, with various courtyards, loggie and galleries, which make it (though according to ancient fashion) very noble and magnificent.” Very noble the old place still is though the real entrance under the tower is now abolished, and the late Princess Borghese, who bought Cafaggiuolo in 1864, made an arch in the front wall which spoils the façade. Moats and drawbridges have disappeared, and the grass grows right up to the walls. Cafaggiuolo is typical of the practical style of Michelozzi, who adopted classical forms rather because of their simplicity and convenience than because he shared Brunelleschi’s æsthetic enthusiasm. Cosimo probably ordered his favourite architect to build a castle to serve as a stronghold in case of any popular rising, rather than a villa, but the lines dictated by this utilitarian end are treated with great skill and produce a sense of dignity and grandeur. It is in fact a mediæval castle adapted to the new taste for classical architecture by the use of classical mouldings in doors and windows, but without any essential reconstruction of the mediæval plan of building. Cosimo Pater Patriae spent what time he could spare from the cares of government between his two favourite villas Careggi and Cafaggiuolo; he preferred the latter to his other possessions because all the country he saw from the windows belonged to him, and whenever the plague broke out in Florence he took refuge in the pure air of the Mugello. “You may know,” wrote one of his friends, “when Florence is menaced; for if Cosimo and his family go to Cafaggiuolo you may be sure that eight or ten people die *per diem* in the town, but should they leave it the plague is indeed severe.”

Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici passed much of their childhood at Cafaggiuolo; they were sent there when their grandfather Cosimo the Elder lay dying and the plague was ravaging Florence. The two boys wrote thence to their father: “Magnifice Pater, we arrived here yesterday morning in safety; at Tagliaferro we had a little rain, but all the rest of the journey could not have been pleasanter. On arrival we ordered that the family of Messer Zanobi should go on to Gagliano, and we made them understand that if any of them went to Florence or any other infected places they could not return.

As to Pulci, who had been waiting two days in order to be with us, we cleverly sent him back to Chavallina,<sup>[11]</sup> and in all things till now we have observed your commands. Thus shall we continue to do. We commend ourselves to you and to Mona<sup>[12]</sup> Lucrezia. Your sons Laurentius et Giulianus de' Medicis."

In the Medicean archives are many letters from the factor of Cafaggiuolo to Piero de' Medici giving him news of his children and their grandmother. In April 1467 he reports: "Yesterday we went out fishing and they caught enough for their dinner and returned home at a reasonable hour; to-morrow, if they will, we go out riding after dinner and begin to show them the estate as you ordered." Again in August the following year he writes: "Madonna Contessina and the boys are well, may God preserve them. Lorenzo wants to smooth the ground in front of Cafaggiuolo. Here we stand in need of wax and tallow candles. I told Madonna Contessina, and she said I was to take white Venetian ones; but they appear to me too honourable for Cafaggiuolo. If it seems so to you also tell Madonna Lucrezia to send us others, and at all events let tallow ones be sent for common use. Yestermorn Madonna Contessina, Lorenzo and Giuliano with the household went on horseback to the Friars of the Wood and heard High Mass. Madonna rode Lorenzo's mule, and was astonished to find herself more agile than she had expected. As it seems to please her we shall go to Comugnole and about in the plain to have a little amusement, but always with two footmen at her stirrup, and we shall do what we can to save her all fatigue and trouble in the management of the house. The boys are having a happy time and go bird-catching and shooting and return at a reasonable hour; they enliven her and the neighbourhood."

Cafaggiuolo always brings Donatello to one's memory, as Piero de' Medici, in obedience to the wishes of his father Cosimo, made him a present of a house and farm belonging to the estate. The great sculptor was delighted at thus becoming a landed proprietor, but after a year's experience of farming begged Piero to take back his gift. Life, he said, was too short to be spent in listening to the incessant complaints of an ignorant and tedious peasant, whose roof was always being carried off by the wind, his crops damaged by hail, or his cattle seized for arrears of taxes. Piero laughed heartily at Donatello's inability to cope with the astute Mugello peasant and exchanged the farm for a pension.

Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici often returned to Cafaggiuolo as young men, and with their friends the Pulci frequented the fairs and weekly markets of the Mugello. At one of these, Lorenzo met the heroine of that delightful country idyll *Nencia da Barberino*, "a masterpiece of true genius and humour. It can scarcely be called a parody of village life and feeling, although we cannot fail to see that the town is laughing at the country all through the exuberant stanzas, so rich in fancy, so incomparably vivid in description."<sup>[13]</sup> Luigi Pulci imitated it in *La Istoria della Beca da Dicomano*, while his brother Luca in the *Driadeo d'Amore* praises the rivers Sieve, Lora, Sturo and Tavaiano, and under feigned names describes the places where Lorenzo and Giuliano and the three brothers Pulci went hawking and fishing.

After the Pazzi conspiracy and the murder of Giuliano in 1476, Lorenzo sent his wife Clarice with the children and their tutor Angelo Poliziano to Cafaggiuolo for safety. Poliziano wrote to Lucrezia, who had remained in Florence with her son: "Magnifica Domina mea. The news I can send from here is that we are all well, that we have so much and such continual rain that we cannot quit the house, and that we have exchanged hunting for playing at ball, so that the children may not want for exercise.... I remain in the house by the fireside in my slippers and greatcoat, and you would take me for melancholy in person could you see me; but perhaps I am but myself after all, for I neither do nor see nor hear anything that amuses me, so much have I taken to heart our calamities; sleeping and waking they haunt me. Two days since we began to spread our wings as we heard the plague had ceased, now we are again depressed on learning that things are not yet quite settled with you. When at Florence we have some consolation—if nought else that of seeing Lorenzo return home safe. Here we are always anxious about everything; and as for myself, I declare to you I am drowned in weary laziness for the solitude in which I find myself. I say solitude, because Monsignore [probably the Bishop of Arezzo] shuts himself up in his room, where I find him sorrowful and full of thought, so that being with him increases my own melancholy; Ser Alberto del Malherba mumbles offices all day long with the children; I remain alone, and when tired of studying ring the changes on plague and war, on sorrow for the past and fear for the future, and have no one with whom to air these my phantasies. I do not find my Madonna Lucrezia here to whom I can unbosom myself and I am dying

of weariness.... I commend myself unto you. Ex Cafasolo, die 18 dicembris 1478. Your servant Angelus.”

Poliziano was no favourite with the proud and unlettered Clarice, and he complained to Lorenzo about Giovanni (afterwards Pope Leo X): “His mother sets him to read the Psalter, of which I do not approve. When she does not interfere with him he makes most wonderful progress.” It ended by Clarice sending away Poliziano and engaging a priest to superintend her son’s studies. Before his birth she dreamed that she was delivered of a huge but docile lion, and his father always destined him for the Church. Soon after he was seven he received the tonsure and was declared capable of ecclesiastical preferment; whereupon the King of France made him abbot of Fonte-dolce, an appointment rapidly followed by so many others that, after enumerating them all, old Fabroni in his life of Leo X exclaims: “Bone Deus, quot in uno juvene cumulata sacerdotia.”

In April 1533, the stern old villa echoed to the laughter of a bevy of young girls who went with Caterina de’ Medici, the only daughter of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino,<sup>[14]</sup> then only fourteen years of age, to receive Margaret of Austria, the illegitimate daughter of Charles V. The poor child was but nine when she arrived in Tuscany as the affianced bride of Alessandro, Duke of Florence, whose mother was a negress, or some say a peasant woman from Collevechio, the wife of a groom in the service of the Duke of Urbino. He was supposed to be the son either of Lorenzo himself or of the Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici (afterwards Clemente VII); and the interest taken in him by Pope Clemente, who warmly supported his election as Duke of Florence, rather points to the latter supposition. He is inscribed in the family tree as “of uncertain parentage.” Alessandro’s cruelty and licentiousness are matters of history; he left his mother to suffer dire poverty, and she is said to have died of poison administered by his orders, so that his murder by Lorenzino de’ Medici delivered the poor little Princess from a brutal husband. Lorenzino fled to Cafaggiuolo after murdering his cousin, and waited to know how the news was received in Florence. When he heard that messengers had arrived at Trebbio, another Medicean villa close to Cafaggiuolo, where Maria Salviati, widow of Giovanni de’ Medici (delle Bande Nere), and her son Cosimo lived, he left in hot haste for Venice. “It only needed that someone should begin a tumult,” writes Varchi, “when Signor Cosimo, who had been secretly warned by friends and

summoned by many citizens, arrived in Florence with a small company; he being the son of Signor Giovanni, and of comely aspect, and having always shown himself of a pacific and kindly nature, it cannot be said, described, or imagined with what delight he was looked on by the people or how ardently they desired and hoped to see him Prince.”

His father’s memory probably preserved his life a few years before, for Varchi tells us, “Signor Otto da Montauto was taken up for killing Bernardo Arrighi at Prato and condemned to lose his head, but the punishment was commuted to a fine of 1000 ducats and a year’s imprisonment. But it is supposed that these rigorous measures were not taken against Signor Otto for the murder committed, but because on his return from succouring Lastra when sent on a secret mission to Trebbio to fetch Madonna Maria de’ Medici and Cosimino her son, he failed to do so; some say that having asked a peasant who was coming down from Trebbio: ‘Who is up there and what are they doing?’ The man, being intelligent and quick-witted, understood what manner of man he was, and answered with intent to frighten him: ‘Up there are the Lady Maria and the Lord Cosimo with many soldiers and all the peasants of the country round, and they are making good cheer and keep watch day and night.’ So Signor Otto would not tempt fortune. Others say he did not go because, not only do good soldiers dislike doing the work of policemen, but having begun life under the Lord Giovanni and gained his spurs with him, like all who had fought under the Lord Giovanni he worshipped his memory in a way not to be believed, and therefore was attached to his wife and his son.”

The “kindly nature” of Cosimo was only skin-deep if all the tales told of him are true, and his youngest son Don Pietro de’ Medici was distinguished for immorality. Married against his will to Eleonora, daughter of his mother’s brother Don Garcia di Toledo, he systematically neglected the young and lovely Spaniard, described as “beautiful, elegant, gracious, kindly, charming and affable; and above all with two eyes rivalling the stars in brilliancy.”<sup>[15]</sup> Evil tongues whispered that the Grand Duke’s admiration for his wife’s niece was the principal motive for her marriage with Don Pietro which ended so tragically at Cafaggiuolo. After the death of Cosimo I the name of Alessandro Gaci, a handsome youth from Castiglion Fiorentino, was coupled with that of Donna Eleonora, but the threats of the Grand Duke Francesco forced him to leave Florence and enter a Capuchin

monastery. His successor was a Florentine, Bernardino Antinori, whose passionate admiration for the lovely princess soon became known. The lovers were imprudent; a letter fell into the hands of the Grand Duke, whose scandalous ill-treatment of his wife Joan of Austria and subserviency to every whim of the dissolute Venetian, Bianca Cappello, were the talk of Florence. He asserted that the honour of his family demanded an example and ordered Antinori to be taken to the Bargello and strangled, and his sister-in-law to be sent to rejoin her husband at Cafaggiuolo. Bidding a tearful farewell to her little son, Eleonora left Florence on the morning of the 11th July 1576 and reached the stern old villa at nightfall, where Don Pietro received her with unwonted demonstrations of affection and at supper was very merry. He insisted on accompanying her to her room, and before she could summon her women threw her on to the bed and plunged his dagger several times into her breast. She died in a few minutes imploring God to show her more mercy than she had received at the hands of men, and kneeling by the lifeless body, Don Pietro prayed to his patron saints for forgiveness and vowed he would never marry again—a vow he did not keep. Then he sat down and wrote a few lines to his brother the Grand Duke announcing the sudden death of Donna Eleonora.

The doctor's certificate that Donna Eleonora de' Medici had died of failure of the heart, was received in Florence with the incredulity vouchsafed to most of the sudden deaths in the Medici family. Francesco I pretended to believe it when he wrote to his brother, Cardinal Ferdinando, at Rome: "Yesternight at the fifth hour Donna Eleonora, being in bed, had so violent a stroke that she was suffocated before Don Pietro or others could apply any remedies; this has sore disturbed me, and will, I know, afflict Your Eminence. But as whatever comes from the hand of God must be borne with patience, I pray you may accept quietly the will of the Divine Majesty. This night the body will be brought from Cafaggiuolo for proper interment, of which I hereby desire to give you notice, taking advantage of the courier who has come from Spain."

But the Grand Duke told the real story in a letter dated 16 of July, and sent to the Florentine ambassador at Madrid with orders to read it to the King of Spain. "Although in a former letter it was stated that Donna Eleonora died of failure of the heart, you are, nevertheless, to inform His Catholic Majesty that the Lord Don Pietro, our brother, took her life with

his own hands for her betrayal of him in ways unbecoming a lady of high birth. This he had communicated to Don Pedro her brother, through a secretary, begging him to come here; not only did he refuse to come, but he prevented the secretary from having speech with Don Garcia (Donna Eleonora's father). We desire that H.M. should know the truth, being determined H.M. shall be informed of all the doings of Our house, and especially of this; for if We did not lift the veil from H.M.'s eyes, it would seem to Us not to serve H.M. well and honourably. All facts shall be sent on the first opportunity so that H.M. may know with what good reason the Lord Don Pietro thus acted."

Settimanni accuses Don Pietro of the further crime of poisoning his little son who was odious to him on account of his likeness to his mother. He also records that when, thirty-eight years after death, Donna Eleonora's body was moved from one vault to another in San Lorenzo it was found to be perfectly preserved, and the beautiful young princess (she was but twenty-one when so foully murdered) lay as though asleep, clothed all in white with her hands crossed over the wounds in her breast.<sup>[16]</sup> Murders and sudden deaths were too common in the Medici family to deter the Grand Duke Francesco I from taking his second wife Bianca Cappello to Cafaggiuolo in 1585 with a great following of courtiers. Hearing that their favourite painter Sandrino Bronzino was painting an altarpiece for the church of Santa Maria a Olmi near Borgo San Lorenzo, they mounted their horses and went to pay a visit to the prior, Don Quintilio Rinieri. He was an old acquaintance of Bianca's, and entreated them to do him the honour of dining with him. Don Quintilio had a fine taste in wine and some reputation as a sayer of good things, he was moreover a courtier, and before dinner was over he obtained the consent of the Grand Duchess Bianca to allow Bronzino to paint her portrait on the wall of his room. In 1871 the fresco was transferred to canvas and placed in the Uffizzi gallery. Bianca, who was then thirty-seven, sits resplendent in crimson velvet, and this, Signor Baccini thinks, is probably the only authentic portrait that exists of the "daughter of Venice."<sup>[17]</sup>

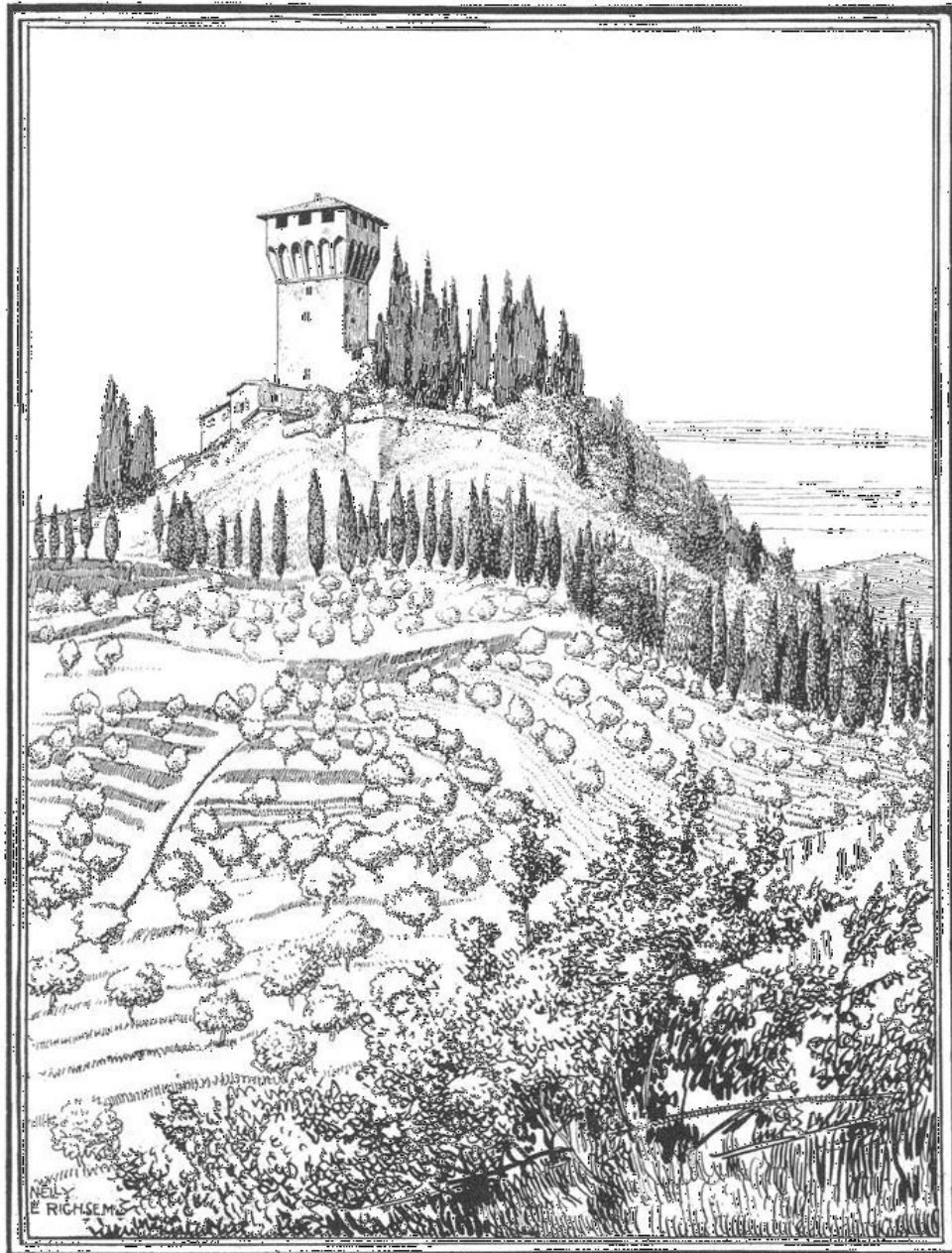
When Cardinal Ferdinando succeeded his brother Francesco as Grand Duke, he used to spend the autumn months at Cafaggiuolo, where he could enjoy complete liberty and indulge in his passion for the chase. From an unpublished diary in three large volumes by Cesare Tinghi, one of his

secretaries, and found in the National Library by Signor Baccini, we learn that Ferdinando I was very strict as to preserving his game, and punished poachers severely. He rose early and went out shooting or fishing with his gentlemen, and in the afternoon gave audiences to princes and ambassadors who were received with great magnificence. Often the peasants would be summoned to dance for the amusement of the Grand Duchess Christine and her children, and sent home rejoicing with presents of ribbons, scarves and nick-nacks; or the soldiers from San Martino, the fortress begun by Cosimo I, and finished by Ferdinando, which guarded the entrance to the Mugello, would execute military games and sham battles.

Cafaggiuolo was not much frequented by the Medici after the time of Ferdinando I, and only occasional references to it are found in the archives. The family of Lorraine preferred the villas nearer Florence, though they sometimes passed a night there on their way to Austria, but when Ferdinando III returned to Tuscany in 1814 after the fall of Napoleon, the Florentine nobility rode out to Cafaggiuolo to meet him and the whole of the Mugello was illuminated in his honour.

Before leaving “the old den among the hills” its majolica ware must be mentioned, over which such bitter controversy has raged; some writers, like the late M. Jacquemart, over-estimating its antiquity and importance, others, like Dr Malagola and Professor Argnani, asserting that it never existed and that the pieces signed *Cafaggiuolo* (more or less ill-spelt) were made by a family of Faenza, the Cà Fagioli (House of Fagioli). Some documents, printed also in the *Athenæum* (Dec. 1899, p. 872) prove that as early as 1485 several kilns for common pottery, *stoviglie*, and for bricks were in existence near and at Cafaggiuolo itself. Signor Baccini<sup>[18]</sup> cites others in a list of the possessions of Cosimo I, drawn up in 1566, which show that either some of these *stovigliai* had become *vasellai*, *i.e.* makers of vases and decorative ware, or that the kilns were then tenanted by artistic potters. Two of the kilns, with a house and *botega*, stood near the villa, where now are the stables, and both were rented by a Jacopo di Stefano. Mr Drury E. Fortnum, in his magnificent work on majolica published by the Clarendon Press, gives a long list of Cafaggiuolo ware from the earliest dated piece known of 1507, and the marks on the most characteristic pieces, such as the letters P. and S. with a paraph, or a plain or barred P., while others have a monogram of J. P. C. These marks have apparently not been explained, but

Signor Baccini gives good reasons for supposing them to be the initials of a family who went from Montelupo to Cafaggiuolo to manufacture the famous *bocali* or measuring jugs, beginning with a certain Piero; his son was Stefano di Piero and his grandson the Jacopo di Stefano who in 1566 tenanted the house, shop and kilns of Cafaggiuolo.



**FOOTNOTES:**

[9] The name Cafaggio, or Cafaggiuolo (Cafagium), meaning a wooded estate surrounded with a fence or ditch, is often met with in Tuscany, and dates from old Lombard times.

[10] Bosco a' Frati is a monastery said to have been founded in the time of St Francis of Assisi by the Ubaldini family. It was here that St Bonaventura received the cardinal's hat sent to him by Gregory X. in 1273. The messengers found him with his sleeves rolled up washing dishes in the scullery; turning round he pointed to a tree near by and bid them hang the hat on a bough until he had finished his work.

[11] The Pulci owned a villa "Il Palagio" at Cavallina a few miles from Cafaggiuolo.

[12] Mona or Monna is an abbreviation of Madonna, Mia Donna, and all well-born women were thus addressed. It corresponds to the French Madame.

[13] J. A. Symonds. *Renaissance in Italy. Italian Literature*, p. 381.

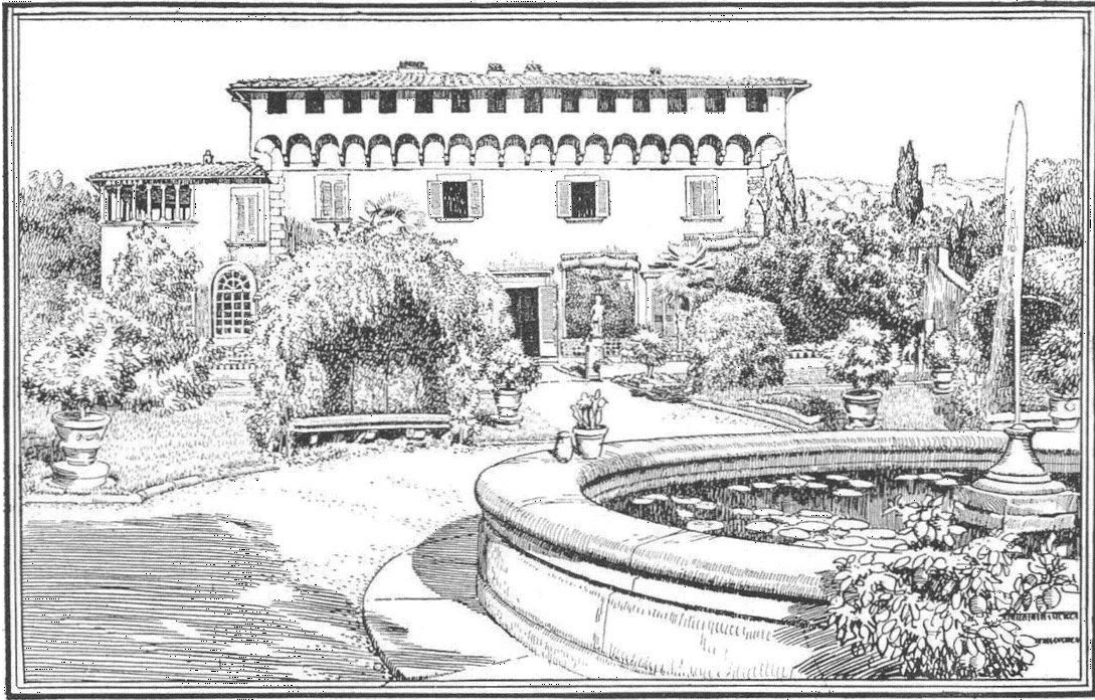
[14] Leo X deprived the adopted son of Guidobaldo di Montefeltro, Francesco Maria Della Rovere, of the Dukedom of Urbino in favour of his nephew Lorenzo de' Medici in 1516.

[15] *Diario di Firenze*. A. Lapini.

[16] See Settimanni. *Cronaca M.S.* all' anno 1608.

[17] See *Le Ville Medicee in Mugello*. Guiseppe Baccini. Firenze, 1897.

[18] *Opus cit.*



## VILLA DI CAREGGI

THE three great Medicean villas, Careggi, Cafaggiuolo and Poggio Cajano, have been so often sung by poets and celebrated by historians, that to all who love Italy their names are household words.

Careggi lies about two miles north-west of Florence, on what old Varchi calls “the most delightful hill named Montughi, after the ancient and noble family of the Ughi, whereon are innumerable villas of splendid construction; and most splendid of them all, the new Careggi built by Cosimo the elder.”<sup>[19]</sup> The name Careggi is derived from the Latin *Campus Regis*, and Roman remains abound in the neighbourhood. Near by was the Via Cassia, leading from Rome to Pistoja and Lucca, and some of the inscriptions found relating to it have been placed in the courtyard of the church, San Stefano in Pane de Arcora.<sup>[20]</sup>



### VILLA DI CAREGGI.

On the 17th June 1417, Cosimo de' Medici bought a country house at Careggi from Tommaso Lippi for 800 florins. "A palace with a courtyard, a loggia, a well, archways, dove-cotes, a tower, a walled kitchen-garden, two peasant houses and arable land, vineyards, olive-groves, and spinnies, in the parish of Careggi." Thus runs the contract.

Cosimo called in his friend and favourite architect, Michelozzo Michelozzi, to rebuild the villa, and no doubt remembering the place of his birth—the strong castle of Trebbio in the Mugello—he ordered that Careggi should become a castle with battlements, covered galleries round the upper part, a tower, a drawbridge, and high walls all round the pleasure grounds.

The huge pile of Careggi lies embosomed among fine cedars, pines and firs; unfortunately the villa has been painted a dirty chocolate brown, which detracts considerably from its beauty. But the entrance hall is fine, and the great straight staircase leading from the open courtyard up to the first floor is most imposing.

The first room at the top of the staircase is a large hall with a huge grey stone fireplace. How one would like to conjure up the magnificent Lorenzo and his friends; to listen entranced while Luigi Pulci declaimed a Canto of

Morgante, or Messer Angelo Poliziano recited a Ballata; or hear the learned Greek Argyropoulos discuss philosophy with Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, Bernardo Rucellai, Leo Battista Alberti and Cristofano Landino, while Michelangelo Buonarroti sat by listening, his head resting on one hand like one of his own prophets.

Out of the big hall one goes through three or four rooms on to a loggia facing west, with a brilliantly gay ceiling painted by Poccetti. Here, no doubt, the Academicians sat in the long summer evenings looking down on the garden with its fountains, and on the oak woods crowning the neighbouring hills.

The last room on the south side of the house (on the first floor) was probably where Lorenzo de' Medici died, and not the one generally pointed out to strangers. On an ancient plan of the villa the end room is found marked "the room of Messer Lorenzo," and the small closet opening out of it, with a spiral staircase in the thickness of the wall leading down into the courtyard, is indicated as "the study of Messer Lorenzo."

From the courtyard one enters a fine vaulted and frescoed room leading into a loggia under the one painted by Poccetti. This has been closed in by glass windows, and here Mr Watts, while staying with Lord Holland, who rented Careggi when he was minister to the Tuscan court in 1845, painted a large fresco of the murder of Piero Leoni, doctor to Lorenzo. It is a fine work with daring and successful foreshortening.

From the covered gallery round the top of the villa the view is splendid. To the south is "the delightful hill Montughi," dotted with villas, to most of which is attached some story of love or bloodshed; then the towers and palaces of fair Florence backed with line upon line of blue and violet mountains. Looking westward we can follow the track of the Arno flowing down to the sea, until lost behind the hill on which stands Artimino, another Medici villa. The little town of Prato shines white in the sun, and if the day be at all clear Pistoja can be seen, with the rugged Apennines and the white peaks of the Carrara mountains in the distance. To the north, shielding Careggi from the harsh north wind, rises Monte de' Vecchi, so-called because the great family of Vecchi, or Vecchietti, whose palaces stood on the site of the Campidoglio in the centre of Florence and were destroyed by

the Ghibellines after the battle of Monteaperti, possessed villas and estates on its slopes.

At Careggi, Cosimo the elder passed what time he could spare from the affairs of state, surrounded by a galaxy of artists and men of letters such as the world has seldom seen. Among the former were Brunelleschi, Donatello, Michelozzo Michelozzi, Ghiberti, Verrocchio, Paolo Uccello, Luca della Robbia, Fra Angelico, Fra Filippo Lippi and Masaccio. Among the latter, Marsilio Ficino, Niccolò de' Niccoli, Cristofano Landino, Lionardo Aretino (Bruni), Carlo Aretino (Marsuppini), Poggio Bracciolini, Ambrogio Traversari and Giannozzo Manetti.

To Ficino Cosimo gave a villa (la Fontanella)<sup>[21]</sup> close to Careggi, and named him President of the Platonic Academy which he founded, having been convinced of the importance of Platonic studies by Giorgius Gemistus, a native of Byzantium, who came to Florence in 1438 in the train of the Emperor Palaeologus. Niccolò de' Niccoli "censor of the Latin tongue," as Lionardo Aretino called him, was one of the Academicians. He spent his whole fortune in buying MSS., and his house, stored with treasures, was open to all strangers, students and artists. Cristofano Landino, known for his commentary on Dante, and Lionardo Aretino (Bruni), Chancellor of the Republic of Florence, were also Academicians. The translations of the latter from Greek were celebrated for their sound scholarship and pure latinity, while his diplomatic letters were regarded as models, and his public speeches were compared to those of Pericles. When he walked abroad a train of scholars and foreigners attended him, and when he died the Priors of Florence decreed him a public funeral in Santa Croce, "after the manner of the ancients." Carlo Aretino (Marsuppini), another member of the Platonic Academy, succeeded Bruni as Chancellor; an omnivorous reader and possessed of an extraordinary memory, he formed a great contrast to Niccoli, who had introduced him to Cosimo. Vespasiano describes Niccoli as "of a most fair presence, lively, with a smile ever on his lips, and very pleasant in his talk"; whereas Marsuppini was grave in manner, taciturn, and given to melancholy.

Poggio Bracciolini was another of the great scholars attracted to Florence by the fame of Cosimo's liberality. He was a friend of Ambrogio Traversari, whose cell in the convent of the Angeli was the meeting-place of learned men. Giannozzo Manetti, the Hebrew scholar, had studied Greek under

Traversari, and his Latin was so perfect that Bruni is said to have been jealous of him. The Republic sent him as her ambassador to various Italian courts, and there is a good story in the *Commentario*, that “when he was speaking at Naples the King was so entranced he did not even brush the flies from his face.” At last Manetti roused the jealousy of the Medicean party and ended his life in exile. “These men,” writes Symonds, “formed the literary oligarchy who surrounded Cosimo de’ Medici, and through their industry and influence restored the studies of antiquity at Florence.” Cosimo was a Mæcenas worth serving. For his own family he built the great palace in Via Larga (afterwards Riccardi, now the Prefecture), he restored or rebuilt the villas of Cafaggiuolo, Trebbio and Careggi, while he expended 500,000 golden florins on public buildings. During the last years of his life he seldom moved from Careggi, and the following letter, written by his son Piero to Lorenzo and Giuliano about their grandfather four days before his death, gives a pleasant picture of the private life of the Medici family:—

“I wrote to you the day before yesterday how much worse Cosimo was; it appears to me that he is gradually sinking, and he thinks the same himself. On Tuesday evening he would have no one in his room save only Mona Contessina [Cosimo’s wife] and myself. He began by recounting all his past life, then he touched upon the government of the city, and then on its commerce, and at last spoke of the management of the private possessions of our family and of what concerns you two; taking comfort that you had good wits, and bidding me educate you well so that you might be of help to me. Two things he deplored. Firstly, that he had not done as much as he had wished or could have done; secondly, that he left me in such poor health and with much irksome business. Then he said he would make no will, not having made one whilst Giovanni<sup>[22]</sup> was alive seeing us always united in true love, amity and esteem; and that when it pleased God to so order it he desired to be buried without pomp or show, and reminded me of his often expressed wish to be interred in San Lorenzo. All this he said with much method and prudence, and with a courage that was marvellous to behold; adding that his life had been a long one and that he was ready and content to depart whensoever it pleased God. Yesternorn he left his bed, and caused himself to be carefully dressed. The Priors of San Marco, of San Lorenzo and of the Badia were present, and he spoke the responses as though in perfect health. Then being asked the articles of faith, he repeated them word

by word, made his confession, and took the Holy Sacrament with more devotion than can be described, having first asked pardon of all present. These things have raised my courage and my hope in God Almighty, and although according to the flesh I am sorrowful, yet, seeing the greatness of his soul and how well disposed, I am in part content that his end should be thus. Yesterday he was pretty well and also during the night, but on account of his great age I have small hope of his recovery. Cause prayers to be said for him by the Monks of the Wood, and bestow alms as seems good to you, praying God to leave him to us for a while, if such be for the best. And you, who are young, take example and take your share of care and trouble as God has ordained, and make up your minds to be men, your condition and the present case demanding that of you lads. And above all take heed to everything that can add to your honour and be of use to you, because the time has come when it is necessary that you should rely on yourselves, and live in the fear of God, and hope all will go well. Of what happens to Cosimo I will advise you. We are expecting a doctor from Milan, but I have more hope in Almighty God than in aught else. No more at present. Careggi, the 26 July 1464.”

Cosimo died on the 1st August 1464; he was buried with sovereign honours in the sacristy he had built in San Lorenzo, and on his tomb was inscribed, by public desire, “Cosimo Pater Patriae.” Piero, his son, succeeded quietly to the honours and power of his father. He had met and loved Lucrezia Tornabuoni at Careggi, her father having a villa close by,<sup>[23]</sup> and Cosimo sanctioned the marriage and regarded Lucrezia as a daughter. She was a gifted woman, handsome and virtuous, a poetess, and at the same time devoted to all her household cares. Piero de’ Medici died only five years after his father of a fit of the gout at Careggi on the 3rd December 1469, and was succeeded by his brilliant son Lorenzo the Magnificent.

“Lorenzo,” writes John Addington Symonds, “was a man of marvellous variety and range of mental power. He possessed one of those rare natures, fitted to comprehend all knowledge and to sympathise with the most diverse forms of life. While he never for one moment relaxed his grasp on politics, among philosophers he passed for a sage; among men of letters for an original and graceful poet; among scholars for a Grecian, sensitive to every nicety of Attic idiom; among artists for an amateur gifted with refined discernment and consummate taste. Pleasure-seekers knew in him the

libertine, who jousted with the boldest, danced and masqueraded with the merriest, sought adventures in the streets at night, and joined the people in their May-day games and Carnival festivities. The pious extolled him as an author of devotional lauds and mystery plays, a profound theologian, a critic of sermons. He was no less famous for his jokes and repartees than for his pithy apothegms and maxims; as good a judge of cattle as of statues; as much at home in the bosom of his family as in the riot of an orgy; as ready to discourse on Plato as to plan a campaign or to plot the death of a dangerous citizen.”<sup>[24]</sup>

“What other men call study and hard toil, for thee shall be pastime;” sings Poliziano, “wearyed with deeds of state, to this thou hast recourse, and dost address the vigour of thy well-worn powers to song; blest in thy mental gifts, blest to be able thus to play so many parts, to vary thus the great cares of thy all-embracing mind, and weave so many divers duties into one.”<sup>[25]</sup> Angelo Poliziano, “honour and glory of Montepulciano” as Pulci calls him, who thus sounds the praises of Lorenzo, was born in 1454. His name, famous in Italian literature, is a latinised version of his birthplace, Montepulciano. As a boy of ten he entered the University of Florence, and studied under Landino, Argyropoulos, Andronicus Kallistos and Ficino. At thirteen he published Latin letters, at seventeen Greek poems, and edited Catullus when he was eighteen. Lorenzo de’ Medici received the young student into his own household, and made him tutor to his children. Ugly and misshapen, he squinted and had an enormous nose, but his voice was wonderfully sweet and melodious, and his eloquence great. Men of learning visited Florence on purpose to see him, and he complains (in a letter to Hieronymus Donatus, May 1480), “does a man want a motto for a ring, an inscription for his bedroom or a device for his plate, or even for his pots and pans, he runs like all the world to Poliziano.”

Another famous frequenter of Careggi, Pico della Mirandola, is thus described by Poliziano:—

“Nature seemed to have showered on this man, or hero, all her gifts. He was tall and finely moulded, from his face a something of divinity shone forth. Acute, and gifted with prodigious memory, in his studies he was indefatigable, in his style perspicuous and eloquent. You could not say whether his talents or his moral qualities conferred on him the greater lustre. Familiar with all branches of philosophy and the master of many

languages, he stood on high above the reach of praise.” Pico della Mirandola showed remarkable abilities at a very early age. His mother, a niece of Boiardo the knightly poet of “Orlando Innamorato,” sent him at the age of fourteen to Bologna. There he mastered the humanities and what was taught of mathematics, logic, philosophy and oriental languages, and then went to Paris, the headquarters of scholastic theology. His memory was wonderful, a single reading served to fix the language and the matter of the text on his mind for ever. Pico was about twenty when he came to Florence, and his beauty, noble manners and great learning made him the idol of society. But every year he inclined more and more to grave and abstruse studies, and as Symonds notes: “at last the Prince was merged in the philosopher, the man of letters in the mystic.”<sup>[26]</sup>

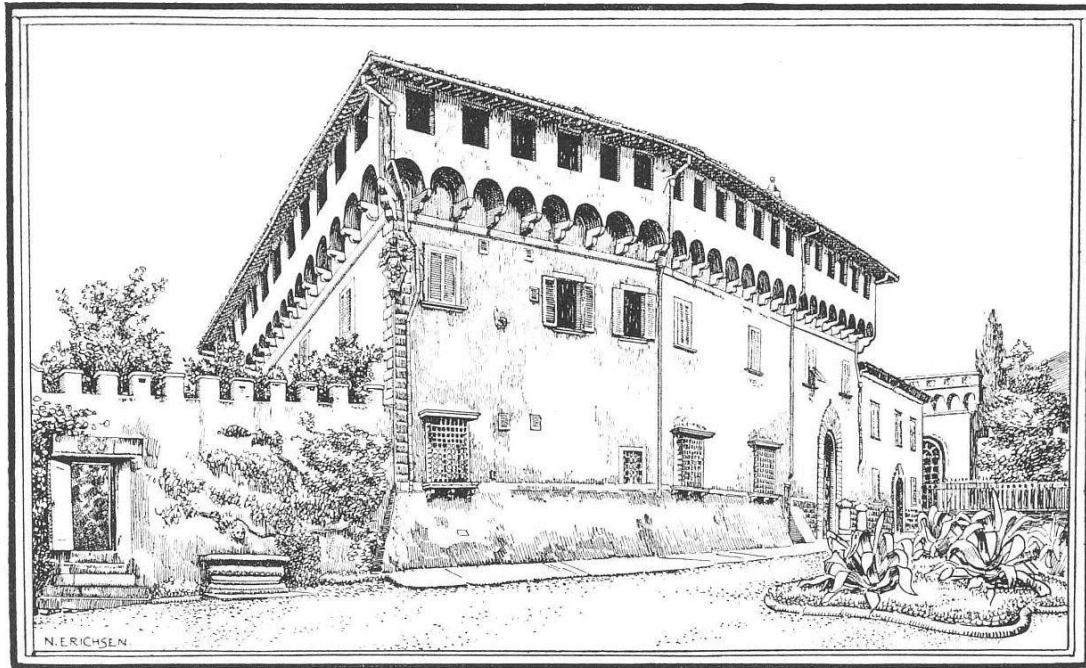
In a letter to Jacopo Antiquario Poliziano, after describing the malady from which Lorenzo had been suffering for some time, continues: “The day before his death, being at his villa of Careggi, he grew so weak that all hope of saving him vanished. Perceiving this, like a wise man, he called before all else for the confessor to purge himself of his past sins. This same confessor told me afterwards that he marvelled to see with what courage and constancy Lorenzo prepared himself for death; how well he ordered all things pertaining thereunto, and with what prudence and religious feeling he thought on the life to come. Towards midnight, while he was quietly meditating, he was informed that the priest, bearing the Holy Sacrament, had arrived. Rousing himself, he exclaimed, ‘It shall never be said that my Lord, who created and saved me, shall come to me—in my room—raise me I beg of you, raise me quickly, so that I may go and meet Him.’ Saying this he raised himself as well as he could, and supported by his servants advanced to meet the priest in the outer room, there crying he knelt.” Poliziano here gives the text of a long prayer which Lorenzo recited and then continues: “these and other things he said sobbing, while all around cried bitterly. At length the priest ordered that he should be raised from the ground and carried to bed, so as to receive the Viaticum in more comfort. For some time he resisted, but at last out of respect to the priest he obeyed. In bed, repeating almost the same prayer and with much gravity and devotion, he received the body and blood of Christ. Then he devoted himself to consoling his son Pietro, for the others were away, and exhorted him to bear this law of necessity with constancy; feeling sure the aid of Heaven would be vouchsafed to him, as it had been to himself in many and

divers occasions, if he only acted wisely. Meanwhile your Lorenzo, the doctor from Pavia, arrived; most learned as it seemed to me, but summoned too late to be of any use; yet to do something he ordered various precious stones to be pounded together in a mortar, for I know not what kind of medicine. Lorenzo thereupon asked the servants what that doctor was doing in his room and what he was preparing; and when I answered that he was composing a remedy to comfort his intestines he recognised my voice and looking kindly, as was his wont, ‘Oh Angiolo,’ he said, ‘art thou here?’ and raising his languid arms took both my hands and pressed them tightly. I could not stifle my sobs or stay my tears, though I tried hard to hide them by turning my face away. But he showed no emotion and continued to press my hands between his. When he saw that I could not speak for crying, quite naturally he loosed my hands and I ran into the adjoining room where I could give free vent to my grief and to my tears. Then drying my eyes I returned, and as soon as he saw me he called me to him and asked what Pico della Mirandola was doing. I replied that Pico had remained in town, fearing to molest him with his presence. ‘And I,’ said Lorenzo, ‘but for the fear that the journey here might be irksome to him, would be most glad to see him and speak to him for the last time before I leave you all.’ I asked if I should send for him. ‘Certainly, and with all speed,’ answered he. This I did, and Pico came and sat near the bed, while I leaned against it by his knees in order to hear the languid voice of my lord for the last time. With what goodness, with what courtesy, I may say with what caresses, Lorenzo received him. First he asked his pardon for thus disturbing him, begging him to look upon it as a sign of the friendship—the love—he bore him; assuring him that he died more willingly after seeing so dear a friend. Then introducing, as was his wont, pleasant and familiar sayings, he joked also with us. ‘I wish,’ he said to Pico, ‘that death had spared me until your library had been complete.’ Pico had hardly left the room when Fra Girolamo (Savonarola) of Ferrara, a man celebrated for his doctrine and his sanctity and an excellent preacher, came in. To his exhortations to remain firm in his faith, and to live in future, if Heaven granted him life, free from crime; or if God so willed it, to receive death willingly; Lorenzo replied that he was firm in his religion, that his life would always be guided by it, and that nothing could be sweeter to him than death if such was the divine will. Fra Girolamo then turned to go, when Lorenzo said, ‘Oh, father, before going deign to give me thy benediction.’ Then bowing his head, immersed

in piety and religion, he repeated the words and the prayers of the friar, without attending to the grief, now openly shown, of his familiars. It seemed as though all save Lorenzo were going to die, so calm was he. He gave no signs of anxiety or of sorrow; even in that extreme moment he showed his usual strength of mind and fortitude. The doctors who stood round him, not to seem idle, worried him with their remedies and assistance: he accepted and submitted to everything they suggested, not because he thought it would save him, but in order not to offend anyone, even in death. To the last he had such mastery over himself that he joked about his own death. Thus when given something to eat and asked how he liked it he answered, 'As well as a dying man can like anything.' He embraced us all tenderly and humbly asked pardon if, during his illness, he had caused annoyance to anyone. Then disposing himself to receive extreme unction he recommended his soul to God. The gospel containing the passion of Christ was then read, and he showed that he understood by moving his lips, or raising his languid eyes, or sometimes moving his fingers. Gazing upon a silver crucifix inlaid with precious stones and kissing it from time to time, he expired...."

The other accounts of the last interview of Lorenzo with Savonarola by various authors—Pico della Mirandola, Cinozzi, Burlamacchi, Barsanti, Razzi, Fra Marco della Casa, etc.—give the more generally accepted story that Lorenzo sent for Savonarola, and said he wished to confess to him. He deplored three great sins: the sack of Volterra; the dowry monies taken from the Monte delle Fanciulle, whereby so many girls were driven to a life of shame; and the blood shed after the Pazzi conspiracy. The friar told him that three things were required of him. "Firstly, a lively faith in the mercy of God." "I have that," said Lorenzo. "Secondly, to restore what you have unjustly taken, and to bid your sons make restitution." This, after some moments of hesitation, Lorenzo also acceded to. Then Savonarola drew himself up to his full height and said, "Lastly, to restore to Florence her liberty." Lorenzo turned his head away and Savonarola departed without hearing his confession and without giving him absolution. Professor Villari, who may be supposed to understand the manners and motives of his countrymen better than foreigners, does not believe that Savonarola would have gone to Careggi save at the express desire of Lorenzo, who sent for him in order to confess his sins and receive absolution from a man he knew to be honest. Cinozzi gives the words of Savonarola, stating that the

conversation was a preliminary to the confession which was never made. He adds: "These words were repeated to me by Fra Silvestro, who died with his superior Fra Ieronimo, and who, as I well believe, had them and heard them from Fra Ieronimo's own lips." Professor Villari considers that Poliziano would not have dared to make a genuine report of the scene (supposing he saw it), in order not to cast a slur on the memory of his patron and benefactor, and to avoid giving offence to the Medicean party.



Various versions also exist of the death of Pier Leoni, who evidently was what we should call the trusted family doctor of the Medici; for when Lorenzo's daughter Magdalena, married to Francesco Cybo, son of Innocent III, was so ill at Rome, she sent an express messenger to her father to beg him to send Maestro Leoni to see her. Poliziano declares that Piero Leoni killed himself in despair at not being able to save Lorenzo; Piero Ricci (Petrus Crinitus), a contemporary author, also records that he drowned himself in a well near Florence, but other accounts say that he was murdered by some of Lorenzo's people, who suspected him, unjustly, of poisoning their master. Enemies of the Medici went so far as to accuse Piero de' Medici of inducing him to administer poison to his father, and then of drowning him in the well of the courtyard at Careggi.

In 1494 the Medici were expelled from Florence and an attempt was made to reconstitute a commonwealth upon the model of Venice. But the internal elements of discord were too potent. The Medici were recalled, again to be expelled in 1527. “Two years later Dante and Lorenzo da Castiglione and a number of youths went in hot haste,” writes Varchi, “and set fire to the villas of Careggi and Castello; the latter, however, did not burn easily, and fearing lest the enemy’s forces should cut off their retreat they fell back. So one of Signor Cosimo’s labourers was enabled to saw some beams in half and put out the fire. They also set fire to the palace of Jacopo Salviati, which was burnt, as well as Careggi.”

Luckily the thick walls of the fine old villa defied the flames, and the first care of Alessandro de’ Medici was to restore it to its pristine splendour; but he was murdered by his cousin Lorenzino before he had time to finish the work. The Grand Duke Ferdinando II, had an especial affection for Careggi, and attempted to resuscitate the Platonic Academy which once flourished there, but in vain. All he could do was to commemorate it in a fresco in the Pitti palace, which represents Plato surrounded by the illustrious men who had formed part of it—

“Mira qui di Careggi all’ aure amene  
Marsilio, e il Pico, e cento egregj spirti,  
E di, s’ all’ ombre degli Elisj mirti  
Tanti n’ ebber giammai Tebe, o Atene.”

(Behold here in the soft air of Careggi, Marsilio, and Pico, and a hundred men of learning, and say whether at Thebes or Athens there were as many in the shade of the Elysian myrtles) is the inscription.

In 1779 Careggi was sold to Vincenzo Orsi for 31,000 scudi. In 1848 it again changed hands and was bought by Mr Sloane, who left it to Count Boutourline, from whose family the present owner, M. Segré, bought the villa a few years ago.

## FOOTNOTES:

[19] Benedetto Varchi. *Storia Fiorentina*. Lib. IX. p. 251 F. Mazzei in a pamphlet, *La Macine a Montughi*, gives another derivation; he says that in 1100 the Marchioness Villa left large estates to her son Ugone in this district, and thence the hill was called *Montem Hugonis*, corrupted into Montui by the common people and into Montughi by writers.

[20] Moreni. *Contorni di Firenze*. Vol. I. p. 45, *et seq.*

[21] Now belonging to Mr Mason.

[22] Cosimo's favourite son, who died 1463.

[23] Villa Lemmi. The frescoes by Botticelli, now in the Louvre, were discovered there.

[24] John Addington Symonds. *Renaissance in Italy. The Revival of Learning*, p. 320.

[25] Angelo Poliziano. *Carmina*, etc., p. 179.

[26] J. A. Symonds. *Renaissance in Italy. The Revival of Learning*, p. 331.



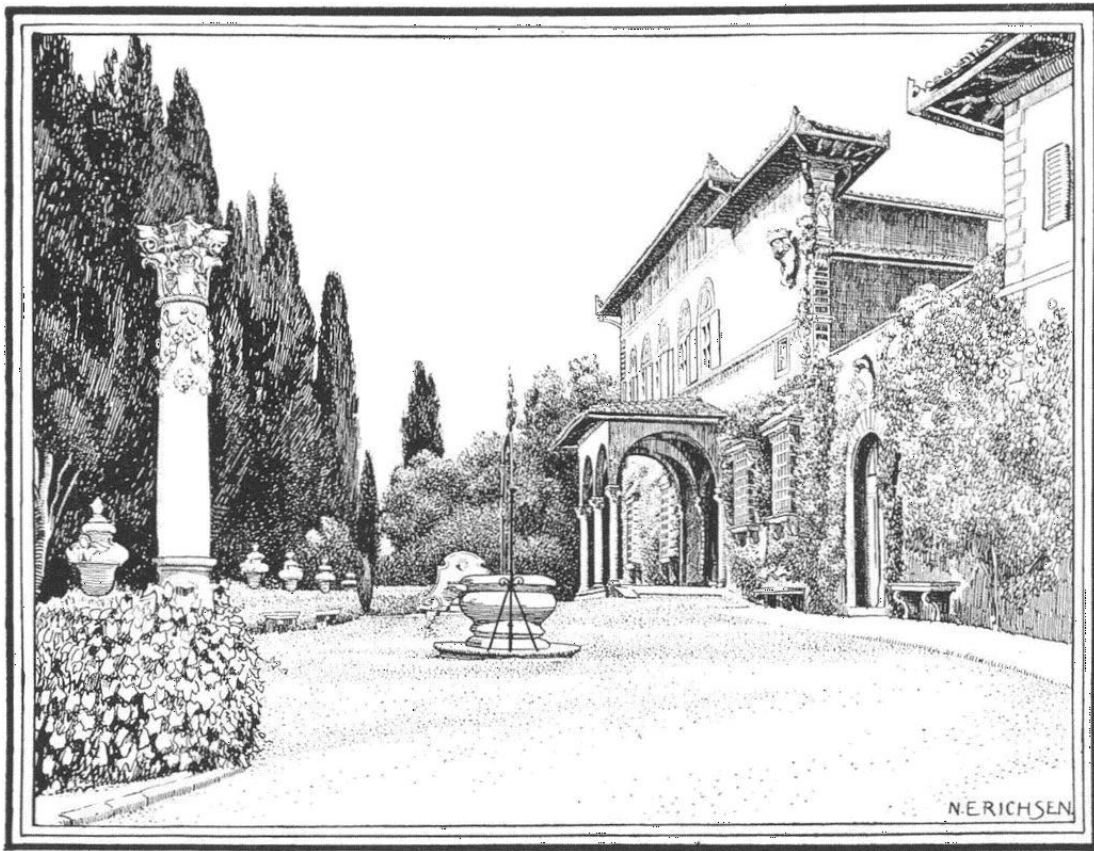
**COSIMO PATER PATRIAE,**  
By MICHELOZZI.  
*(Villa di Cafaggiuolo).*



**LORENZO DE' MEDICI,**  
By NICCOLÒ FIORENTINO.  
*(Villa di Coreggi).*

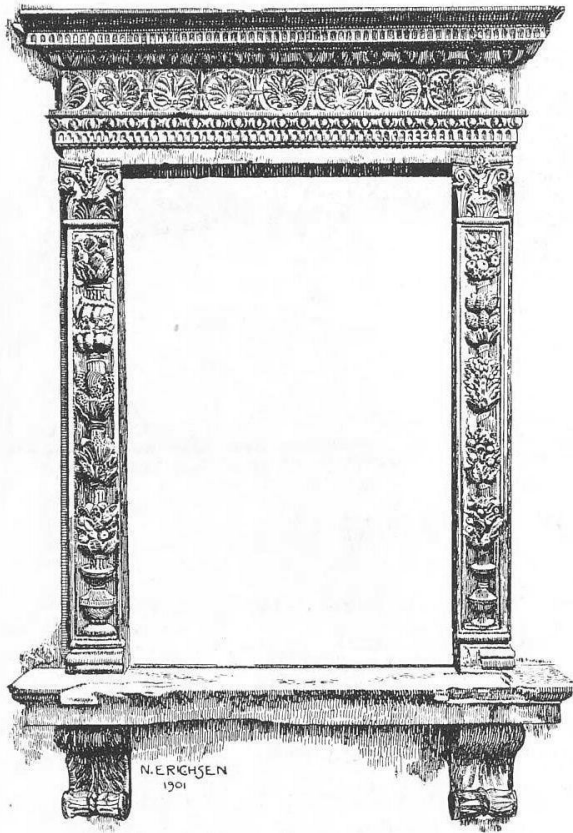


**MARSILIO FICINO,**  
By ANONIMO.  
*(Villa Medici).*



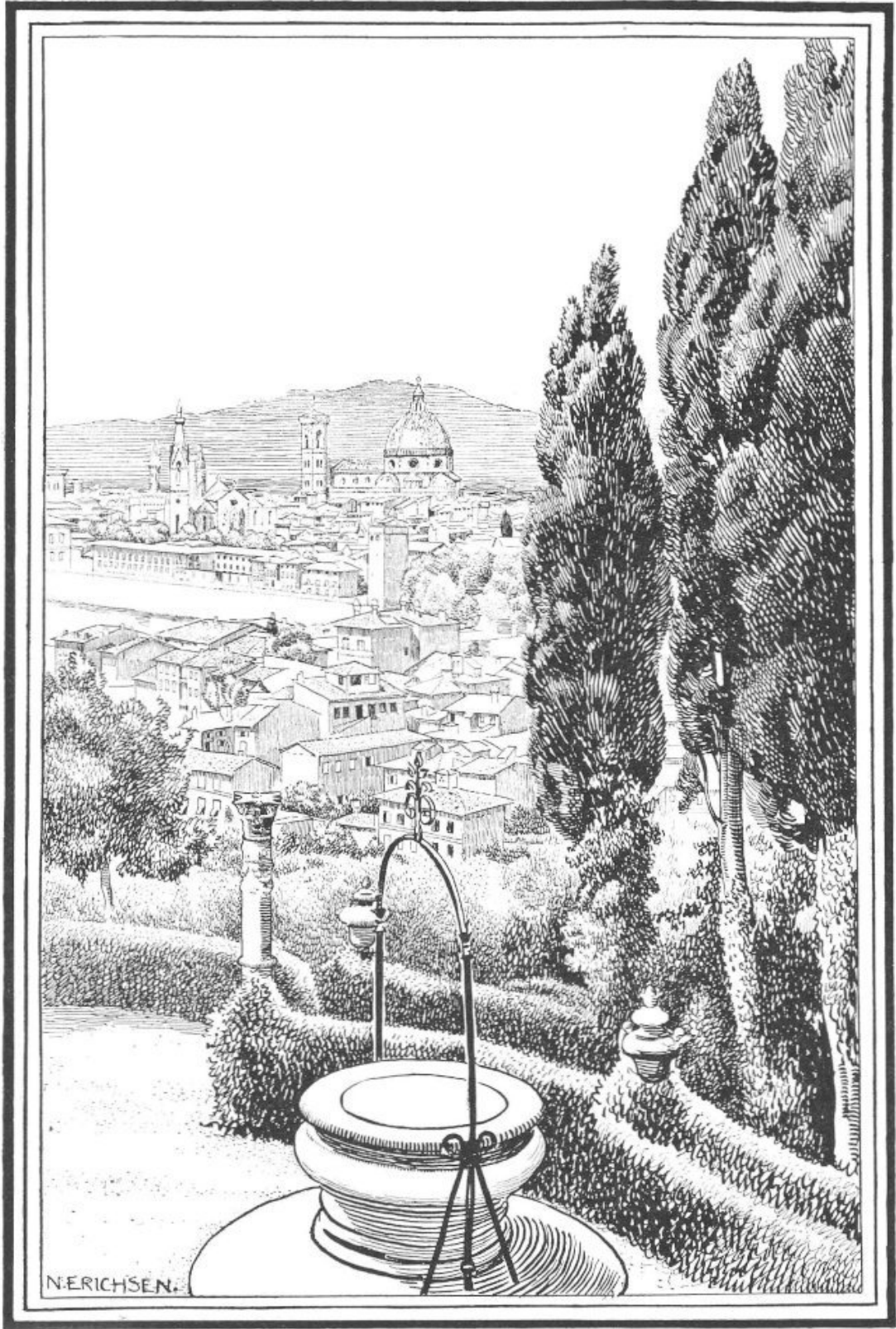
## VILLA DI RUSCIANO

ABOUT a mile outside the great three-storied gateway of San Niccolò stands the old brown villa of Rusciano, which even in the days of Sacchetti had the reputation of changing masters more frequently than any other in Tuscany. It is first mentioned in 785, when Charlemagne is said to have granted the estate to the church of San Miniato a Monte; three centuries later Pope Nicholas II, gave it to the hospital of St Eusebius, popularly known as San Sebbo; then it belonged to two sisters, Buoninsegna and Princia, who in 1267 sold the house and lands to the nuns of San Jacopo in Pian di Ripoli. After passing through several other hands it was bought by Luca Pitti, who crowned the beautiful hill with what Vasari calls “a luxurious and superb palace,” built, or rather adapted and enlarged for him in 1434 by Brunelleschi, to render it a fitting residence for one who was Gonfalonier of Florence and at the height of his prosperity.



Herr Cornel von Fabriczy<sup>[27]</sup> considers that only the eastern side of the villa is Brunelleschi's work, the western being the original building, while the southern façade dates from late in the sixteenth century. One of the glories of Rusciano, much written about by critics, is a most beautiful window looking into the courtyard, but lately covered in. It is said by some to be by Brunelleschi, but the exaggerated consoles ornamented with acanthus leaves, and the pillars at the sides with Corinthian capitals, are not like the work of the great master. The garlands of flowers at the sides, tied in here and there, remind one of those on the monument to Marsuppini by Desiderio da Settignano, as does

the delicate frieze at the top. Herr von Fabriczy suggests that this lovely window, which recalls those of the palaces at Urbino and at Gubbio, may perhaps have been designed by Luciano da Laurana, architect to Federigo di Montefeltre, to whom, as we shall see, the villa belonged for a short time. Anyhow this one richly ornamented piece of architecture contrasts strangely with the absolute simplicity, almost amounting to bareness, of everything else in the courtyard. Dr Carl von Stegmann, in his *Architekten der Renaissance* thinks the frieze and the shape of the capitals are in the style of Desiderio da Settignano, while the garlands of flowers remind him more of the work of Benedetto da Majano. The rooms of the villa are of huge size, and many still retain their fine old wooden ceilings, gigantic beams resting on simply-shaped consoles with curved outlines.



Luca Pitti would have been a happier man had he taken to heart the wise words of Cosimo de' Medici. "You," said Cosimo, "strive towards the indefinite, I towards the definite; you aspire to reach the heavens with your ladder, I place mine on the earth so that I may not climb so high as to fall: and if I desire that the honour and reputation of my house should surpass yours, it seems to me but just and natural that I should favour rather mine own than what belongs to you. Nevertheless let us do as big dogs, which meeting, sniff one at the other and then, both having teeth, separate and go their ways: you to attend to your concerns, I to see after mine own." But the character of Luca was correctly gauged by that acute and charming lady, Alessandra Macinghi, married to a Strozzi, who calls him, in her letters to her exiled sons after their father's death which give so vivid a picture of what wives and mothers endured in the good old times, "a vain ambitious man and a weathercock, moreover badly surrounded." After intriguing against the Medici, and even plotting to assassinate Cosimo's son Piero, Luca Pitti abandoned the anti-Medicean faction and accepted pardon at the hands of Piero, after which his old friends scorned him and avoided meeting him in the streets.

In the summer of 1472 the Gonfalonier of Florence, Tanai de' Nerli, received the Captain-General of the Florentine army, Count Federigo di Montefeltre, outside the city gates and escorted him, amid the acclamations of the citizens, to the Piazza, where the magistrates thanked him for his services in conquering rebellious Volterra, and presented him with a richly caparisoned charger and a silver helmet studded with jewels and chased in gold by Pollajuolo, with Hercules trampling on a griffin (the device of Volterra) as its crest. The grateful Republic also bought Rusciano of Luca Pitti and bestowed it on their victorious general together with the freedom of the city. But he does not seem to have inhabited his Florentine villa long, for in the following year it was let to Giuliano Gondi, and towards the end of the fifteenth century Federigo's successor, Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino, sold it to the Frescobaldi. After this Rusciano changed hands every few years and was owned by the Covoni, Usimbardi, Capponi, Gerini and many other less illustrious Florentine families, until in 1825 it came into the possession of an Englishman, Mr Baring, and after three more sales the noble old villa now belongs to Baron von Stumm.

The Baron is a master in the art of landscape gardening, and with a northerner's love for trees has transformed the grounds into a veritable earthly paradise, whence lovely views of Florence, framed by rare conifers and bays, are like so many glimpses of a fairy city. When seen on a morning with deep snow lying on every mountain, while a pale tinge of colour among the vineyards tells of coming spring in the valley of the Arno, and the city, usually so brown and strongly defined upon the river banks, shines white as though reflecting the dazzling snow peaks around, one is tempted to exclaim with Rogers,

“Of all the fairest cities of the Earth  
None is so fair as Florence. 'Tis a gem  
Of purest ray.”

All the town lies below us, but unlike the vast unbroken bird's-eye view from Bellosguardo or San Miniato, here we only feel her presence, and while listening to the midday bells we see, between two clumps of slender bamboo, Palazzo Vecchio looming like some enchanter's castle out of the thick atmosphere and suffused with rosy hues. The mysterious feeling of the building is enhanced, for the bay and olive trees hide the houses around it and nothing of the modern town is visible.

Such a city, seen from a terrace where a column of purest marble makes the rose tints of the sky more clearly felt, may well inspire her people to weave legends, even in this century of ours, as to her having been built by angels in the night. Between the cypresses the Duomo, sometimes so russet brown above the city it is guarding, to-day is toned and mellowed in the winter sunlight, and the downward markings of its cupola shine like ribs of alabaster. Whiter still and fairer rises the campanile “coloured like a morning cloud, and chased like a sea shell.”

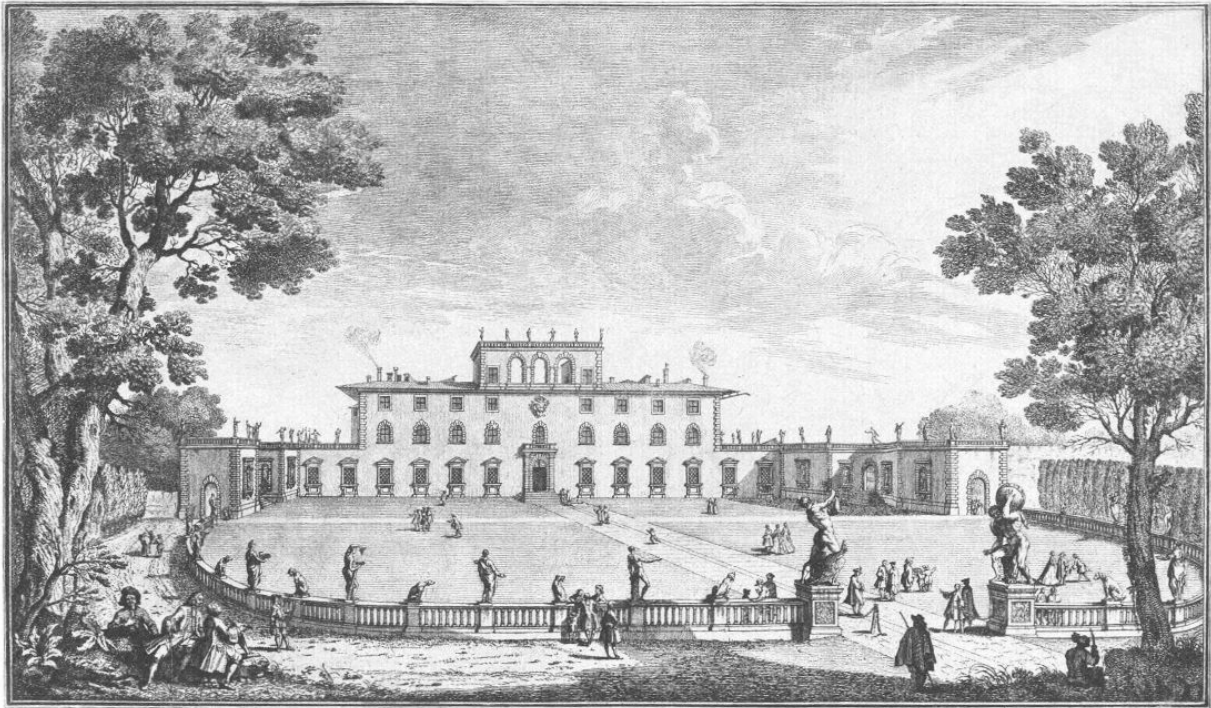
The terraced garden of Rusciano, where granite columns with capitals encircled by dolphins rise amidst palms and magnolias, lies on the southern side of the villa facing the heights of Monticci.

A watch-tower on the slopes, a little village in the plain with pointed bell-tower rising above the jutting roofs of peasant houses low-lying among the fruit trees, hills palely outlined, their cypress-covered summits seen against

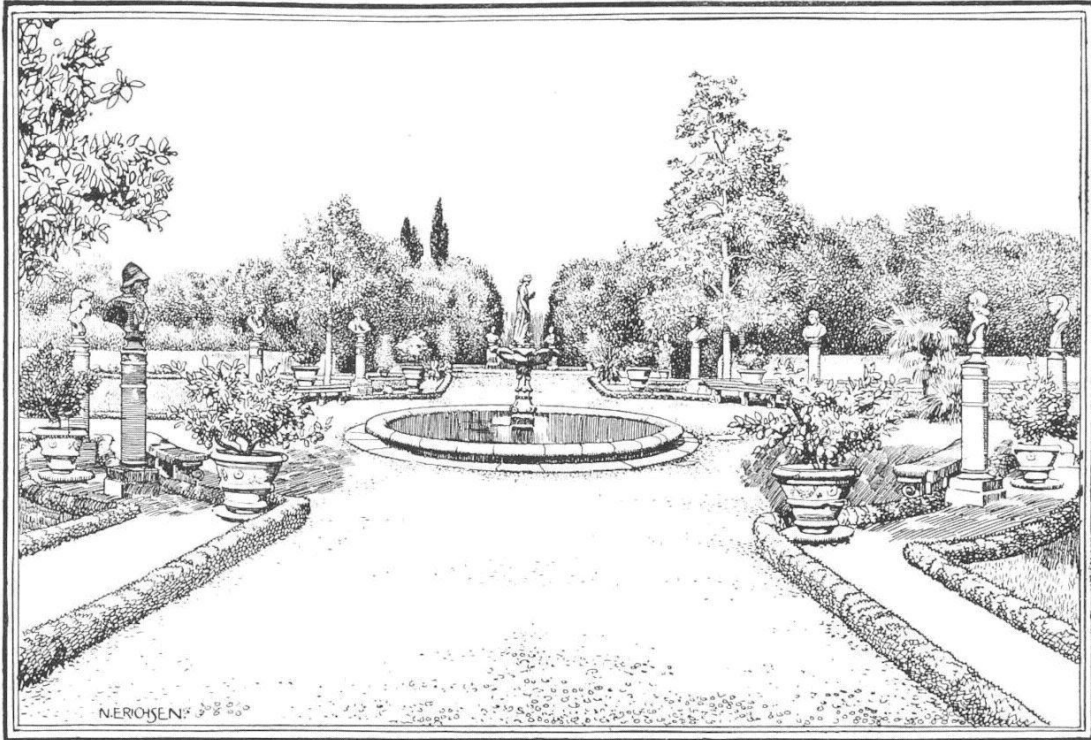
still paler distance, pine trees along the valley wreathed in mist and nearer, olive trees reflecting, like so many mirrors, the radiant hues of the morning sunlight on each of their small pointed leaves—all these things and many more we see from the garden of Rusciano.

### **FOOTNOTES:**

[27] *Filippo Brunelleschi, sein Leben und seine Werke*, von Cornel von Fabriczy. Stuttgart, 1892.



**VILLA DI POGGIO IMPERIALE.**



## VILLA DI POGGIO IMPERIALE

ABOUT a mile outside Porta Romana on the heights of Arcetri stands the fine Villa Poggio Imperiale, now a school for girls. Formerly it was called Poggio Baroncelli, from the rich and powerful family of that name who owned large possessions on this side of Florence, and turned an old castle into a dwelling-house; but they failed in 1487, when the villa and much of the land belonging to it became the property of Agnolo Pandolfini, whose descendants sold it to Piero d'Alamanno Salviati. In 1548 the Salviati were declared rebels and Cosimo I seized all their possessions.

Cosimo had such an affection for Tommaso, one of the descendants of the Baroncelli, that he insisted on his living in the Medici palace in Via Larga (now palazzo Riccardi, Via Cavour). When in 1569 Pius V gave the Duke Cosimo I, in spite of strenuous opposition on the part of the Emperor Maximilian, the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany, Tommaso Baroncelli rode out to meet him on his return from the coronation at Rome. "Such was his joy," writes Cosimo Baroncelli (son of Tommaso) in a manuscript history of his family, "on seeing that great Prince his most gracious Lord, that he

fainted and would have fallen from his horse if the attendants had not quickly supported him and lifted him from the saddle. They placed him on a low wall near the fountain of San Gaggio where he died, to the very great grief of H.H. and of the whole court; he being singularly beloved for his kind and courteous manners. He died in the year 1569 on the 21st March, the day of St Benedict the Abbot.”

There is a tradition that a duel took place close to the villa in 1312 between four Florentines and four Germans during the siege of Florence by the Emperor Henry VII, but the one between Lodovico Martelli and Giovanni Bandini is historical and has been minutely described by Varchi. “Lodovico di Giovan Francesco Martelli, a youth of great courage, having a secret enmity against Giovanni Bandini, seized a favourable occasion of fighting and if necessary dying, for the love of his city; he sent him a challenge, written by Messer Salvestro Aldobrandini, setting forth that he (Bandini) and all Florentines serving in the enemy’s ranks were traitors to their country, and that he was ready to prove this in the lists fighting hand to hand, leaving the choice of place, of arms and whether on foot or on horseback to him.... Giovanni, who lacked not courage and abounded in wit, tried to evade fighting in so bad a cause, and replied with more prudence than truth, that he was in the enemy’s camp to visit certain friends and not to fight against his country which he loved as well as anyone. This, whether true or false, ought to have sufficed Lodovico; but he being desirous at all costs to cross swords with Giovanni replied in such manner, that not to fail in the honour of a gentleman, on which he particularly prided himself, Giovanni was obliged to accept; it was arranged that each should choose a companion. Giovanni ... chose Bertino di Carlo Aldobrandini, a youth whose beard had but just begun to sprout ... Lodovico chose Dante di Guido da Castiglione, who accepted the risk solely for love of his country.

“Lodovico and Dante quitted Florence on the 2nd day of March (1530) leaving the Piazza San Michele Berteldi in the following order—to recount everything in minute fashion. In front of them were two pages clothed in red and white, on horses whose caparisons were of white leather, and then two other pages mounted on great chargers and dressed in the like manner; followed by two trumpeters blowing continuously. After these came Captain Giovanni da Vinci, a youth of extraordinary stature, the second of Dante, and Pagolo Spinelli, a citizen and an old soldier of great experience,

second of Lodovico, and Messer Vitello Vitelli, umpire of both.... Then followed the two champions on fine Turkish horses of marvellous beauty and value. They wore tunics of red satin with sleeves of the same slashed with lace, their breeches were of red satin laced with white and lined with cloth of silver; on their heads were skull-caps of red satin and hats of red silk with white plumes. Six servants dressed in the same fashion as the pages on horseback walked by the stirrups of the knights ... and in their wake were several captains and brave soldiers with many of the Florentine militia, who having eaten with them that morning bore them company as far as the gate.... They followed the Via di Piazza, by Borgo Santo Apostolo, down Parione, crossing the Carraja bridge to the San Friano gate where was their baggage; twenty-one mules laden with all and every sort of thing they might want in the way of food or arms for man and horse. Not to be beholden to the enemy for anything, they carried with them bread, wine, oats, straw, wood, meat of all kinds, every sort of bird and of fish and of pastry, tents fitted with every convenience and furniture they could need even to water. They took a priest, a doctor, a barber, a butler, a cook and a scullion with them. Going out of the gate with all this baggage they went along under the walls, until close to the gate of San Pier Gattolini [now Porta Romana] they turned to the right ... where was the last of the enemy's trenches, and then proceeded to Baroncelli [Poggio Imperiale], the whole camp running to see them, it having been agreed that until they stood before the Prince of Orange no shot should be fired from any artillery, either large or small on either side, and this was faithfully observed.

“At twelve on the day of St Gregory, which fell on a Saturday, they fought in two stockades.<sup>[28]</sup> ... They fought in their shirts, that is breeches and no jackets, with the right sleeve cut off at the elbow, a sword and a short mailed glove on the sword hand and nothing on their heads.... Thus it was chosen by Giovanni to gainsay the opinion held of him in Florence, that he had more prudence than valour and behaved with more cunning than courage.

“Dante having caused his red beard which descended nearly to his waist to be shaved, attacked Bertino, and in the first round received a wound in his right arm and a slight touch on the mouth; he was then assailed with such fury by his adversary that without being able to shield himself he got three wounds on his left arm, one severe, and two slashes, so that if Bertino

had continued to press him as he should have done, he was in such condition that he would have been forced to yield; being unable to hold his sword in only one hand he took it with both, and keenly watching the movements of his adversary saw how he rushed towards him with the utmost fury and inconsiderateness ... so advancing and extending both arms he drove his sword into Bertino's mouth between the tongue and the uvula in such fashion that his right eye swelled forthwith; thus he who just before had boastingly promised to die a thousand times sooner than yield once, either vanquished by the extreme pain ... or else out of his senses, asked for quarter, to the very great displeasure of the Prince [of Orange] ... and died the following night at the sixth hour. Then Dante, to encourage his companion, shouted twice aloud 'Victory, Victory,' not being able, by reason of the laws agreed upon between them to otherwise help him.

“Lodovico at the first trumpet blast attacked Giovanni with incredible fury; but Giovanni, who was a master of fence and did not allow himself to be carried away by anger or any other passion, gave him a cut above the eyebrow, the blood from which began to impede his sight; therefore he with increased rage tried three times to seize his opponent's sword with his left hand and wrest it from him, but Giovanni turning it quickly and drawing it hard towards him, always pulled it out of his hand and wounded him in three places in the said left hand; so that the more Lodovico tried to clear his eye from blood with his left hand in order to see light, the more he besmeared himself; nevertheless with his right hand he made a ferocious pass at Giovanni which passed more than a span beyond him, but did him no other harm than a slight scratch beneath the left breast. Then did Giovanni deal him a right-handed blow on the head, which he not being able to ward off in other fashion parried with his wounded left hand and tried once more to seize the sword. Failing in this and being severely wounded, he placed both hands to the hilt of his sword and resting it against his breast rushed at Giovanni to run him through; but the latter, agile as he was strong, sprang back, and at the same moment dealt him a blow on the head saying: 'If thou wouldst not die yield thyself to me.' Lodovico, unable to see and wounded in several places, answered: 'I yield myself to the Marquis del Guasto,'<sup>[29]</sup> but Giovanni insisting he yielded unto him.”<sup>[30]</sup>

Lodovico Martelli died of his wounds twenty-four days after the duel, and it was solemnly decreed that his portrait should be placed in the Uffizi

gallery among those of men famous for their patriotic virtues. Patriotism had, however, little to do with the duel, which was fought for love of Marietta Ricci, wife of Niccolò Benintendi.<sup>[31]</sup>

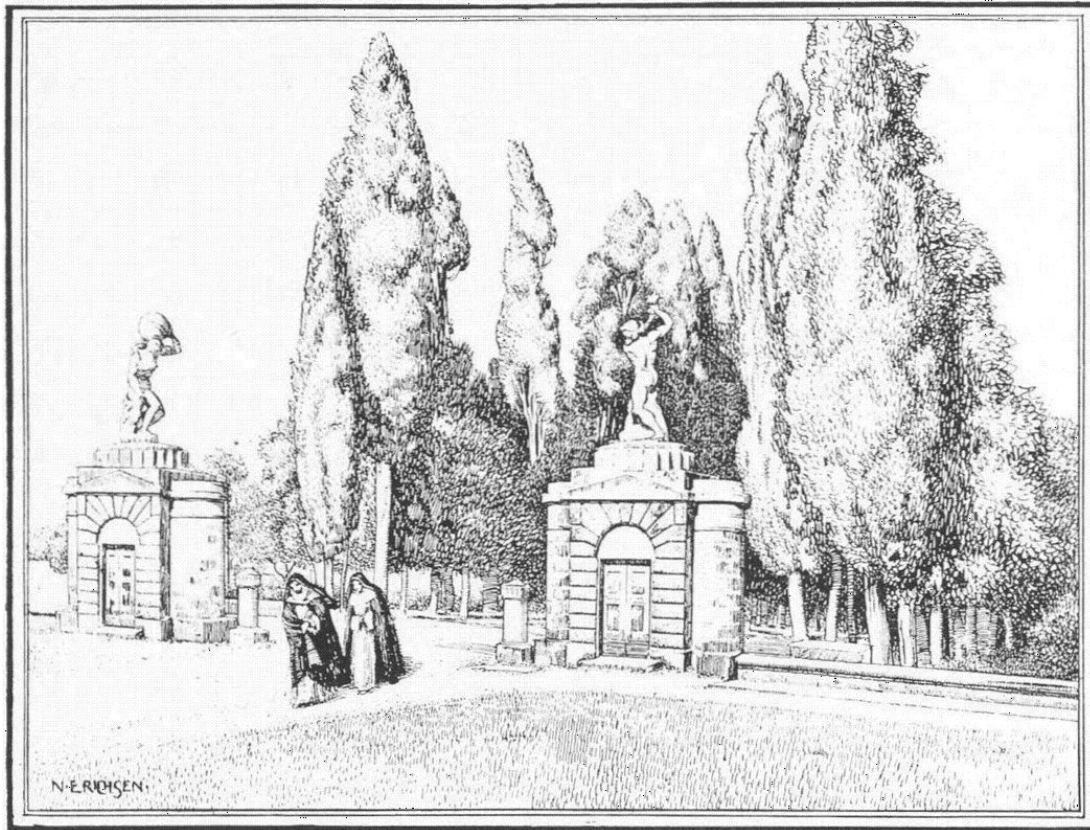
In 1565 Cosimo I gave the villa to his favourite daughter Isabella, married to Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, with faculty to leave it by will to her children; if she died intestate it was to revert to the crown. Eleven years later she was strangled one summer's night by her husband at their villa Cerreti Guidi, and in the following October her brother, the Grand Duke Francesco I, confirmed his brother-in-law in the possession of Poggio Baroncelli.

In 1619 it became the property of the Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena of Austria, wife to Cosimo II. She bought it from Paolo Giordano Orsini, who was in want of money to pay the dower of his sister Camilla, engaged to Marcantonio Borghese, Prince of Sulmona. At the same time the Grand Duchess bought several farms to enlarge the grounds and make the broad carriage road leading up to the villa. She also planted the ilexes and cypresses which are now such a feature in the landscape. It became her favourite residence, and here Claudia de' Medici, her sister-in-law, was married to Federigo Ubaldo della Rovere, eldest son to the Duke of Urbino, with less pomp than was usually displayed by the Medici owing to the recent death of the Grand Duke Cosimo II.

Maria Maddalena determined to enlarge and beautify her villa, and chose Giulio Parigi as her architect, changing its name from Poggio Baroncelli to Poggio Imperiale. She and Christine of Lorraine (mother, grandmother and guardians of the young Grand Duke Ferdinando II) entertained Prince Stanislao of Poland there in 1625 with the tragedy of St Ursula, a ball, and a ballet on horseback performed in an amphitheatre built for the purpose in front of the villa.

Ferdinando II married his cousin Vittoria, only child of Claudia de' Medici and Federigo della Rovere, who died soon after the birth of his daughter. Brought up at Poggio Imperiale by her aunt Maria Maddalena, Vittoria bought the villa from her husband after his mother's death for 62,500 scudi and spent large sums in enlarging and embellishing the place; several of the rooms added by her were frescoed by Volterrano (Baldassare Franceschini). When her half-brothers (by her mother's second marriage

with the Arch Duke Leopold of Austria) came to Florence she gave a magnificent entertainment there, including the favourite Florentine pastime of the *Buratto* or Saracen. Loud laughter greeted the unhappy wight whose lance missed the proper spot on the breast of Buratto and was then knocked off his horse by the staff unerringly wielded by the wooden statue.



Violante of Bavaria, wife of Prince Ferdinando, son of Cosimo III, lived occasionally at Poggio Imperiale, and it was frequently visited by her brother-in-law Gastone, the last of the Medicean Grand Dukes, who inherited all the vices but none of the talent of his house. Pietro Leopoldo of Lorraine, his successor, had a particular predilection for the imperial villa and spent 1,300,000 francs on enlarging it and building immense stables (now cavalry barracks). When he, on the death of his brother in 1790, became Emperor of Austria, his second son Ferdinando III succeeded to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and gave hospitality at Poggio Imperiale to the King of Sardinia and his wife, who had been compelled to quit Piedmont by the revolution. Charles Emanuel IV and Marie Clotilde arrived on the 19th January 1799, only to be driven out after a month of quiet and repose. They

fled to Sardinia, and Napoleon having abolished Tuscany with a stroke of a pen, the Grand Duke took refuge with his brother in Vienna. A new kingdom—Etruria—was then created, with Lodovico of Bourbon, son of the Duke of Parma, as king. He died in 1803, leaving his young widow as regent for his little son, and Poggio Imperiale became her favourite residence. She added the rustic loggia and was beginning other improvements when Napoleon, unmoved by her tears and entreaties, swept Etruria off the map of nations and the poor Queen Regent and her small boy were driven into exile. A new mistress now ruled in the great villa—Napoleon’s sister, the brilliant Elise Bonaparte married to Captain Felice Baciocchi, who had been created Prince of Lucca and Piombino; and she gave balls and festivals to celebrate her brother’s victories in the villa which owed most of its splendour to Austrian princesses. Her grandeur was, however, short-lived; in 1814 she left Poggio Imperiale at dead of night, and Ferdinando III returned to Tuscany.

Three years later a royal company assembled in the “Villa of five hundred rooms,” as Poggio Imperiale was commonly called, to say farewell to the Arch Duchess Leopoldine of Austria who was to embark at Leghorn as the bride of the Crown Prince of Portugal and the Brazils. Her two sisters, one married to Prince Leopold of Naples the other to Napoleon, then a prisoner at St Helena, met her there together with the Princess of the Brazils who had come to receive her son’s future wife at the hands of Prince Metternich.

In the autumn of 1822, when Carlo Alberto, Prince of Carignano, that strange compound of hesitation and daring, religion and mysticism, came as an exile to Florence, his father-in-law Ferdinando III lent him Poggio Imperiale, and here his son Victor Emanuel, the future King of United Italy, narrowly escaped being burnt to death as a baby. His nurse, driven distracted by the mosquitoes tried to burn them on the mosquito-net and set fire to the bed. Snatching up the child she clasped him to her breast and saved his life at the sacrifice of her own. When the “Re Galant’ Uomo” entered Florence on the 15th April 1860, his first visit was to Poggio Imperiale to see the room he had inhabited as a child, and the apartments occupied by his parents.

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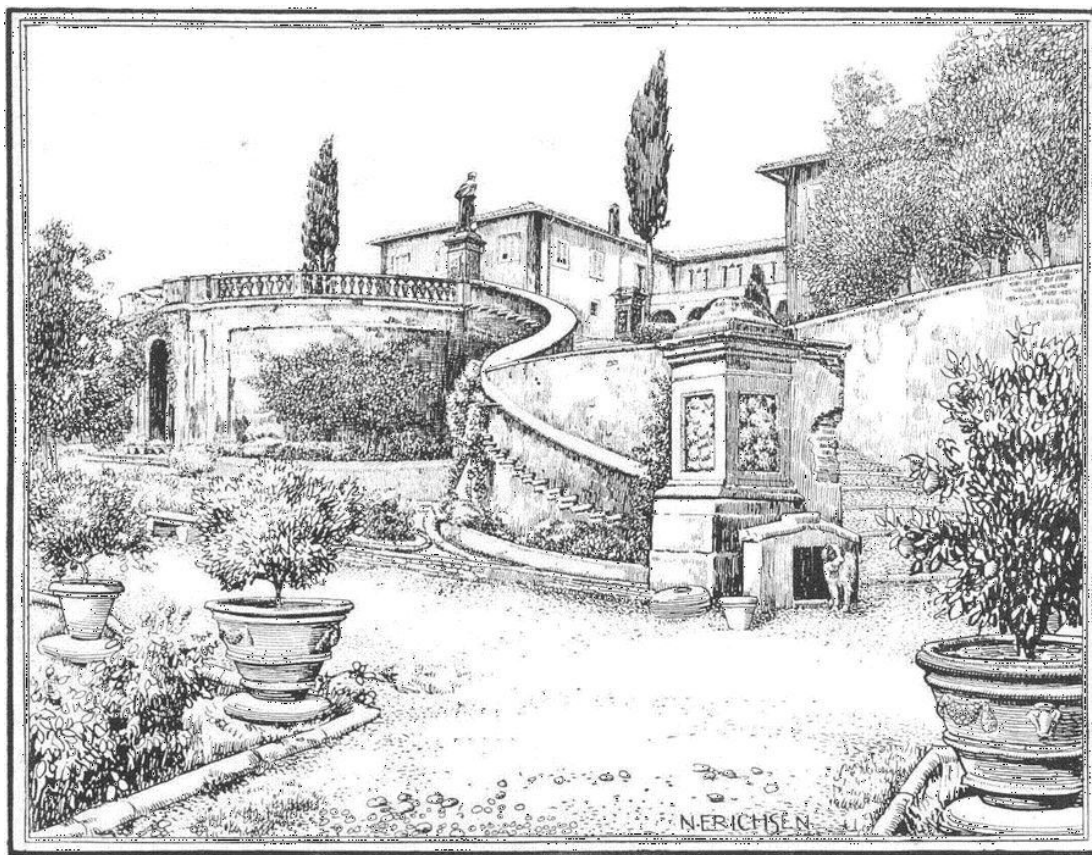
## FOOTNOTES:

[28] Lodovico Martelli and Giovanni Bandini in one, Dante da Castiglione and Bertino Aldobrandini in the other.

[29] Colonel in command of the Spanish infantry.

[30] Varchi. *Storia Fiorentina*. Firenze, 1836-1841. Vol. II. p. 302.

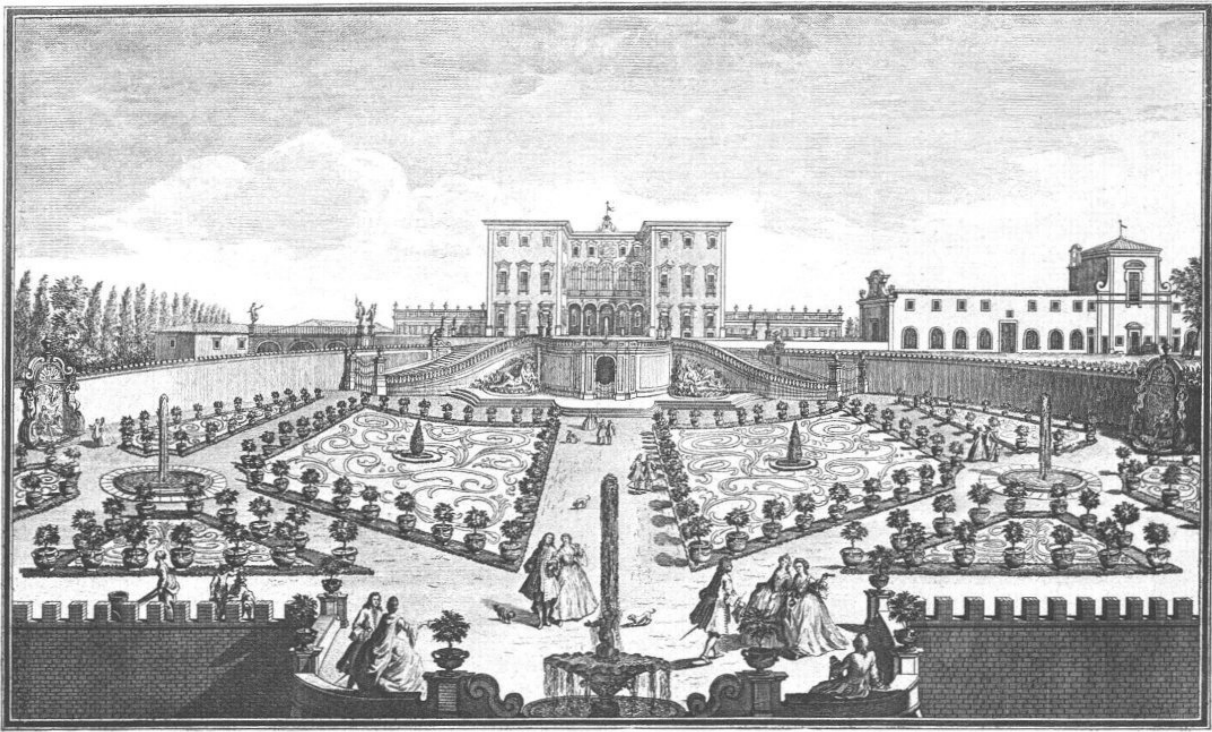
[31] See Letter XVIII. Busini.



## VILLA DI LAPPEGGI

THE hamlet of Lappoggi lies some six miles south-east of Florence in the picturesque valley of the Ema, and here the Ricasoli had a villa which in 1569 they sold to Francesco de' Medici, son of Cosimo I. Francesco I was succeeded by his brother Ferdinando I, who, in order to avoid any controversy with Don Antonio de' Medici, the supposed illegitimate son of the Grand Duke Francesco and Bianca Cappello,<sup>[32]</sup> gave him a life interest in a considerable share of the family property, Lappoggi among the rest. On the death of Don Antonio in 1604 the Grand Duke again came into possession and bestowed it on the Orsini family. Alessandro, last of the Orsini, died about thirty years later, and once more Lappoggi reverted to the crown when Don Mattias de' Medici had it for his life, but seldom lived there, as he was governor of Siena. Finally the villa became the property of

Cardinal Francesco Maria de' Medici, whose favourite place of residence it was.



### VILLA DI LAPPEGGI.

Antonio Ferri, the court architect, was then ordered to prepare designs for a villa, and choosing the most magnificent the Cardinal asked what the cost would be; after a few moments of reflection Ferri answered forty thousand scudi for solid good building. “And if I only desire to spend thirty thousand, and yet have my villa built according to this design, how long would it last?” said the Cardinal. On the architect replying that he would guarantee it for eighteen years, the Cardinal exclaimed, “Eighteen years? That is enough; that will serve my time.”

Lappengi is celebrated in the *Rime Piacevole* of Giovan Battista Faggioli, a poet who was one of the chief boon companions of the pleasure-loving Cardinal, and seems to have been consulted as to the planting of the grounds. He strongly recommended bay trees: “they are evergreen, but not funereal like cypresses, so noble that kings make crowns of their leaves; and above all they avert thunderbolts, which are frequent at Lappengi. But,” he continues in his facetious poem, “plant what you will, everyone is sure to praise your work, for a Prince can do no wrong. Should he by chance

commit some gross error, liars and courtiers will make it out a miracle; so that if you plant a pumpkin to-morrow they will all exclaim, ‘What a beautiful outlandish fruit.’ Or if you sow a bean—a common enough thing—you will hear, ‘What a glorious plant, what a show it makes, what taste the Cardinal has.’”

Francesco Maria de’ Medici was very fond of practical jokes. Once he saw an ass go pass the villa with her foal, and calling his French cook Monsù Niccolò and his two aids bade them buy the foal and serve it dressed in various ways at dinner. After the guests had eaten their fill, particularly of an excellent pasty, the bleeding legs and head of the little donkey with the hair on, were solemnly placed on the centre of the table. Some of the party had to leave the room, but most of them praised the good dinner and laughed, or pretended to laugh, at the Cardinal’s wonderful wit. Fagioli writes a long description of the scene in verse, saying that for his part, he preferred the long ears. He also describes the game of *pallone*, in high favour at Lappoggi, and various games of cards over which large sums of money were lost. Comedies written by him were learned and acted by the courtiers within six hours, in obedience to a master whose every whim had to be gratified at once. On the Cardinal’s birthday there was a fair on the sward near the villa; all Florence, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, flocked to see the fun and danced till late in the night. Marionettes, musicians, astrologers, conjurors “who,” says our satirical poet, “did not much astonish me, because the talent of changing cards by sleight of hand is by no means uncommon in these days.”

There were great doings at Lappoggi in 1709; Frederick IV, King of Denmark,<sup>[33]</sup> was in Florence, and the Cardinal de’ Medici begged him to honour his villa with his presence, and asked ten ladies of the aristocracy, chosen for their knowledge of French, to meet him. Prince Giovan Gastone waited betimes upon the King with all the court dignitaries to accompany him to his uncle’s villa where the ladies received His Majesty at the door with much reverence and courtesying, and at dinner they and Prince Giovan Gastone sat at the King’s table and were served by the pages of the court; the Cardinal having a bad fit of the gout being unable to do the honours himself. The dinner consisted of four complete changes: one cloth after another was removed and towards the end came a course of sweet dishes of various kinds; after these had been tasted, sugar-plums disposed in

pyramids and many kinds of liqueur were placed on the table. In front of the King was put a large coffee-pot in the shape of a fountain with four jets, and at the sides of the table were four golden dishes, two containing three cups of chocolate each, the others cups of water. Between the golden dishes the space was covered with Savoy and other biscuits, and when the coffee-pot was removed, “trionfi” of bottles of San Lorenzo and other rare wines took its place, and all the glasses used were of the finest engraved Bohemian glass. During dinner there was a concert, and the same musicians followed the King about during the whole day, and managed so well as to be ready to receive him with dulcet tunes at every halting-place. After the banquet the King withdrew with the ladies and cavaliers into another room and played games until four o’clock, when they drove about the grounds and visited the home farm. Then going into the orange garden they found a sumptuous cold repast, preparations of milk, capons in jelly, iced fruit and sweetmeats of divers kinds. The iced fruit, a dish new to the King and to all his people, delighted them so much that His Majesty asked permission to make a present of a dish to his dwarf, who was of noble birth and a great favourite and trusted counsellor. On a table apart stood small flasks of the most costly Tuscan wines, chiefly those made on the surrounding hills praised so highly by Redi in his *Bacco in Toscana*. The King and all the company sat down and ate heartily of the good things, and then, to crown so royal a day, it was proposed to dance; the King set the example, but as night was approaching and dew began to fall it was considered prudent to retreat indoors. More liberty and jollity being permitted in the country than in town, French dances were abandoned and peasant dances, such as the *Spalmata*, the *Mestola* and the *Scarpettaccia* were indulged in, to the great satisfaction and delight of His Majesty. Thus they amused themselves until three in the morning, when all returned to Florence.”<sup>[34]</sup>

In July of the same year the Cardinal was, for family reasons, induced to obtain dispensation from Holy Orders and marry the Princess Eleonora Gonzaga of Guastalla, twenty-five years his junior, and the bachelor amusements at Lappoggi came to an end. The young Princess openly manifested her dislike and contempt for her worn-out, gouty and corpulent husband, and he, they say, took this so much to heart that he died after only eight months of married life.

Lappeggi was then abandoned and shut up for four years when Cosimo III lent it to Princess Violante of Bavaria, widow of his eldest son. She loved the society of literary men and poets and had a particular admiration for *improvisatori*. Cavaliere Bernadino of Siena, famous for his talent in improvising, often visited her at Lappeggi, where he met the burlesque poet Ghivizzani, and a peasant girl who lived near by called Domenica Maria Mazzetti, surnamed la Menica di Legnaja, who had a great reputation for improvising in “terza rima.” So delighted was Princess Violante with the girl’s talent that she had her taught reading, writing, Latin and music, all which she learnt with ease. After the death of Cosimo, Princess Violante had to give up Lappeggi and went to live in Rome; she took the peasant girl with her and caused her to be crowned with bays on the Campidoglio.

In 1816 Lappeggi was sold by public auction to Signor Capacci; he soon resold it to Captain Cambiagi, who was obliged to take down the second story, which was causing the walls to bulge and threatened to destroy the whole house, and at his death the Gheradesca family bought it and turned the royal villa into a lodging-house for poor people. In 1876 it came into the possession of the well-known sculptor Giovanni Dupré, whose daughter, also a sculptress, still owns it. In May 1895 the villa, like so many in the neighbourhood of Florence, suffered severely from an earthquake; but time, neglect and earthquakes have been unable to quite destroy the beauty of the place, and as we stand on the wide broad terrace in front of the villa looking out across the valley of the Chianti towards Siena, the talent of Antonio Ferri the architect is realised, who so happily placed the villa of Lappeggi and its gardens in sight of so fine a scene. The lines of the balustrade, projecting above the garden in a bold half circle, are seen against the hills where they slope down towards the valley, thus forming a scene as austere beautiful as a drawing by some great Tuscan Master. A wide staircase leads swiftly down on either side of the terrace to the lower level of the garden, which is raised above the vineyards by strong bastions and confined by a low rampart wall. The outline of the beds remain as in Zocchi’s print, but where the pleasure-loving Cardinal once walked with a gay company of Florentines among the brightness of his flowers now are seen only artichokes and potatoes, and the statues and vases are no longer standing to recall the pageantry of those days. At the top of the garden a big grotto has been scooped out beneath the upper terrace, which Francesco Maria, no doubt remembering for a brief moment his title of Cardinal, caused to be

ornamented with terra-cotta bas-reliefs illustrating such scenes as Moses before the burning bush, while a huge statue of St Mark with his lion seated above a pool of water, might easily be mistaken by a casual observer for a Neptune rising from the sea with his dolphin.

From the loggia of the house one enters a finely proportioned room, decorated with charming frescoes of landscapes seen through arches, where pheasants strut on terraced walks, while a statue of Venus looks down upon a lake, all faintly painted and with a dim distance which gives to the room that great idea of space which the Italians of the eighteenth century so well knew how to render. We sat here one rainy day reading of the gay doings of Cardinal Francesco Maria, and as we saw the rents in the walls made by the earthquake, and recalled the bargain between the Cardinal and his architect, we wondered that the villa should have stood so long.<sup>[35]</sup>

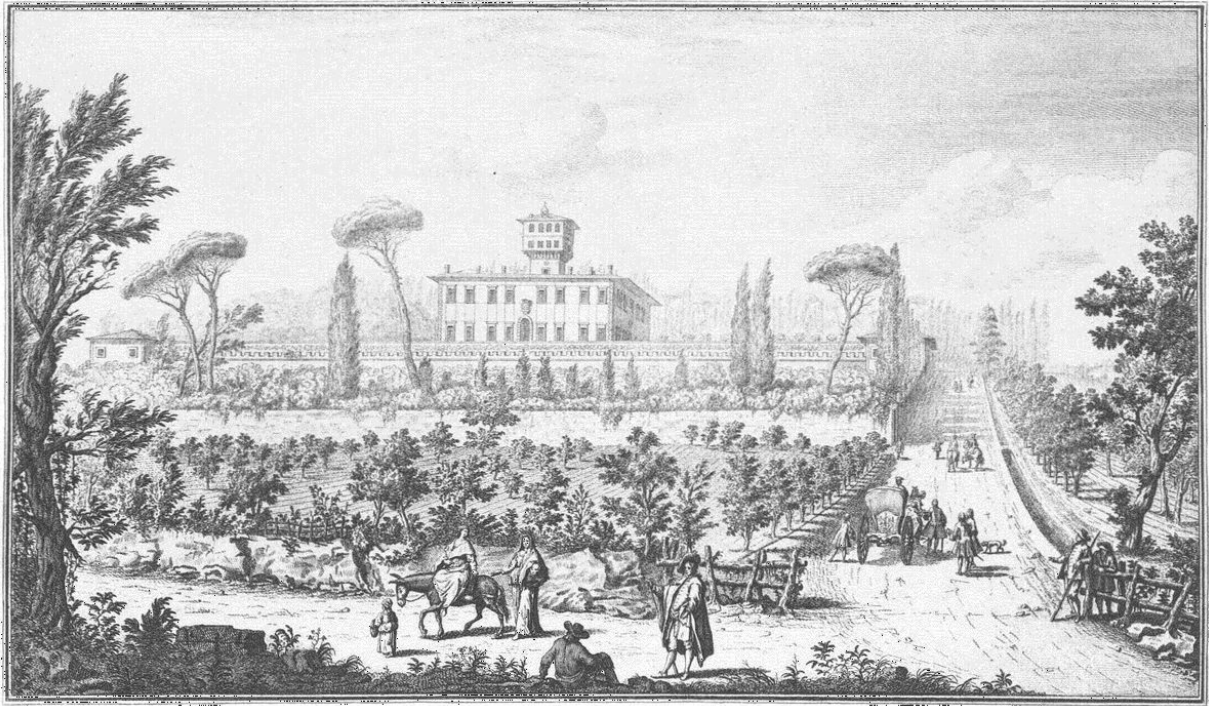
### FOOTNOTES:

[32] A new-born babe was smuggled into the Pitti Palace in a lute and presented to the Grand Duke by Bianca Cappello as his child; Francesco I bought for him the estate of Capistrano in the Abruzzi which carried the title of Prince with it, and left him also large property by will. The real mother was murdered, as soon as she had given up her child, by the orders of Bianca.

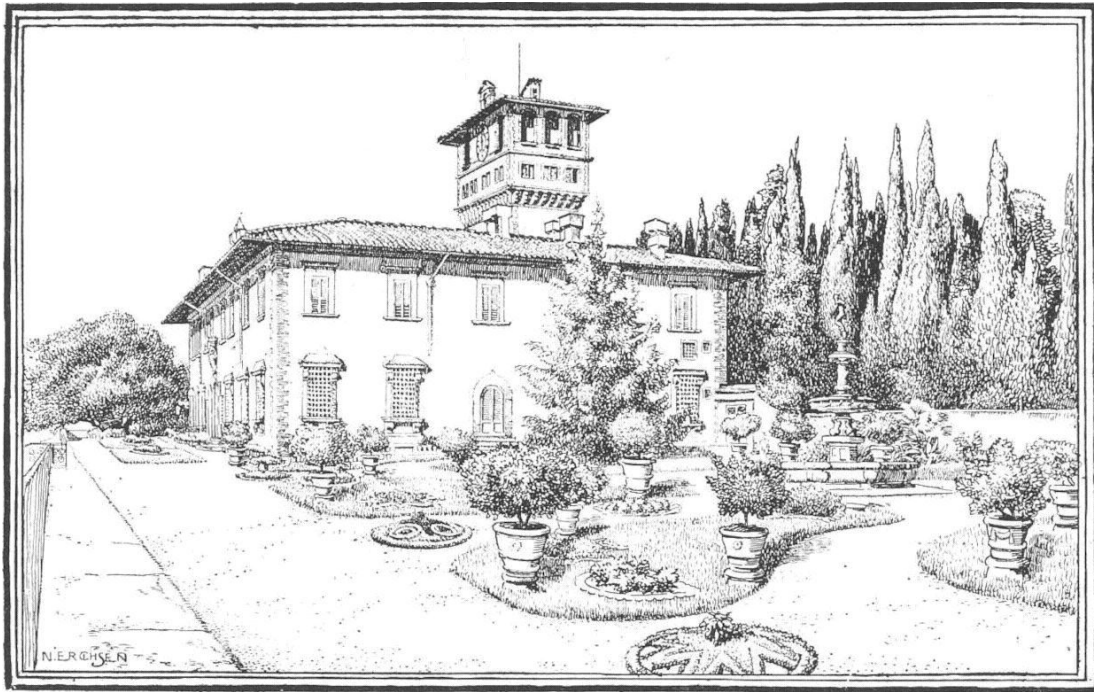
[33] When travelling in Italy as crown prince in 1691, Frederick fell in love with Maddalena Trenta, daughter of a gentleman at Lucca; and being at Venice for the carnival in 1709 he could not resist going to Florence in order to see once more the woman he had loved so passionately. After his departure she had sought refuge and consolation in the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, and he obtained a special dispensation to pay visits to the still beautiful nun, who they say tried to convert him.

[34] Taken from a manuscript (No 893 in the MSS. Moreniani). "Relazione di tutti le Cerimonie, Trattamenti, Feste e Trattenimenti seguiti in Firenze l'anno 1708 in 1709, nella venuta di Federigo IV, Re di Danimarca e Norvegia."

[35] For the account of Lappoggi in the days of the Cardinal Francesco Maria de' Medici, I am chiefly indebted to a rare pamphlet by Signor G. Palagi, *La Villa di Lappoggi e il Poeta Gio. Batt. Faggiuoli*. Firenze, Succ. Le Monnier 1876.



**VILLA DELLA PETRAJA**



## VILLA DELLA PETRAJA

THE number of beautiful homes owned by the Medici strikes one with fresh surprise when visiting the villas of Petraja and Castello, which lie close together with a shady ilex wood between them, about three miles from Florence. Something of the old charm still lingers about them although the life of that time has departed, and few now pace the terraced walks, or sit in the shade of the quiet ilex woods, where once all the gay world of Florence thronged to hold court round their Medicean rulers. The charm of both villas now lies in their gardens and surroundings, and though so essentially Florentine each has its individual character—Petraja, within sight of the city, peaceful, amidst a garden of roses and carnations, its terraces sinking gradually down to the plain, with an enormous marble reservoir of clear green water, in which colossal carp disport themselves under the first one, on which the villa and a few huge ilexes stand. A rustic staircase twines round the trunk of the largest of these trees leading up to a platform among the branches, where Victor Emanuel used to dine. The view of Florence at one's feet, surrounded by villa-crowned hills, is lovely, and Ariosto is said

to have written his well-known lines while standing on the terrace of Petraja

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“To see the hills with villas sprinkled o’er  
Would make one think that, even as flowers and trees,  
Here earth tall towers in rich abundance bore.

“If gathered were thy scattered palaces  
Within a single wall, beneath one name,  
Two Romes would scarce appear so great as these.”<sup>[36]</sup>

The beautiful fountain on the east side of the villa was removed from Castello and brought here by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo. It is one of Tribolo’s masterpieces, and Vasari tells us “he carved on the marble base a mass of marine monsters, all plump and under-cut, with tails so curiously twisted together that nothing better can be done in that style; having finished it, he took a marble basin, brought to Castello long before ... and in the throat, near to the edge of the said basin, he made a circle of dancing boys holding certain festoons of marine creatures carved with excellent imagination out of the marble; also the stem to go above the said basin he executed with much grace, with boys, and masks for spouting out water of great beauty, and on the top of this stem Tribolo placed a bronze female figure a yard and a half high to represent Florence ... of which figure he had made a most beautiful model, wringing the water out of her hair with her hands.”<sup>[37]</sup>

Petraja is first celebrated in Florentine history for a gallant defence made by its owners the Brunelleschi, against the Pisans and their English and German allies in 1364. It was the time of the fierce feud between Pisa and Florence, when the Pisans were smarting under the loss of the great iron chain used for closing the entrance of their port, which the Florentines had carried off in triumph and hung over the western door of San Giovanni. Piero de’ Farnese, commander of the Florentine army, had also taunted the Pisans by striking a commemorative coinage under their very walls; Piero, however, died of the plague, and the fortune of war changed. The Pisans not only coined money under the walls of Florence, but they ravaged the whole country. “The Germans,” writes Scipione Ammirato, “the Pisan despoilers

and the English, encamped at Sesto and Colonnato on their way back from the Mugello, and spreading over the slopes of Monte Morello took San Stefano in Pane, where they remained some days devastating the villas, which they burned down over a radius of three miles. The sons of Boccaccio Brunelleschi, most valorous youths, then owned Petraja.... The villa being therefore well defended by the young Brunelleschi, who showed no sign of surrendering, the enemy determined to take it by force, with the intention of cutting the defenders to pieces and razing the building to the ground. The English<sup>[38]</sup> first undertook the work and advanced in fine order with the greatest ferocity, carrying ladders and catapults as though they had to storm the walls of Florence itself. But all was in vain. Some were killed, many others were bruised and wounded. The Germans then determined to try their luck and made a second assault as furious as any castle ever underwent. Neither more nor less happened to them than what had befallen the English. So they determined with combined forces to assault the villa a third time, and to their shame and the everlasting glory of the Brunelleschi they were once more repulsed.”<sup>[39]</sup>

The Brunelleschi were on the winning side, and had the joy of witnessing the triumphal entry of Galeotto Malatesta and his army into Florence; when, by way of insulting a fallen foe, the Pisan prisoners were compelled to kiss the tail of the Marzocco, the stone lion beloved of all Florentines.

The Strozzi were the next owners of Petraja, and we can fancy the pleasure Palla Strozzi took in spending some of his wealth on laying out terraces and beautiful gardens and filling his villa with costly works of art and valuable manuscripts. He occupied several high offices in Florence and took a leading part in the affairs of the city; unfortunately he joined the Albizzi against the Medici and was exiled in 1435. His son Messer Lorenzo di Palla Strozzi seems however to have still owned Petraja in 1438, as is shown by a deed executed by him before a public notary dated “from my villa of Petraja.” Whether it came into the possession of the Medici when the estates of Palla were confiscated by the Republic of Florence after the return of Cosimo the Elder from exile, or whether it was confiscated in consequence of the rebellion of Filippo Strozzi against the government of Cosimo, is not ascertained. Palla Strozzi was sixty-six years old when he was driven into exile, and although he carefully avoided the society of other Florentine malcontents and lived entirely with learned men, his sentence of

banishment was renewed. He lost one son after another, and died in 1462 without seeing his beloved Florence again.

Cosimo de' Medici died two years later at the age of seventy-six, the Republic inscribed the glorious title of "Pater Patriae" on his tomb, and he was universally mourned as the most sagacious man in Italy. "His financial genius," says Galluzzi, "was such that when Alfonso, King of Naples, joined the Venetians against the Republic of Florence, he caused so great a dearth of coin by drawing bills as to compel them to come to terms. There are few examples in history of a citizen who, without arms, and solely by the admiration excited by his virtues, became the master of his fatherland."<sup>[40]</sup> "Nothing is denied to him," exclaimed Pius II, "he is a judge of war and peace, a moderator of the laws; not so much a citizen as the lord of the country. The policy of the Republic is settled in his house, he gives commands to the magistrates." "Write in private to Cosimo," was the advice Sforza's envoy gave to his master, "if you want anything particularly... Cosimo does everything... Without him nothing is done."<sup>[41]</sup> The most eminent men in Florence were among his intimate friends: Antonino the saintly archbishop, Fra Angelico the holy painter, and the learned monk Ambrogio Traversari, who set aside one of the cells of St Marco for his use. Cosimo invited Argyropulos the Greek to Florence, and made him one of the teachers of his son Piero and of his grandson Lorenzo. Marsilio Ficino was brought up in his house, and the last year of his life he spent in studying the translation made by his protégé of Plato's *On the highest good*.

Cosimo I, his collateral descendant, was like all his house a patron of men of letters; he lived much at Petraja, and wishing to have Varchi near him "to enjoy his sweet converse," lent him "La Topaja," a small villa on the hillside above Petraja. Poets, artists and strangers of note who came to Florence, toiled up the steep road to visit the great historian, and Varchi must often have entertained there the celebrated courtesan Tullia d' Arragona, whose portrait at Brescia by Bonvicino fully justifies the passionate verses addressed to her by so many poets of that time.

... "occhi belli.

Occhi leggiadri, occhi amorosi e cari,  
Piu che le stelle belle e piu che il sole."

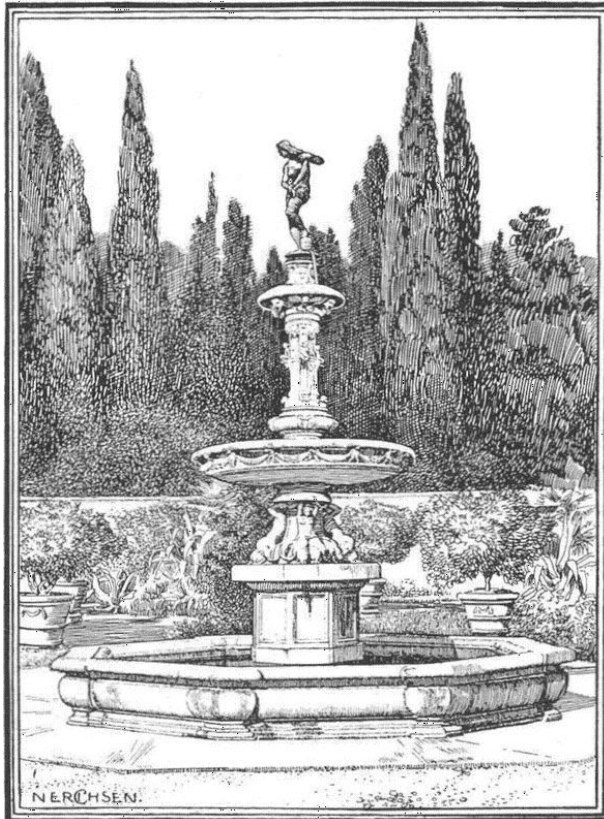
writes Muzio; while Ercole Bentivoglio indited sonnets to her celestial brow. Tasso called her “la mia Signora,” and Alessandro Arrighi praised her wise conversation, her most rare beauty, and her singing, which could turn a marble statue into flesh and blood. Tullia was the daughter of Cardinal Luigi d’ Arragona (son of the Marquis of Gerace, a natural son of Francis I of Arragon, King of Naples, and of Diana Guardato). Born in Rome and educated in Siena and Florence, she aspired to be a second Sappho. Varchi, in spite of the silvered hair he talks so much about, evidently succumbed to the charms of the beautiful woman, and even when love had cooled into a platonic friendship he continued to polish and sometimes re-write, in his elegant scholarly language, the sonnets and verses of the lovely Tullia. Her reputation as a poetess induced Cosimo to excuse her from wearing the yellow veil, odious sign of her profession. The sonnet sent with her petition, which is still in the state archives of Florence, bears *Fasseli gratia per poetessa* in his handwriting on the margin. In her old age she became devout and was a protégée of the pious Duchess Eleonora of Toledo, wife of Cosimo. Tullia’s poem *Guerrino il Meschino*, which she declared to be the versification of a Spanish story, was written about this time; it is no doubt an old popular tale, and some critics hold that from it Dante took the conception of his Divine Comedy. In the preface she rates Boccaccio soundly for “the improper, indecent and truly abominable things” in his book, and wonders how people calling themselves Christians can hear his name mentioned without making the sign of the Holy Cross. “Yet,” she goes on, “so corrupt is our nature, that the book is not avoided as an abomination, but run after by all.” Poor Tullia, when young and beautiful she no doubt read the *Decameron* with as much zest as other people, and one cannot help thinking she must occasionally have been rather bored in her new rôle of a well-conducted woman. Her patroness Eleonora, disliked in spite of many virtues by the Florentines on account of her “insopportabile gravità,” died in 1562, and Tullia did not long survive her.

After the death of Cosimo I, Petraja was the favourite residence of his son, Cardinal Ferdinando de’ Medici, on his rare visits to Florence. He commissioned Bernardo Buontalenti to enlarge and improve the villa, “but,” says Ammirato, “I am persuaded that the tower we see to-day, which Cardinal Ferdinando certainly did not touch when he altered the rest of the building, is the same that was assaulted by the Pisan army.<sup>[42]</sup> When the Cardinal left the church and married Christine of Lorraine, Petraja was their

favourite residence; and here in May 1598 they received the *Chiaus* of the *Gran Signore*, as old Settimanni calls the Sultan's ambassador, who came to treat about Levantine commerce, a very important thing for Leghorn. The Turk evidently enjoyed himself at Florence, as he spent seventy-four days there, and "although he had a large company with him he was a cheap and frugal guest," remarks the old chronicler.

Ferdinando, one of the best of the Medici, was fond of gathering literary society about him. He gave Scipione Ammirato, "the modern Livy," rooms in his palace in Florence, and offered him La Topaja as a country residence. But the steepness of the road alarmed the southern Italian, accustomed to the dead flat of the country about Lecce; so the Grand Duke gave him an apartment in Petraja, where the history of Florence was chiefly written. In front of La Topaja is an orchard garden with a marble statue of St Fiacrio, whom Moreni calls a son of Eugenius IV, King of Scotland (he really was I am told an Irish Chief), who devoted all the hours he could spare from his orations to the culture of medicinal plants. A laudatory inscription was put on the base of the statue by Cosimo III, in 1696.<sup>[43]</sup>

When Victor Emanuel came to Florence (as a stepping-stone to Rome) Petraja and Castello were his two favourite villas, and enormous aviaries were erected on the upper terrace of Petraja for his fine collection of pheasants. His wife "la bella Rosina" lived there, and her beauty is still talked of by the people about the place. For the King's convenience the great inner courtyard, with frescoes by Volterrano—or what little was left of them after having been white-washed and then "restored"—was glazed over, which though perhaps convenient has entirely spoiled the look of the villa.



## FOOTNOTES:

[36] Translated by R. C. Trevelyan.

[37] Critics declare the “Florence” to be by Giovanni Bologna.

[38] Under the command of Sir John Hawkwood, “Giovanni Aguto, who for a surname in his own country,” says Ammirato, “had the appellation *Falcone di Bosco* (Hawk of the wood), because his mother being taken with the pains of labour on an estate belonging to her, had herself carried into a wood and there gave birth to a son.”

[39] Scipione Ammirato. *Istoria di Firenze*, p. 638.

[40] Galluzzi. *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana*. Vol. I. p. 22.

[41] *Cosimo de' Medici*. Dorothea Ewart. P. 184.

[42] The tower is commonly called *La Torre de' Brunelleschi* from the name of the former owners of Petraja, and not because it was built by the great architect Filippo Brunellesco as is often said. Filippo was of a different family. See *Notizie Storiche dei Palazzi e Villa appartenente alla I.E.R. Corona di Toscana*. G. Anguillesi. Pisa, 1815.

[43] See Moreni. *Contorni di Firenze*. Vol. I, p. 101.



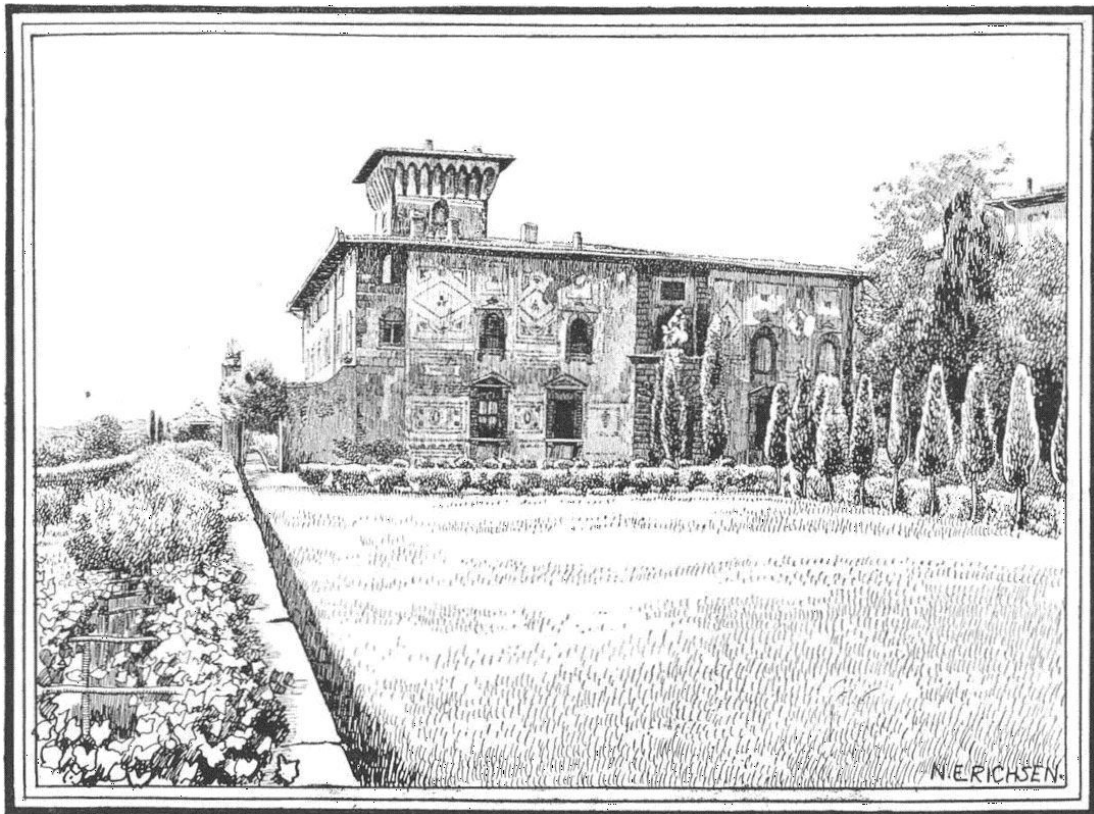
**COSIMO II,**  
**By DUPRÈ.**  
*(Villa di Poggio Imperiale).*



**BIANCA CAPPELLO,**  
**By SELVI.**  
*(Villa di Poggio a Caiano).*



**MARIA MADDALENA**  
**D'AUSTRIA,**  
**By DUPRÈ.**  
*(Villa di Poggio Imperiale).*



## VILLA DI BELLOSGUARDO

“... Tuscan Belosguardo,  
Where Galileo stood at night to take  
The vision of the stars...”

BELLOSGUARDO near Florence is mentioned as a favourable spot for erecting villas as early as 1427. But the great Villa Belosguardo was in existence long before, as it belonged to the noble knight Messer Cavalcante Cavalcanti, father of the poet Guido, and lord of the castle of Le Stinche, of Montecalvo in Val di Pesa, of Luco, of Ostina in the Upper Val d' Arno, and of other places. Some say his ancestors came from Cologne in 806 with the Emperor Charlemagne, others declare them to have come from Fiesole. Dino Compagni mentions Guido, who died about 1301, as “a gracious

youth, courteous and brave, but of a quick and solitary temper and much given to study.” He was an intimate friend of Dante, and no doubt the two poets often stood on the terrace of the fine old villa gazing on the fair city below while discussing poetry and philosophy. Both were Guelphs; and Guido’s hatred of Messer Corso Donati, the head of the Ghibelline party, who had tried to assassinate him while on a pilgrimage, was so intense that he tried one day to kill him in the streets of Florence, and in consequence had to fly the country. Villani tells us that when the two rival factions were reconciled in 1267 a marriage was arranged between Guido Cavalcanti and a daughter of the staunch Ghibelline Farinata degli Uberti; but discord again broke out, the Priors of Florence exiled the chief leaders, and Dante was one of the Priori who voted in favour of the banishment of his friend. The Ghibellines were sent to Castello della Pieve; the Guelphs, Guido among them, to Sarzana. He was, however, almost immediately released as the bad air made him ill, and he died soon after reaching Florence.

Lorenzo de’ Medici in a letter to Don Federigo d’ Arragona, son of the King of Naples, writes about “the delicate Florentine Guido Cavalcanti, a subtle logician, and for his century a profound philosopher. Even as he was handsome, winning and of gentle blood, so was he above nearly all the others in the grace and charm of his writings: accurate and admirable in conception, dignified in his sentences, copious and elevated, wise and far-seeing in his composition. All these gifts are adorned, as though with an embroidered vest, by an enchanting, sweet and ever-youthful style, which, had it been used in a wider field, would indubitably have set him in the first rank.” Dante did place him in the first rank, even above Guido Guinicelli then considered the greatest of Italian poets, when he wrote—

“Thus hath one Guido from the other snatch’d  
The letter’d prize...”

He dedicated the *Vita Nuova* to Guido Cavalcanti, whom he calls “primo de’ miei amici,” and they wrote many sonnets to each other; but Guido’s *Ballate* are by far the most natural and charming of his productions; “Here,” says Symonds, “we find the first full blossom of genuine Italian verse. Their beauty is that of popular song, starting flower-like from the soil and fragrant in its first expansion beneath the sun of courtesy and culture.” His poem,

*Donna mi prega perch' io voglia dire*, has had volumes of commentaries written on its beauties, and is one of the poems cited by Petrarch as among the finest in the Italian language.

Soon after Guido's death new dissensions broke out between the rival factions: Masino Cavalcanti was beheaded by the advice of Pazzino de' Pazzi, the palaces of the Cavalcanti in Florence were burnt and they fled to their castles, from whence they harried the territory of the Republic. The Florentines marched out to attack the strong castle of Le Stinche which after a desperate struggle fell into their hands, and the defenders were immured in a new prison the Signoria had just built on the site of some houses belonging to the Uberti in the parish of San Simone. From these first inmates the prison came to be called Le Stinche—dreaded name in the later annals of the city. Montecalvo was also taken, and the Cavalcanti were only permitted to return to Florence three years later, to be again driven out in 1311 when Paffiero Cavalcanti murdered Pazzino de' Pazzi to revenge the decapitation of his brother Masino. Several of the family then emigrated to Naples, where their descendants filled some of the highest posts in the kingdom.

In 1447 the Cavalcanti sold Villa Bellosguardo to Tommaso, son of Gino Nerii de' Capponi, for 1500 golden florins. After in vain trying on a hill lacking both springs and wells to make lakes and build brick kilns, "which have not turned out what I wished and have cost me fifty florins more than I encashed," as Tommaso writes to his brother, he soon sold the place again to its old owners the Cavalcanti. Whether they destroyed the villa of their own free will in 1530 when Florence was besieged, or whether the Prince of Orange, or the German commander, Felix von Werdenberg, wilfully made a target of it, is unknown, but in some of the chronicles of that time it is mentioned as being in ruins.

Cosimo I confiscated Bellosguardo with other property of the Cavalcanti in 1559 and gave it to one of his servants for life. Eight years afterwards it reverted to the Medici and was bought from them by Lionardo Marinozzi, another of Cosimo's favourites. His son sold it in 1583 to Girolamo di Antonio Michelozzi, whose descendants still own it. It was then described as "una torre ad uso di palazzo," which would seem as though Lionardo had added the magnificent tower on to an already existing villa instead of

building, as was usually done, a dwelling-house round an old tower. It has been immortalised by Mrs Browning as—

“... a tower that keeps  
A post of double observation o'er  
The valley of the Arno (holding as a hand  
The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole  
And Mount Morello and the setting sun.”

The front of the villa is ornamented with *grafite*, and over the front door is a Pietà by Francavilla, a Dutch pupil of Giovan Bologna, while the large entrance hall contains damaged frescoes said to be by Poccetti. The fine old place is now inhabited by Lady Paget, who has converted an orangery into a most picturesque and delightful sitting-room, and restored Villa Bellosguardo to its pristine splendour. All parts of the town can be seen from the terrace; only the Arno lies hidden between two endless rows of palaces, until it reaches the long line of trees in the Cascine, whence its course can be traced for many miles along the valley. From here Florence seems to be closely set between olive-clothed hills, with villas spreading like endless chains as far as the eye can reach, up to the summits above Fiesole, on to the slopes beyond Prato, and behind us towards the Val di Pesa, where the pine woods stand like sentinels against the sky. Straight in front, towards the north, are the heights of Monte Senario, three serrated peaks black even in the sunlight, with the Servite convent lying like a streak of snow among the fir woods. On clear days the point of the Falterona, where the Arno takes its rise, can be seen to the right of the long hill of Vallombrosa on the east.

This view has been celebrated by more than one poet and has given the world-known name—Bellosguardo—to this side of Florence. But only at twilight does the whole beauty of the scene appear. Strange white gleams touch the hills, and in the uncertain light of the closing day there is a confused sense of colour as though the wind were driving great masses of autumn leaves before it through the valley. Then the clearer evening glow succeeds the twilight, and Florence and her russet-coloured roofs stand out clear again in a setting of shadowed hills.

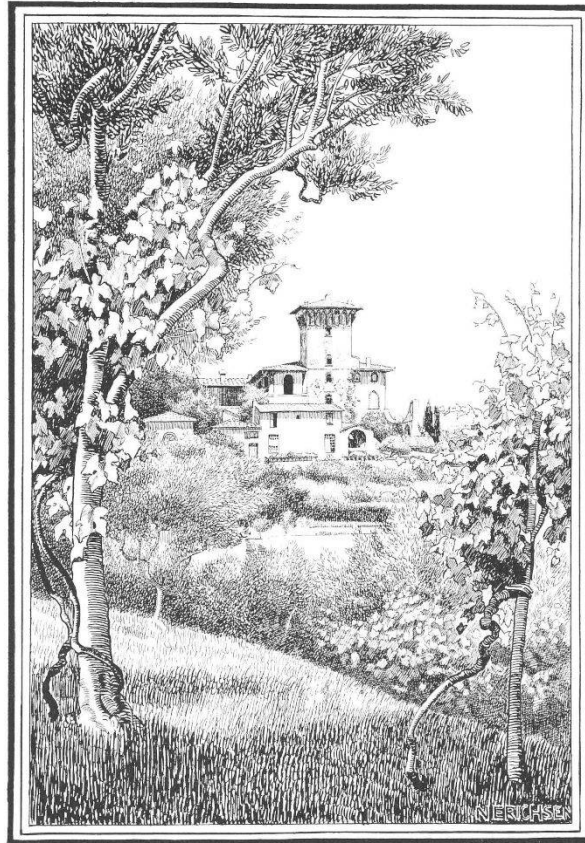
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Adjoining Villa Bellosguardo is the Villa dell' Ombrellino, now belonging to M. Zouboff. Here lived for sixteen years one of the greatest of Italians—Galileo Galilei; and here he composed the dialogue discussing the Ptolemaic and the Copernican systems. All learned Florentines and every foreigner of distinction breasted the steep hill of Bellosguardo to listen to the wonderful conversation of Galileo. Eloquent, sarcastic, brimming over with fun and humour yet full of learning, he was a delightful companion. Virgil, Horace and Seneca he knew by heart and often quoted, as he did the poetry of Petrarch, of Berni, and especially of Ariosto, for whom he had a great admiration. He never permitted Tasso to be compared to Ariosto, saying there was the same difference between them as though a man tried to eat a cucumber after a good melon. Galileo was only happy in the country, declaring cities to be the prisons of human intellect, “whereas the country is the book of nature, always open to him who cares to read and study it with intelligence, for the writing and the alphabet in which it is written are so many propositions, problems and geometrical corollaries, by whose help some of the infinite mysteries of nature may be penetrated.”

In 1633, after the second bitter persecution suffered at Rome by Galileo, he was allowed to return to Florence and live on

“Thy sunny slope, Arcetri, sung of old  
For its green wine; dearer to me, to most,  
As dwelt on by that great Astronomer,  
Seven years a prisoner at the city gate,  
Let in but in his grave-clothes. Sacred be  
His villa (justly was it called the Gem).  
Sacred the lawn, where many a cypress threw  
Its length of shadow, while he watched the stars.  
Sacred the vineyard, where, while yet his sight  
Glimmered, at blush of morn he dressed his vines,  
Chanting aloud in gaiety of heart  
Some verse of Ariosto.—There unseen,  
In manly beauty Milton stood before him,  
Gazing with reverent awe—Milton, his guest,

Just then come forth, all life and enterprise;  
*He* in his old age and extremity,  
Blind, at noonday exploring with his staff;  
His eyes upturned as to the golden sun,  
His eyeballs idly rolling.”<sup>[44]</sup>



At Arcetri, Galileo rented a villa from his pupil Esau Martellini, called “Il Gioiello” (the Gem). This was practically his prison, as the Inquisition forbade him to hold meetings, give lectures, receive friends to dinner, or “commit any action showing a want of reverence.” In 1634 his favourite daughter, a nun in the convent of San Matteo in Arcetri died, and the sick man was inconsolable, but Urban VIII, and his worthy advisers the Jesuits, continued their persecution, ordering that he was not to converse with anyone “not even the most wise and respectable person.” Through the Grand Duke he petitioned the Pope to grant him some mitigation of his rigorous imprisonment, whereupon the Inquisition commanded him to desist from further supplications on pain of instant punishment. In 1638

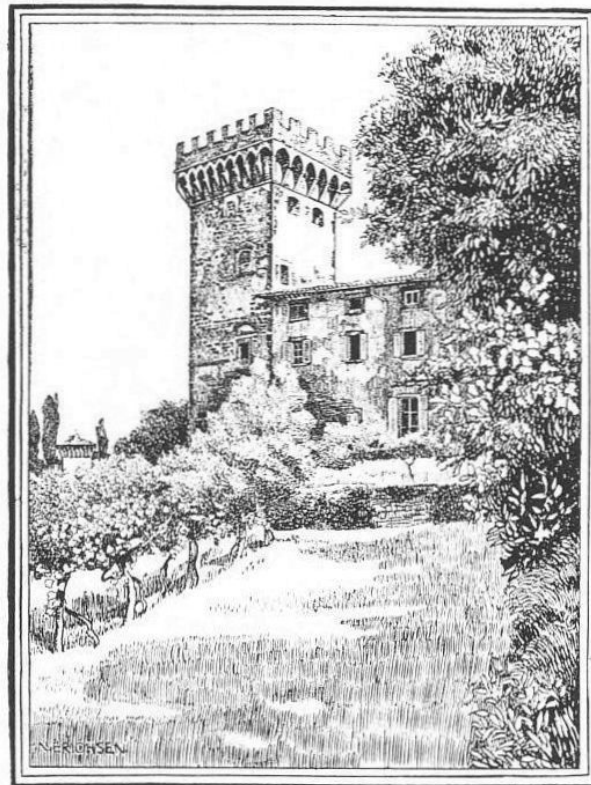
Galileo became blind and died four years later. Viviani describes him in his old age as “strongly built, of middle height, full-blooded, phlegmatic and very strong, but hard work and pain, both of body and mind, had debilitated his frame, so that he often fell into a languid condition.” He was a good musician and played well on the lute, a clever draughtsman, and so able an architect that the government consulted him on the new front they desired to build for the Cathedral of Florence. After 1633 all his letters are dated “from my prison at Arcetri.”

Not far from the Bellosguardo villa, but on the other slope of the hill, overlooking the lower valley of the Arno, stands the old Villa Montauto, once belonging to the Bonciani, who owned large possessions about there. In the tower of this villa Hawthorne wrote *Transformation*, and the peasants still remember the foreign gentleman who “sat like an owl up in the tower and refused to come down to talk to visitors.” He describes it accurately in the twenty-fourth chapter of his novel.

“About thirty yards within the gateway rose a square tower, lofty enough to be a very prominent object in the landscape, and more than sufficiently massive in proportion to its height. Its antiquity was evidently such that, in a climate of more than abundant moisture, the ivy would have mantled it from head to foot in a garment that might by this time have been centuries old, though ever new. In the dry Italian air, however, Nature had only so far adopted this old pile of stonework as to cover almost every hand’s-breadth of it with close-clinging lichens and yellow moss; and the immemorial growth of these kindly productions rendered the general hue of the tower soft and venerable, and took away the aspect of nakedness which would have made its age drearier than now.

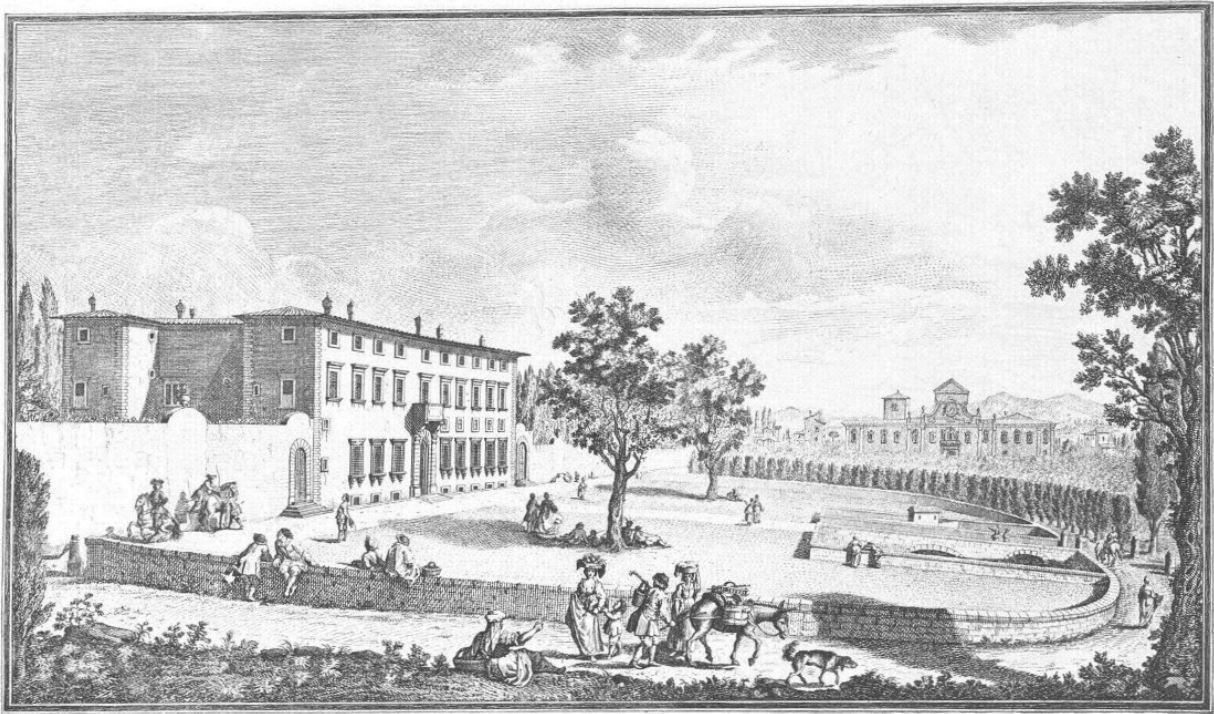
“Up and down the height of the tower were scattered three or four windows, the lower ones grated with iron bars, the upper ones vacant both of window-frames and glass. Besides these larger openings, there were several loopholes and little square apertures which might be supposed to light the staircase that doubtless climbed the interior towards the battlemented and machicolated summit. With this last-mentioned war-like garniture upon its stern old head and brow, the tower seemed evidently a stronghold of times long past. Many a crossbowman had shot his shafts from those windows and loopholes, and from the vantage height of those grey battlements; many a flight of arrows, too, had hit all round about the

embrasures above, or the apertures below, where the helmet of a defender had momentarily glimmered.... Connected with the tower, and extending behind it, there seemed to be a very spacious residence, chiefly of more modern date. It perhaps owed much of its fresher appearance, however, to a coat of stucco and yellow wash, which is a sort of renovation very much in vogue with the Italians.”

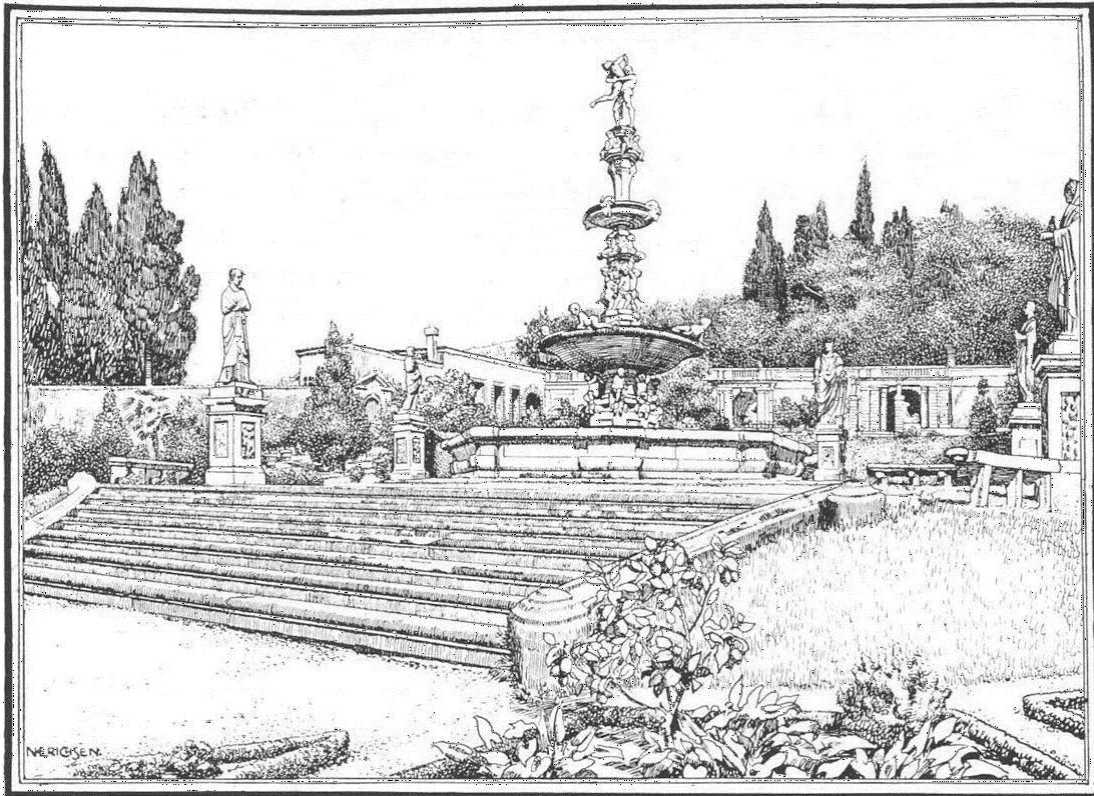


### FOOTNOTES:

[44] *Italy*. Samuel Rogers. P. 140.



**VILLA di CASTELLO**



## VILLA DI CASTELLO

THE villa of Castello, “built by Pier Francesco de’ Medici with much judgment,” as Vasari remarks, belonged to the Medici family before they became Grand Dukes of Tuscany, and was always one of their favourite residences. Unlike Petraja, which towers above the plain, Castello is a long low villa on a gentle incline above the high road, with no extensive view, and the eye feasts only on the garden behind. And what a charming scene it is on a windless summer’s day! The magnolia trees, the pride of the place, are in flower, copper beeches and oleanders mingle their glorious colours in marvellous variety above the green lawns and give a luxuriant look to what is really a formal garden; for on the terraces which rise from the back of the villa, lemon trees in big terra-cotta pots edge the gravel walks, and the Florentine gardener has not forgotten to tie the carnations to canes so that they stand stiffly up from their pots on the low walls. Then there is the fountain in the centre of a terrace of its own, divided from the others by

steps, and surrounded with statues of ladies and gentlemen of the Medici family; but their drapery is so tightly drawn round them in stiff straight folds that they resemble far more one's idea of Roman senators and their wives.

The fountain, generally referred to as a work of Giovanni Bologna, Vasari attributes to Tribolo, and the mixture of bronze and marble is fine. It is divided into various basins; on the larger one are four little bronze "putti" lying on the edge of the marble basin playing with the water. Below them, in the centre of the fountain, seven marble "putti" are seated upon lions' claws; four rams' heads look over the edge of the upper and smaller basin, and marble figures of children hold wild geese by the necks which spout water from their bills. Four other "putti" are seated below the pedestal on which Hercules is wrestling with Antæus, a group by Ammanati, so curiously like figures by Pollaiuolo that it might have been suggested by one of his drawings. Breasting the hill and crossing another terrace we come to a large cool grotto scooped out of the hillside, its roof decorated with masks, scrolls, baskets of flowers and arabesques done in different coloured shells. Queer, nearly life-size animals fill the three recesses in the grotto, a camel with a monkey on its back, a unicorn, a wild boar, a ram, a lion, a bear, hounds, and smaller creatures carved out of various marbles and stone to correspond to the colours of the animals portrayed, stand on rocks in happy confusion. Animals from every quarter of the globe are united here by the fanciful artist whose one idea was not zoology but the amusement of the members of a Florentine ducal house during long summer days. In order to enhance illusion he has given the stag and the ram real horns, and the boar has real tusks in his ferocious mouth. The large sarcophagii, or baths, under these groups, of white and pink marble, are very fine. One has all sorts of sea fish sculptured on its side; the others, a tangle of shells, crabs, lobsters and crayfish; all three rest on large dolphins.

On the terrace above this grotto are remains of the labyrinth described by Vasari in his life of Tribolo, some fine trees and a large round reservoir full of emerald green water with an island in the centre on which crouches a colossal bronze figure of the Apennines surrounded with lilies and ferns. The statue is said to be by Tribolo, and one asks oneself how the same man who designed the lovely fountain in the garden could perpetrate such a hideous monster.

The walk (about a mile) from Castello to Petraja through the ilex wood is very charming, and passes close by a small church—or rather one may call it a campanile with a chapel attached, for the exquisite beauty of the bell-tower is the first thing to attract one as it rises from the hillside so evenly balanced by a group of cypresses. The whole forms a perfect jewel of architectural effect. No wonder the people of the country round are proud of their campanile and call it “la meraviglia di Castello.”

The name of the villa does not come from *castle* as is often said, but from the roman *castellum*, a receptacle for water. Villani tells us that Marcrinus, a Roman senator, made a conduit on arches and brought the water seven miles, in order that the citizens of Florentia might have abundance of good water to drink. The aqueduct started from the streamlet Marina at the foot of Monte Morello, and collected all the springs above Sesto, Quinto, Colonnato, etc., on its way. That worthy old academician, Domenico Manni, in his book *Le Terme Fiorentine*, describes various arches, pilasters, and great pieces of masonry still existing in his time (1750) near Doccia, near the torrent Mugnone, near the Villa Corsini, close to Castello, and at Ponte a Rifredi. He gives drawings of two arches which soon afterwards fell down, and copies of many inscriptions found while digging foundations for houses or ploughing the fields. The aqueduct is still commemorated in the name of a church near Montughi, San Stefano in Pane de Arcora.

Caterina Sforza, widow of Giovanni de' Medici, the celebrated mother of a still more celebrated son, inhabited Castello during the last seven years of her chequered existence. An illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Milan, she was affianced at eleven years of age to Girolamo Riario, a favourite nephew of Sixtus, and married to him after the murder of her father. Her beauty, grace of manner, wit and intelligence gained the heart, not only of the Pope but of all who knew her, to judge by the impassioned description given by Fabio Oliva when she was about twenty. “As she issued from her litter, it seemed as if the sun had emerged, so gorgeously beautiful did she appear, laden with silver and gold and jewels, but still more striking from her natural charms. Her hair, wreathed in the manner of a coronet, was brighter than the gold with which it was entwined. Her forehead of burnished ivory almost reflected the beholders. Her eyes sparkled behind the mantling crimson of her cheeks, as morning stars amid those many-tinted lilies which returning dawn scatters along the horizon.”

After the murder of her first husband in 1488, avenged by her without mercy, she proclaimed her son Ottaviano, Count of Forli; and soon afterwards married Giacomo Fea, the handsome, loyal and brave captain who kept the citadel of Forli so well against the insurgents who had killed Count Girolamo Riario. Ratti, the biographer of the Sforzas says: "It would be difficult to find in history any woman who so far surpassed her sex, who was so much the amazement of her contemporaries and the marvel of posterity. Endowed with a lofty and masculine spirit, she was born to command; great in peace, valiant in war, beloved by her subjects, dreaded by her foes, admired by foreigners." Likenesses of Caterina, of her first husband and her two eldest sons, are to be seen in the altarpiece of the Torelli chapel in the church of San Girolamo at Forli.

In 1496 she was once more a widow, Giacomo Fea having been murdered by some of her own subjects, whom she punished as she had done the assassins of her first husband. Giovanni de' Medici, envoy of Florence to the court of her son, married her the following year and died soon after, leaving her with an infant boy. After vainly trying to stem the invasion of her eldest son's territories by Duke Valentino, who entered the citadel of Forli by treachery, she was made prisoner and sent to Rome; but after a short imprisonment was allowed to retire to Florence, where she dedicated herself to the education of her little son, Giovanni de' Medici. Her letters, full of family troubles, complaining bitterly that she was left without sheets for her bed, forks or tablecloths, are sad reading. Pierfrancesco and Lorenzo de' Medici attempted to contest her right to the villa and to the little that was left of the heritage of her third husband "the Magnificent Joanne de' Medici"; and she lived in constant fear that Lorenzo, who had unlawfully assumed the tutelage of her son, would make away with him in order to dissipate the patrimony of his dead father. After a law suit she rescued the boy from the clutches of his uncle and smuggled him, with some waiting-women, into the nunnery of Anna-Lena. Here, dressed as a girl and jealously guarded by the faithful nuns, the future soldier Giovanni delle Bande Nere—the last of the great condottiere—passed eight months. It was only after the death of Lorenzo, in 1504, that he joined his mother at Castello, when she devoted all her remarkable energy to his education. Tutor succeeded tutor, for Madonna Caterina wished the boy to be an accomplished and learned gentleman; but he despised book-learning, and only cared for athletic exercises and out-door sports. "So you have your boy

back,” wrote an old follower of her husband whom she commissioned to procure “a small and handsome horse” for the seven year old Giovanni. “If my father had come to life again I could not be more glad; and so it is with all the condottieri here in camp. The day your letter arrived the commissary was so overjoyed he could not eat. As to the horse, we will search among the condottieri here, and whosoever has one will be only too proud to give it. We shall, without fail, find what you want.”<sup>[45]</sup>

In 1527 there were grand doings at Castello, when, as is described by old Varchi, two armies came, “one to attack and pillage Florence as an enemy—which was the army of the Bourbons; while the other under the guise of a friend and defender pillaged and spoiled her—which was the army of the League; and it happened that on the last Friday of April, which was on the twenty-sixth day of the year 1527, the Cardinal of Cortona [Silvio Passerini], although he knew all the intrigues and confabulations of both old and young against the State, either not believing or wishing to show he feared them not, left Florence most imprudently with the other two Cardinals, the Magnificent, Count Piero Noferi and the whole court, and went a little over two miles outside the Faenza gate to Castello, the villa of Signor Cosimo, to meet and receive the Duke of Urbino and the other heads of the League. Meanwhile the citizens rose and took possession of the palace of the Signoria, and the Cardinals with Ippolito had to return in all haste to quell the insurrection. Thereupon the citizens sadly and sorrowfully went back to their houses without injury but in great fear.”

Maria Salviati, the mother of Cosimo I, died at Castello; and they say he was with difficulty persuaded to quit a hunting party and return to receive her last blessing. He enlarged the villa considerably on the eastern side after the designs of Tribolo, and charged Pontormo to decorate the Loggia, but all the frescoes have perished. Cosimo retired to Castello after his secret marriage with Camilla Martelli, a marriage so distasteful to his Austrian daughter-in-law that she wrote to her brother the Emperor to complain. He answered in the following arrogant lines which she was silly enough to send to her father-in-law: “I cannot conceive what the Grand Duke was thinking of when he made so shameful and odious an alliance, ridiculed by all; it is thought the good Duke must be out of his mind. I beg Your Highness not to permit this impudent woman to be exalted, and to hold no communication

with her; for if in this matter you fail to show the greatness of Your soul and Your magnanimity, everyone will be angered.”

The reply given by Cosimo de' Medici was far more dignified: “As to my having taken a wife, H.I.H. remarks that perhaps I had taken leave of my senses.... One might have rather said I was off my head when I ceded the reins of government to the Prince (Francesco, his eldest son, husband of the Arch-Duchess) with seven hundred thousand ducats of income. I did it with pleasure and I have no intention to cancel my act, although it depends on my own will and pleasure, because I had to do with men; but with regard to my marriage, wherein I had to do with God, one cannot speak thus. I am not the first Prince who has taken a vassal to wife, and shall probably not be the last; my wife is of gentle birth, and is to be respected as such. I do not seek for quarrels, but I shall not avoid them if they are forced upon me by my own family. When I make up my mind to do a thing, I do it, regardless of the consequences, trusting in God and my own right hand.”

In October 1608 Castello was the scene of much rejoicing for the reception of Maria Maddalena of Austria, who passed some days there before her solemn entry into Florence as the bride of Cosimo, eldest son of Ferdinando I. The pomp and magnificence then displayed surpassed anything yet seen; Ferdinando himself crowned his daughter-in-law at the gate of the town, and then the Arch-Duchess, mounting a splendid white palfrey, rode to the cathedral door amidst the acclamations of the crowd. Christine of Lorraine, widow of Ferdinando I, whose favourite villa Castello was, died there in December 1636 after two days' illness; and twenty-seven years afterwards her grandson Giancarlo, brother of the Grand Duke Ferdinando II, who was first a soldier in the service of the King of Spain and then a Cardinal, closed his unworthy life in the same villa. Described as “a man of little worth and of evil morals,” he yet has a claim to the gratitude of posterity as the builder of the charming theatre of the Pergola.

The gardens of both Petraja and Castello have been celebrated by many writers in poetry and prose. Among others Redi, the jovial doctor, sings the praises of the vineyards in his *Bacco in Toscana*, and takes the opportunity to pay a compliment to that poor creature Cosimo III, his patron.

“But lauded  
Applauded,  
With laurels rewarded,  
Be the hero who first in the vineyards divine  
Of Petraja and Castello  
Planted first the Moscadello.”<sup>[46]</sup>



Jacopo Cortesi, the Jesuit painter, better known as *Il Borgognone*, lived as the guest of Cosimo III for some months at Castello, and painted his own portrait there for the Uffizzi gallery in the habit of his Order. Vast sums were spent by Pietro Leopoldo, the beloved Grand Duke of Tuscany who became Emperor of Austria, on beautifying the gardens of the two villas, and they still bear some faint traces of his love for rare trees and shrubs.

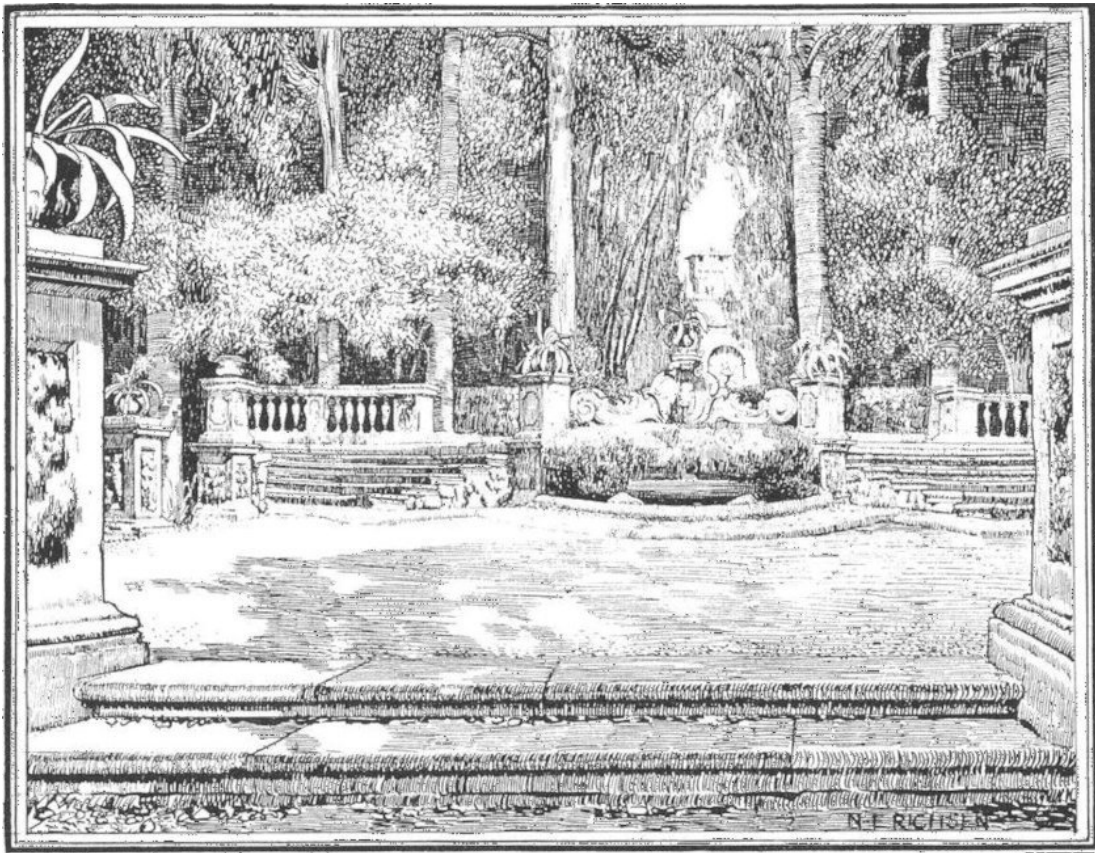
**FOOTNOTES:**

[45] *Caterina Sforza*. By Pier Desiderio Pasolini. Vol. II. p. 321. Firenze, 1893.

[46] *Bacchus in Tuscany*. A dithyrambic poem, from the Italian of Francesco Redi, with notes original and select. By Leigh Hunt. London, 1828.



**VILLA CORSINI AT CASTELLO.**



## VILLA CORSINI AT CASTELLO

THIS villa first belonged to the Strozzi, who sold it to the Rinieri in 1460, when it was called "La Lepre dei Rinieri." About a century later it was bought by Francesco di Jacopo Sangalietti, whose estates were confiscated by the Medici, and sold to Pagolo Donati in 1597. It again changed hands and at last became the property of Cosimo de' Medici, son of the Grand Duke Ferdinando I, but finding it useless to have three villas—Petraja, Castello and Rinieri—so close together, he sold the last in 1650 to Piero Cervieri, who died without heirs and left all he possessed to the Jesuits. On the suppression of their Order the villa was bought by the Lanfredini, from whom it passed into the possession of the great house of Corsini, who enlarged and altered it, probably from the designs of Antonio Ferri, the same architect who built the large saloon, the fine staircase and the façade of the Corsini palace on the Lung' Arno in Florence.

Villa Corsini stands at the foot of the royal villa La Petraja. It is a rather stately baroque edifice, with a large square courtyard in the centre; and though but little raised above the plain, the view of Florence from the south side of the garden is lovely. On the north is a typical Italian pleasaunce, where narrow paths meander under the deep shade of tall ilexes, oaks and fir trees; grey stone columns and balustrades surround small squares and circles of ground, as though it had been once parcelled out among the children of the house. A fountain represents a prancing seahorse who is unceasingly occupied in keeping a huge sarcophagus, entirely overgrown with maiden-hair fern, always brimful of water. Standing by the splashing fountain we get a beautiful glimpse of Petraja through the trees, standing high up on the hill behind. Prince Corsini told me the fine ilexes at Narford Hall were raised from acorns off these trees; the much-travelled Sir Andrew Fountaine, who resided for some time in Florence, and probably bought a good deal of his celebrated collection of Italian pottery from the Grand Duke Cosimo III,<sup>[47]</sup> was an intimate friend of Prince Corsini who sent a bagful of acorns to Narford. A present feature of the garden of the Villa Corsini is a shady avenue of ilexes which leads to the stable and was planted only fifty years ago.

To English people the villa is interesting as it was inhabited by Sir Robert Dudley, to whom it was lent by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Robert Dudley (born 1573) was the son of the Earl of Leicester by his second wife Douglas Howard, widow of Lord Sheffield; but the marriage, for various private and political reasons, was secretly solemnised and never acknowledged by Leicester, who a few years later married Lettice, widow of the Earl of Essex. Leicester calls Robert Dudley “my base son” in his will, yet he left him “the lordships of Denbighe and Chirke, etc., the castle of Kenilworth with all the Parkes, Chases and Lands after the death of my dear brother Ambrose the Earl of Warwick,” and other estates too numerous to mention here.

The Earl of Leicester died in 1588, and his brother a year later, when Robert Dudley succeeded to Kenilworth. In 1591 he was affianced to Frances Vavasour, maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, who however forbade the celebration of the marriage on account of Dudley’s youth.

Dudley was educated at Christ Church, Oxford; where, under the date 7th May 1588, he was entered as *Comitis Filius*. But his love of travel and

adventure drove him to study navigation; he built some warships, engaged the best pilots he could find and started for the West Indies. After conquering the Island of Trinidad he discovered Guiana (of which he made a map published in his work, *L'Arcano del Mare*), and after taking several galleons from the enemy returned to England with much booty. Entering the navy, he, in the absence of his uncle the Earl of Nottingham, took command of the English fleet in 1596; the following year he led the van-guard in the battle of Cadiz; then he besieged Faro in Algarve in Portugal; and when Calais was taken by Mendoza, he commanded the English ships sent to the rescue.

In a letter to the Rev. Mr Hakluyt, a well-known writer on sea-voyages and travels in the time of Elizabeth and James I, Dudley gives a curious account of his first voyage at the age of twenty-one. "... I weighed ancker from Southampton road the 6th of November 1594. Upon this day my selfe in the 'Beare,' a ship of 200 tunnes, as Admirall; and Captaine Munck in the 'Beare's Whelpe,' Vice-Admirall; with two small pinnesses, called the 'Frisking' and the 'Earwig,' I passed through the Needles, and within two dayes after bare in with Plimmouth. But I was enforced to returne backe. Having parted company with my Vice-Admirall, I went wandering alone on my voyage, sailing along the coast of Spaine, within view of Cape Finisterre and Cape St Vincent, the north and south capes of Spaine. In which space, having many chases, I could meet with none but my countreyemen or countrey's friends. Leaving these Spanish shores, I directed my course, the 14th December, towards the Isles of the Canaries. Here I lingered twelve dayes for two reasons; the one, in hope to meete my Vice-Admirall; the other, to get some vessel to remove my pestered men into, who being 140 almost in a ship of 200 tunnes, there grew many sicke. I tooke two very fine caravels under the calmes of Tenerif and Palma, which both refreshed and amended my company, and made me a fleet of three sailes.... Thus cheered as a desolate traveller, with the company of my small and newe erected Fleete, I continued my purpose for the West Indies.

"Riding under this White Cape two daies, and walking on shore to view the countrey, I found it a waste, desolate, barren and sandie place, the sand running in drifts like snow, and very stony; for so is all the countrey sand upon stone (like Arabia Deserta and Petrea), and full of blacke venemous lizards, with some wild beasts and people which be tawny Moores, so

wilde, as they would but call to my caravels from the shore who road very neare it. I now caused my master Abraham Kendall to shape his course directly for the Isle of Trinidad in the West Indies; which after twenty-two dayes we descried, and the 1st Feb. came to anker under a point thereof, called Curiapan, in a bay which was very full of pelicans, and I called it Pelican Bay. About three leagues to the eastward of this place we found a mine of Mercazites, which glister like golde (but all is not golde that glistereth), for so we found the same nothing worth, though the Indians did assure us it was Calvori, which signifieth golde with them. These Indians are a fine shaped and a gentle people, all naked and painted red, their commanders wearing crowns of feathers. These people did often resort unto my ship, and brought us hennes, hogs, plantans, potatos, pines, tobacco, and many other pretie commodities, which they exchanged with us for hatchets, knives, hookes, belles and glasse buttons. The countrey is fertile, and ful of fruits, strange beasts and foules, whereof munkies, babions and parats were in great abundance.

“Right against the northernmost part of Trinidad, the maine was called the high land of Paria, the rest a very lowe land. Morucca I learned to be ful of a greenestone called Taracao, which is good for the stone. Caribes I learned to be man-eiters or canibals and great enemies to the Islanders of Trinidad. In the high land of Paria I was informed by divers of these Indians, that there was some Perota, which with them is silver, and great store of most excellent cane tobacco.... I was told of a rich nation, that sprinkled their bodies with the powder of golde, and seemed to be guilt, and that farre beyond them was a great towne called El Dorado, with many other things.... And after carefully doubling the shouldes of Abrejos, I now caused the Master (hearing by a pilote that the Spanish Fleete ment to put out of Havana) to beare for the Meridian of the yle of Bermuda, hoping there to finde the Fleete. The Fleete I found not, but foule weather enough to scatter many Fleetes which companies left me not, till I came to the yles of Flores and Cuervo; whither I made the more haste, hoping to meete some greate Fleete of Her Majestie my Sovereigne, as I had intelligence, and to give them advise of this rich Spanish Fleete; but findinge none, and my victuals almost spent, I directed my course for England.”

Here he fell in love with, and married, a sister of Thomas Cavendish, who died without children in 1596. Soon afterwards he married Alice,

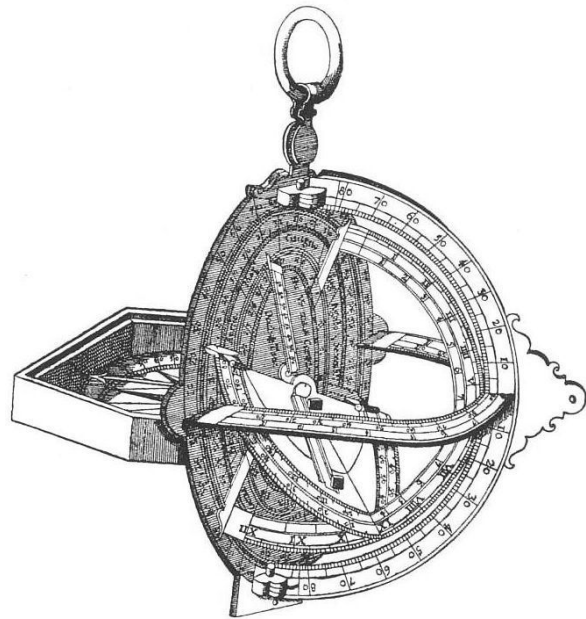
daughter of Sir Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, by whom he had four daughters. His one desire after coming into possession of Kenilworth was to clear his own and his mother's reputation and honour, and for this purpose he instituted proceedings at law to prove his legitimacy. At first in the Ecclesiastical Court he had hopes of success, but the influence of the Essexes and Sydneys proved too strong; the case was transferred to the Star Chamber, which ordered that all "depositions should be sealed up and no copies taken," and only admitted the evidence of Lady Essex.

Irritated by such injustice Dudley left England, and with him went his beautiful young cousin Elisabeth, eldest daughter of Sir Robert Southwell. At Lyons they entered the Roman Catholic Church, obtained the Pope's dispensation from the laws of consanguinity, and were married, Lady Alice Dudley having in vain offered to join him with their four girls and to become a Catholic.

From Lyons Sir Robert and his new wife went to Florence and Dudley wrote to the Grand Duke asking for his protection and offering his services. In quaint French he set forth his noble birth and high lineage, claimed by virtue of descent to be Duke of Northumberland, Earl of Warwick, and Earl of Leicester, and declared himself second to none in the science of navigation and the art of ship-building; he also promised to make the Grand Duke absolute master in the seas of the Levant in spite of all Spanish, infidel and other galleys.

Ferdinando II, made inquiries of Lotti, his Minister in London, about the "Conte di Varuich" before taking him into his service. After expatiating upon the "exquisite stature, fair beard and noble appearance" of Sir Robert Dudley, Lotti added that King James was very angry at his marriage and his assumption of the title of Earl of Warwick, and then writes in cipher, "the chief reason is that His Majesty does not want Catholic subjects, especially when they are brave and worthy men." This brought the matter to a conclusion, and Dudley immediately began building ships for the Grand Duke. He wrote proudly of the galleon *San Giovanni*, "she was a rare and strong sailer, of great repute, and the terror of the Turks in these seas"; and his designs seem to have attracted notice in England, as Lotti wrote to the Grand Duke in March 1607, "H. E. (Sir Thomas Challoner, tutor to Prince Henry) showed me the design of a ship made in Leghorn by the Earl of

Warwick, and he also showed me another which he said was more perfect than any.” This may account for James I, sending Dudley an order to return to England, promising him an earldom and the title of Earl of Warwick. But all offers that left his own and his mother’s name under a slur were refused by Dudley, who remained in Tuscany where, thanks to him, Leghorn became a great commercial port. He induced the Grand Duke to build fortifications, to declare it a free port and to allow an English factory to be set up. The draining of the marshes between Leghorn and Pisa was also suggested by him.



In the *Specola*, or Natural History Museum, in Florence, are three large manuscript volumes in Dudley’s writing on ship-building. The two first are in English, the third in Italian, and his orthography, to say the least, is in both languages peculiar. In the same museum is a curious instrument of his invention for finding the ebb and flow of the tides, of which I give, through the kindness of Mr Temple Leader, an engraving taken from his interesting *Life of Sir Robert Dudley*, from which most of my facts are taken.

In Florence, Dudley and his wife (mentioned by Lord Herbert of Cherbury as “the handsome *Mrs Sudel* whom he carried away with him out of England and is here taken for his wife”) were known as Earl and Countess of Warwick, until the Emperor Ferdinand II, to please his sister the Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena, whose grand chamberlain Dudley was, created him Duke of Northumberland in 1620.

Dudley was undoubtedly a remarkable man. He had been carefully educated, was a brave and scientific seaman and well versed in military and naval architecture; he excelled in all knightly exercises and was cited for his courtly and polished manners. A man of letters and a good mathematician, he also busied himself with medicine and invented a powder known as

*Pulvis Comitum Warvicensis*, much praised by Mario Cornacchini, professor of medicine at Pisa, who declares that “clearing the Italian seas of barbarous and evil pirates was not a greater benefit to mankind than his fighting and exterminating the evil humours which molest humanity and cause disease.”

Of Dudley’s twelve children the eldest, Maria, married the Prince of Piombino; Maria Maddalena became the wife of Malaspina Marchese d’Olivola, High Steward to Queen Christina of Sweden; and Teresa married the Duke della Cornia. Robert, the eldest son, died a few days before he attained his majority, and his mother was so affected by his loss that she followed him to the grave within a few weeks, to the intense grief of her husband. The second son, Charles, was an unmannerly scapegrace who gave his father infinite trouble. He married a Frenchwoman, Marie Madeleine, daughter of Charles Antoine Gouffier, Marquis de Braseux and Seigneur de Crevecœur. His daughter was the beautiful, witty and wild Christina Dudley married to the Marchese Paleotti of Bologna, whose adventurous and romantic life has been so well described by Signor Corrado Ricci,<sup>[48]</sup> and whose daughter Adelaide, after various adventures, turned Protestant, married the Duke of Shrewsbury, became a leader of fashion in London and Lady-in-Waiting to the Princess of Wales; her son Ferdinand, after giving endless annoyance to the Shrewsburys, ended his ill-spent life on the gallows. He was hung at Tyburn on March 28th, 1718, for the murder of his Italian servant, and curiously enough the Tuscan Minister present at his execution was Don Neri Corsini, whose family now own the villa where Sir Robert Dudley, Duke of Northumberland and Earl of Warwick, lived for so many years and died in Sept. 1649.

Since 1230, when the Corsini came from Poggibonsi, their name fills many a page of the history of Florence as Priors and Gonfaloniers of the city. Andrea, the beloved and revered bishop of Fiesole, left such a reputation for goodness and sanctity that he was beatified in 1440 and canonised by Urban VIII, in 1629. He restored the cathedral of his diocese and the façade we now see was built by him. His brother Neri succeeded him as bishop of Fiesole, while another brother, Matteo, went to England, where his uncle was Master of the Mint, and made a large fortune in trade. He is known as the author of interesting family records and of the *Rosaia della Vita*, often quoted in the dictionary of the Crusca as a model of pure and elegant Italian. Tommaso di Duccio, their uncle, a learned jurist and a

great statesman, was one of the chief citizens of Florence in the fourteenth century, and to his prudent counsels and wise administration the Republic owed much of her prosperity and power. After long negotiations he induced the Visconti to make peace with Florence, and when this was at length signed in 1353 he withdrew from public life, entered the Order of the *Gaudenti* (instituted for the protection of widows and orphans) and jointly with the Rossi and Manieri erected a monastery outside the Porta Romana. For himself he built a small house hard by the monastery and passed the rest of his days almost as a hermit, occupied in prayer and good works. Notwithstanding the large amount given in charity he left a very considerable fortune to his sons; the eldest, Amerigo, was bishop of Florence at the time of the Council of Constance, which put an end to the schism of the Church and elected Martino V, Pope. In order to conciliate the citizens Martino raised Florence to the rank of an archbishopric and bestowed the privilege of wearing the crimson robes of a cardinal on her archbishop.

Luca Corsini was the popular Prior of Florence who shut the door of the Palazzo della Signoria in the face of Piero de' Medici after his cession of Pisa, Leghorn, Pietrasanta and Sarzana to Charles VIII, of France. As ardent a republican and as great an enemy of the Medici as he was a friend of Savonarola, it is related that in 1498 the grave magistrate was seen throwing stones and fighting in the streets in defence of Fra Girolamo like any young lad. A daughter of the house of Corsini, Marietta, married the celebrated Niccolò Macchiavelli and is said to be depicted in his novel *Belfegor*; this may be—but he mentions her in his will with affection and esteem. Bertholdo Corsini, who was elected a Prior of Florence in 1531 after the fall of the Republic, must have been a weak man. He paid court to Duke Alessandro de' Medici, who made him custodian of the fortress of San Giovan Battista; but when Alessandro was murdered by his cousin Lorenzino, Corsini repented and offered to give up the arms and ammunition in the fortress to the citizens, who fearing a snare refused to listen to him. When Cosimo II, entered the city, Bertholdo fled and joined the standard of Piero Strozzi. He escaped with his life from the battle of Montemurlo and after fighting in Piedmont and in France, returned to Italy when the Siennese revolted and was appointed custodian of the castle of Sienna. In the battle of Orbetello Bertholdo was taken prisoner by the

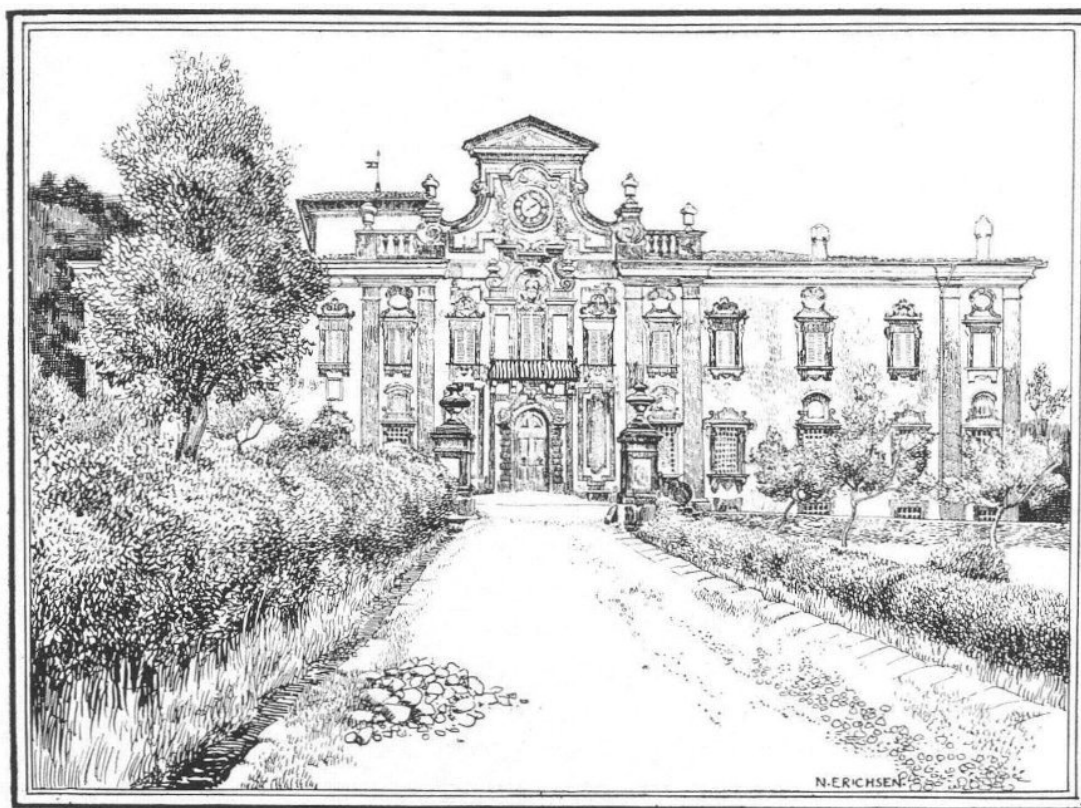
Spaniards, sold to Cosimo for 600 scudi, and beheaded on the 2nd March 1555 in the Piazza S. Apollinari.

Not many years passed before the Corsini and the Medici became partners in a great banking firm in Rome, chiefly managed by Filippo Corsini who had been created Marchese of Sismano, Casigliano and Civitella by the Grand Duke Ferdinando II. Filippo was an intimate friend of Pope Urban VIII, with whom he was connected by his marriage with Maria Macchiavelli, a considerable heiress. Their eldest son Bartolomeo, brought up at the Tuscan court, was after the death of Ferdinando made Master of the Household to his widow Vittoria della Rovere. The second son Neri was a cardinal, and his moderation, prudence and good sense was of infinite service to the Holy See on two different occasions—when Avignon and when Ferrara revolted against the priestly rule. Filippo their nephew, was the companion and friend of Cosimo, son of the Grand Duke Ferdinando II, and the interesting account, now in the Laurentian Library, of the Prince's visits to Oxford, Cambridge and many towns and country houses in England, was written by him and illustrated by P. M. Baldi. A member of most of the Academies of that day, he contributed largely to the cost of publishing the fourth edition of the *Della Crusca* dictionary. Lorenzo, his younger brother, became a cardinal in 1706 and twenty-four years later, when seventy-eight years of age and nearly blind, was elected Pope. It is related that when hailed as Clemente XII, he knelt down and begged the Consistory to allow an old blind man to die in peace; but they insisted, and Lorenzo Corsini unwillingly accepted. His first care was to put the finances in order and to dismiss Cardinal Coscia, the venal favourite of his predecessor Benedict XIII. He reformed the administration of justice, and ordered an emission of new coinage to replace the debased currency of former Popes. The magnificent gallery of the Campidoglio was founded by him; he built the fountain of Trevi, several churches, the façades of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini and of San Giovanni in Laterano, and restored the Vatican. But much of this was done with money derived from the abominable *Giuoco del Lotto*—"estermínio e ruina de' popoli," as the Venetian Ambassador Mocenigo calls it—which had been prohibited by Benedict XIII, and was restored by Clemente under the specious pretext that his subjects would spend their money in gambling outside the papal dominions if they were debarred from gambling at home. On his accession to the Papacy he summoned his two nephews, Bartolomeo and Neri, to

Rome. The former was created Prince of Sismano, Duke of Casigliano and Captain-General of the Papal Guards. Tempted by Charles III, who held out hopes that Spain would renounce her claims on Parma and Tuscany in his favour if he aided her to secure the kingdom of Naples, he identified himself entirely with the Spanish party, only to find his ambitious plans absolutely ignored by the Congress of Vienna. As some consolation he was appointed Viceroy of Sicily in 1737 and a Grandee of Spain two years later. Neri was made a cardinal and practically ruled the Papal States not only under his uncle, who trusted him implicitly, but under three successive Popes. He built the great Corsini palace at Rome and formed magnificent collections of pictures, engravings, manuscripts and books. Intensely hostile to the Jesuits, he used all his influence to obtain the suppression of the Order, but died in 1770 before the promulgation of the decree against them.

Pope Clemente would have left a greater name had he abstained from showering gifts and honours on members of his own family. One great-great-nephew he made a Knight of Malta while still in swaddling clothes and Prior of Pisa at the age of four, in spite of the indignant protests of the Grand Master of the Order; another was domestic prelate and Apostolic protonotary almost before he could read and a cardinal at twenty-four; while Bartolomeo, their brother, became Captain-General of the Papal Guard. His son Tommaso began life as Chamberlain to the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, but when Florence was occupied by the troops of the French Republic and "death to the aristocrats" was the popular cry, he fled to Sicily, and when he returned he found Tuscany transformed into the Kingdom of Etruria. Queen Maria Louisa made Tommaso Corsini master of her household and sent him to Bologna to receive Napoleon I, on whom he made so favourable an impression that when Tuscany was incorporated with the Empire he summoned him to Paris, made him a Senator, a Count of the Empire and a Chamberlain, in which capacity he escorted the Arch Duchess Marie Louise to France. On the fall of the Emperor Corsini returned to Italy, and was Senator of Rome during the exciting days of 1848, when the first dawn of Italian Unity was fostered for a time by Pio IX. After the Pope abandoned the popular party Corsini in vain attempted to stem the tide of republicanism; he had to fly for his life and only returned to Rome after the Papal Government had been re-established by French troops. He was a man of considerable culture and added largely to the Corsini galleries at Florence and Rome. His brother Neri was deservedly

beloved in Tuscany, for he advocated her independence at the Congress of Vienna, and obtained the restitution of the art treasures which had been carried off to Paris. As Prime Minister he devoted himself to the amelioration of the condition of the people, made new roads, gave a fresh impulse to the great work of the bonification of the Val di Chiana, and, a strong free-trader, successfully withstood his retrograde colleagues who, during a period of scarcity, desired to impose a heavy tax on corn. Imbued, like all his forebears, with a great dislike and distrust of the Jesuits he resolutely set his face against their re-admittance into the country. Don Tommaso, the present representative of the princely house of Corsini, by his kindly hospitality, learning and charm of manner has endeared himself to all his fellow-citizens and worthily continues the liberal traditions of his family.



### FOOTNOTES:

[47] See *Maiolica*. By C. Drury E. Fortnum. P. 76. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1896.

[48] *Una illustre Avventuriera*. Corrado Ricci. Fratelli Treves. Milano.



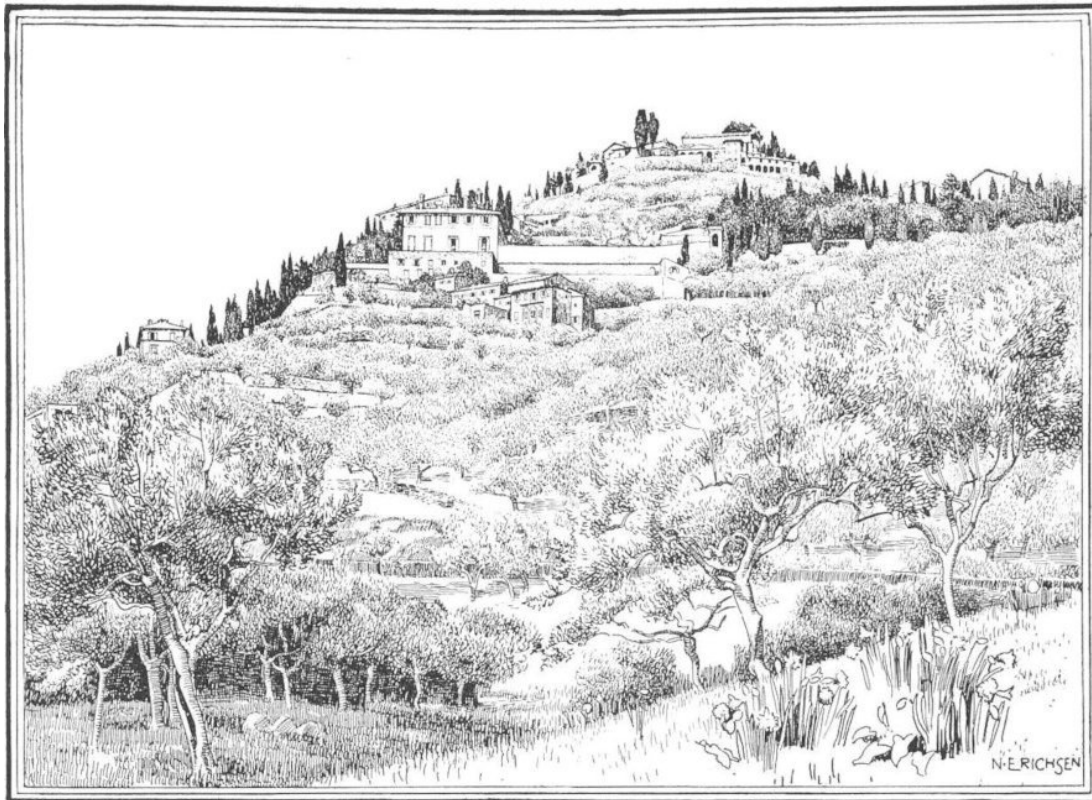
**CATERINA SFORZA,**  
By NICCOLÒ FIORENTINO.  
*(Villa di Castello).*



**SAVONAROLA,**  
By FRA LUCA, OR FRA AMBROGIO  
DELLA ROBBIA.  
*(Villa di Cafaggi).*



**PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA,**  
By NICCOLÒ FIORENTINO.  
*(Villa Medici a Fiesole).*



## VILLA MEDICI A FIESOLE

“NOT more than two miles distant from Florence,” writes old Varchi, “shines Fiesole, once a city, now a fruitful hill; yet is she still a city.... I say still a city, because she always had and still has, her bishop.... Of a truth the position on this charming hill is so pleasant and delightful that the fable about its having been built by Atlantus under a constellation which bestows peace of mind, repose of body and gaiety of heart seems to be true.” Another tradition says it was founded by Comero Gallo, son of Japhet, in the tenth year of the Assyrian empire; he surrounded it with great walls, built high towers and erected two castles, one to the east the other to the west, for defence; others again attribute it to Jason, brother of Dardanus; while some say Hercules of Egypt laid the first stone. Hesiod affirms that Fiesole was one of the nymphs from whom sprang the constellation of the Pleiads which forms a half moon, still the emblem of the city; “Faesulas ex

una Pleaidum ferunt esse dictum,” says also Volterrano. But Dante considers all these to be old women’s tales:

“Another with her maidens, drawing off  
The tresses from the distaff, lectured them  
Old tales of Troy, and Fiesole, and Rome.”<sup>[49]</sup>

Borghini in his history of Fiesole cautiously remarks: “From the divers opinions of so many and such various authors I can only conclude that the city is so ancient that her history can only be guessed at, not known or discovered; and as she is beyond all memory so is she beyond all other cities in renown. The more mysterious her origin, the more attractive she is.”

Vasari tells us that Michelozzo Michelozzi built for Giovanni, son of Cosimo de’ Medici, a “magnificent and noble palace at Fiesole; the foundations of the lower part on the steep slope of the hill cost an enormous sum, but it was not thrown away, as there he made vaults, cellars, stables, places for the making of wine and oil, and other good and commodious habitations; and above them, besides the bed-chambers, drawing-rooms and other apartments, he arranged rooms for containing books and for music: in short Michelozzo showed in this edifice how valiant an architect he was, for it was so well built that although high up on that hill, no crack has ever started.”

Here, beneath the Etruscan city of Fiesole, with all Florence in the valley far below, Lorenzo the Magnificent passed his happiest hours in the company of Landino, Scala, Ficino, Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola and other literary friends, at one moment discussing Plato, at another writing sonnets and songs in idiomatic Tuscan. A true Florentine in his love of the country, his poetry abounds in descriptions of woods and rivers, of the song of birds and the joys of the chase. The following sonnet on the violet will show how well he merited the praise bestowed on his poetry by his contemporaries.

“Not from bright cultured gardens, where sweet airs  
Steal softly round the rose’s terraced home,

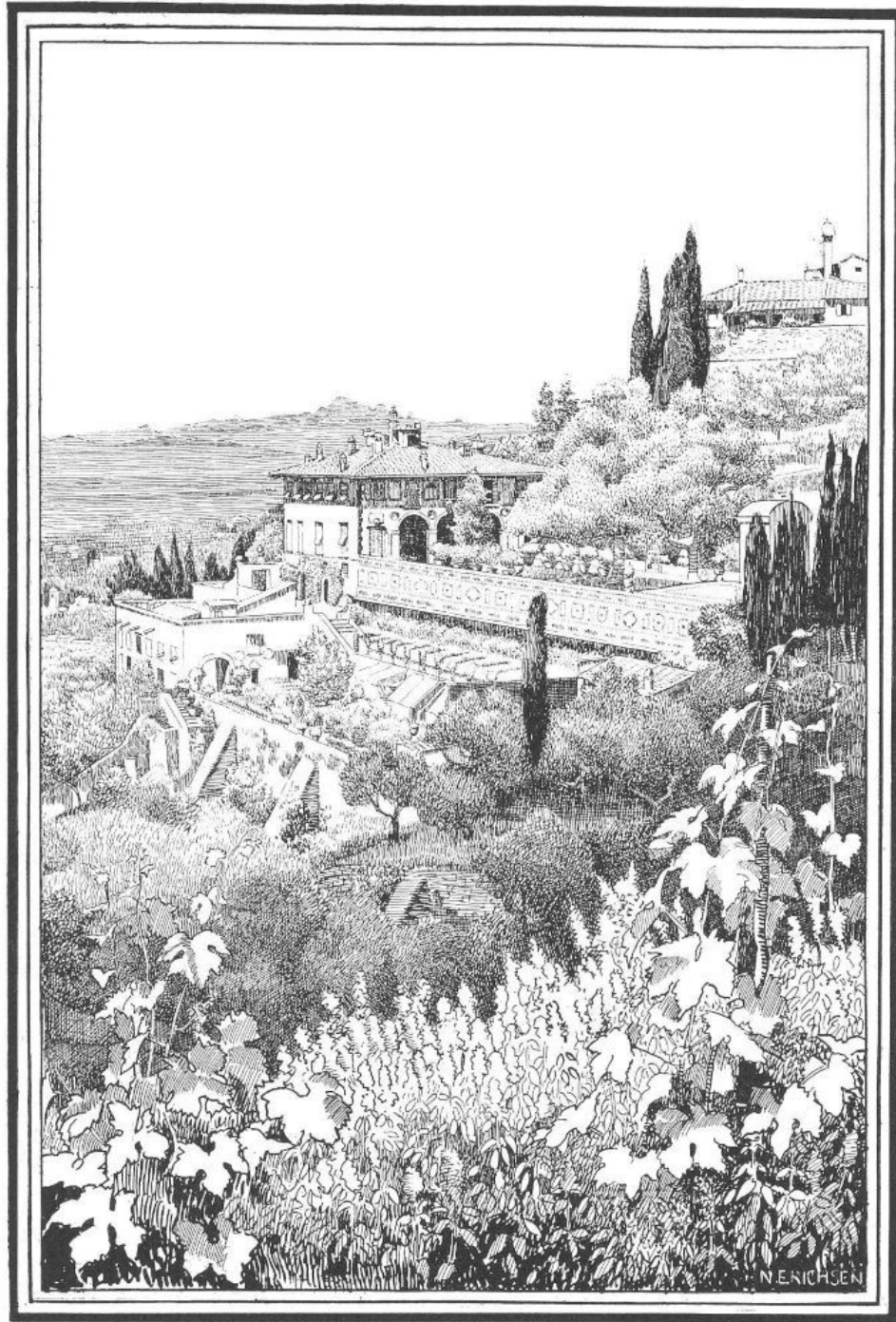
Into thy white hand Lady have we come;  
Deep in dark dingles are our wild-wood lairs.  
Here once came Venus racked with aching cares,  
Seeking Adonis through our leafy gloam:  
Hither and thither vainly doth she roam,  
Till her bare foot a felon bramble tears.  
To catch the sacred blood that from above  
Dripped off the leaves, our small white flowers we spread:  
Whence came that purple hue which now is ours.  
Not summer airs, nor rills from far springs led  
Have nursed our beauty; but by tears of love  
Our roots were watered; love-sighs fanned our flowers.”<sup>[50]</sup>

The villa at Fiesole was nigh being the scene of a double murder, when, as Roscoe writes, “a pope, a cardinal, an archbishop, and several other ecclesiastics associated themselves with a band of ruffians to destroy two men who were an honour to their age and country; and purposed to perpetrate their crime at a season of hospitality...” The two men were Lorenzo the Magnificent and his brother Giuliano, one of the best of the Medici; the conspirators were Sixtus IV, and his nephew Girolamo Riario, Francesco de’ Pazzi, whom jealousy of the Medici had led to settle at Rome, his uncle Jacopo de’ Pazzi, a gambler and a libertine, and all his ten nephews save two; Guglielmo, married to Lorenzo’s sister Bianca before their father’s death, and Renato, a man of letters. The Pope’s chief agent was the archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, a man of notoriously bad character, whose preferment to the see of Pisa Lorenzo had strenuously opposed, seconded by his brother Jacopo Salviati and by the son of Poggio Bracciolini the great scholar. Jacopo Poggio was of some repute in the world of letters and dedicated a commentary on Petrarch’s *Trionfo della Fama* to Lorenzo. “I am aware,” he writes, “that what little I know is due to the help and valiant encouragement given to me in my youth by Cosimo thy grandfather.... I consider myself obliged and constrained out of gratitude to dedicate unto thee, his true and worthy heir, whatever fruit is born of his grave and weighty admonitions and exhortations; as a recognition that whatever virtues I possess derive from thy house.” The underlings were Bernardo Bandini, a man of ill-fame, Giovan Battista Montesicco, a

condottiere engaged in the service of the Pope, Antonio Maffei, a priest from Volterra and Stefano da Bagnone, an apostolic scribe.

Mecatti gives a vivid account of the attempted murder of Lorenzo, who seems to have behaved with admirable coolness, in his *Storia Chronologica di Firenze*. “When Cesare Petrucci was Gonfalonier of Florence in 1478, the Pazzi, brothers-in-law of the Medici, for Guglielmo had a sister of Lorenzo and Giuliano to wife, proposed, together with the Salviati, to murder Lorenzo and Giuliano; they knew that the Pope would give them a free hand in this undertaking because Francesco Pazzi, treasurer to the Pope, wrote that on account of the aid given to Vitelli the Pontiff was exceeding wroth with him, and also that the King of Naples approved of it. On communicating this their idea to Salviati, archbishop of Pisa, he immediately joined them, accounting himself offended by Cosimo for having outlawed Jacopo Salviati his relation, and by Lorenzo for not having been able to take possession of his archbishopric; moreover he promised to bring with him many of his relations and friends. Matters being thus arranged they thought of how to execute their design. Now there was in Florence at the Loggia de’ Pazzi<sup>[51]</sup> a nephew of Count Girolamo Riario lately created a cardinal, who was studying at Pisa and considered as an archbishop; so they thought their design might be effected when they went to dine at the villa of Lorenzo at Fiesole. But this came to nought because Giuliano did not come; then they determined to do the deed in the Medici house, for they made sure that when the archbishop came to Florence to attend High Mass Lorenzo, according to his custom, would invite him to dinner. Thus was it therefore settled, and on the 26th April, the day fixed for the function, the cardinal went with a large following to the house of Lorenzo, who received him with every mark of extreme benevolence and courtesy and invited him and all his company to dinner. But on the conspirators hearing that Giuliano would not be present, they determined to do that in church which they had thought to accomplish at table, and settled among themselves that the signal was to be the elevation of the Body of Christ. Therefore when all had gone into the cathedral and the mass had begun, the archbishop of Pisa went with thirty of his companions to the Palace of the Signoria to kill the Gonfaloniere and take possession of the Palace. But on entering to speak with the Gonfaloniere his confusion was such that Petrucci, calling his people ordered them to arm and take prisoner the archbishop, his brother, his nephew Jacopo del Poggio, secretary of the

cardinal Riario and the five brothers Perugini with the rest of their company. A short while after securing them a great noise was heard in the street, and Jacopo de' Pazzi appeared on horseback, galloping hither and thither and shouting aloud Liberty, Liberty. Then the Priors and their familiars threw several stones from the windows: and meanwhile came the news that in Santa Maria del Fiore at the elevation of the Host Giuliano de' Medici had been murdered, and Lorenzo wounded in the neck by Stefano Bagnone, rector of Montemurlo and chancellor of Jacopo de' Pazzi, and Antonio Maffei of Volterra an apostolic scribe: that Francesco Nori had fallen by his side, and that Lorenzo, all streaming with blood, had been carried to his own house. When the Gonfaloniere heard this he commanded cords to be put round the necks of the archbishop, of his brother, of his nephew and of Jacopo del Poggio, and that they should be thrown out of the windows, the cords being attached to the columns; the other wounded he caused to be either driven out of the doors on to the Piazza or thrown also out of the windows. Then the people rose in fury, and rushing to the house of the Pazzi found Francesco in bed, he having wounded himself on the leg when he struck Giuliano, and naked as he was they took him to the Palace and hung him at once by the side of the archbishop. They would have done yet more ferocious things, but that on going to the Medici house Lorenzo showed himself, and begged them to let vengeance be taken by the magistrate. In a short time Giovanni and Galeotto de' Pazzi Riario himself and his brother were brought in, when Lorenzo entreated of the Signoria that no proceedings should on any account be taken against the cardinal or his brother. Meanwhile from the Mugello arrived Renato, Giovanni and Niccolò de' Pazzi with many men from Montesicco as prisoners, and soon after Jacopo and Renato his nephew were hung, the latter somewhat unjustly, because, being a man of letters, when he heard of the plot he disapproved and hastened away to his villa in order not to be present.”<sup>[52]</sup>



It was after this attempt on his life that Lorenzo sent his wife and children and their tutor Angelo Poliziano to Cafaggiuolo for safety. Madonna Clarice had always disliked Poliziano and he was bored to death in such uncongenial company, so after a little while Clarice dismissed him, and was very irate when Lorenzo gave him hospitality in his Fiesole villa. A

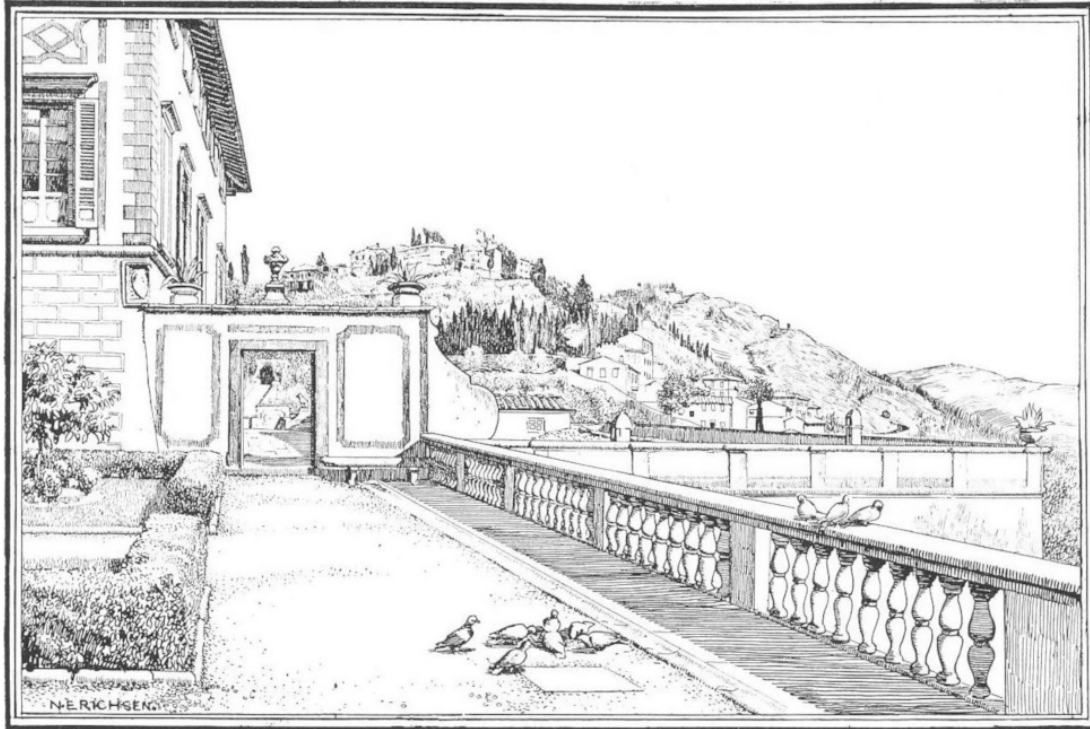
delightful description of the life led by the Platonists is to be found in a letter from Poliziano to Marsilio Ficino: “When your retreat at Careggi becomes too hot in the month of August, I hope you may think this our rustic dwelling of Fiesole not beneath your notice. We have plenty of water here and, as we are in a valley, but little sun, and are never without a cooling breeze. The villa itself, lying off the road and almost hidden in the midst of a wood, yet commands a view of the whole of Florence; and although in a densely populated district yet have I perfect solitude, such as is loved by him who leaves the town. I have a double attraction to offer you, for Pico often comes from his oak wood to see me, stealing in unexpectedly he drags me out of my den to share his supper, which as you know is frugal, yet well served and sufficient, and seasoned with most pleasant talk and jests. But come to me, you shall not sup worse and perchance you shall drink better; for the palm of good wine I am ready to contend even with Pico himself.”<sup>[53]</sup>

It was in this “perfect peace” that Poliziano wrote his famous Latin poem *Rusticus*, full of the same love of woods and fields that animated Lorenzo the Magnificent, to whom he affectionately refers towards the end of the poem:

“Such was my song, with idle thought  
In Fiesole’s cool grottoes wrought,  
Where from the Medici’s retreat  
On that famed mount, beneath my feet  
The Tuscan city I survey,  
And Arno winding far away.  
Here sometime at happy leisure  
Bounteous Lorenzo takes his pleasure  
His friends to entertain and feast,  
(Of Phœbus’ sons himself not least)  
Offering a haven safe and free  
To stormtossed ships of Poesy.”<sup>[54]</sup>

Little is heard of the Fiesole villa after the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent; eventually it was sold to the Marchese del Serre, who let it to that eccentric Englishwoman the Countess of Orford, about whom Sir

Horace Mann tells Walpole: “she has been detained by the purchase of her own Villa, at Fiesole, which, about a year ago, had been bought over her own head.... Cavaliere Mozzi, her messenger told me that she had commissioned him to desire that I would inform you that, if her age and ill-health permitted, she would hasten to England, though she does not see in what shape she could be useful to her son.... She set out yesterday for Naples, I believe to bring away all her furniture, in order to fix in Tuscany.... She has bought the villa at Fiesole.” Later in the same year he mentions her again as riding for some hours every morning and maintaining “a vivacity not common at her age.” In Jan. 1781, Mann informs Walpole: “Lady Orford died at Pisa on the 13th.... She has left everything she was possessed of to Mozzi. The whole inheritance will be very considerable, reckoning only what she had here and at Naples.” Three years later he notes, “Lady Orford’s old Cicisbeo, Cavaliere Mozzi married.” He sold the Medicean villa to the Buoninsegni family of Siena, from whom Mr Spence bought it in 1862, and for many years it was the meeting-place of all English visitors to Florence, attracted by the genial hospitality of its versatile owner. In 1897 it passed into the possession of Col. Harry Macalmont, whose mother now lives there. But little remains of the original design of Michelozzi as Mozzi unfortunately restored and altered the building considerably, turning it into a villa of the eighteenth century.



## FOOTNOTES:

[49] Dante. *Paradise*, Canto XV. Cary's translation.

[50] Translated by R. C. Trevelyan.

[51] A villa then belonging to the Pazzi family, bought afterwards by the Panciatichi and eventually by the great singer Catalani; near the village of La Lastra some two miles outside Porta San Gallo.

[52] *Storia Chronologica della Città di Firenze*. Dell' Abbate Guiseppe Maria Mecatti. Vol. II. p. 450. Napoli, 1755.

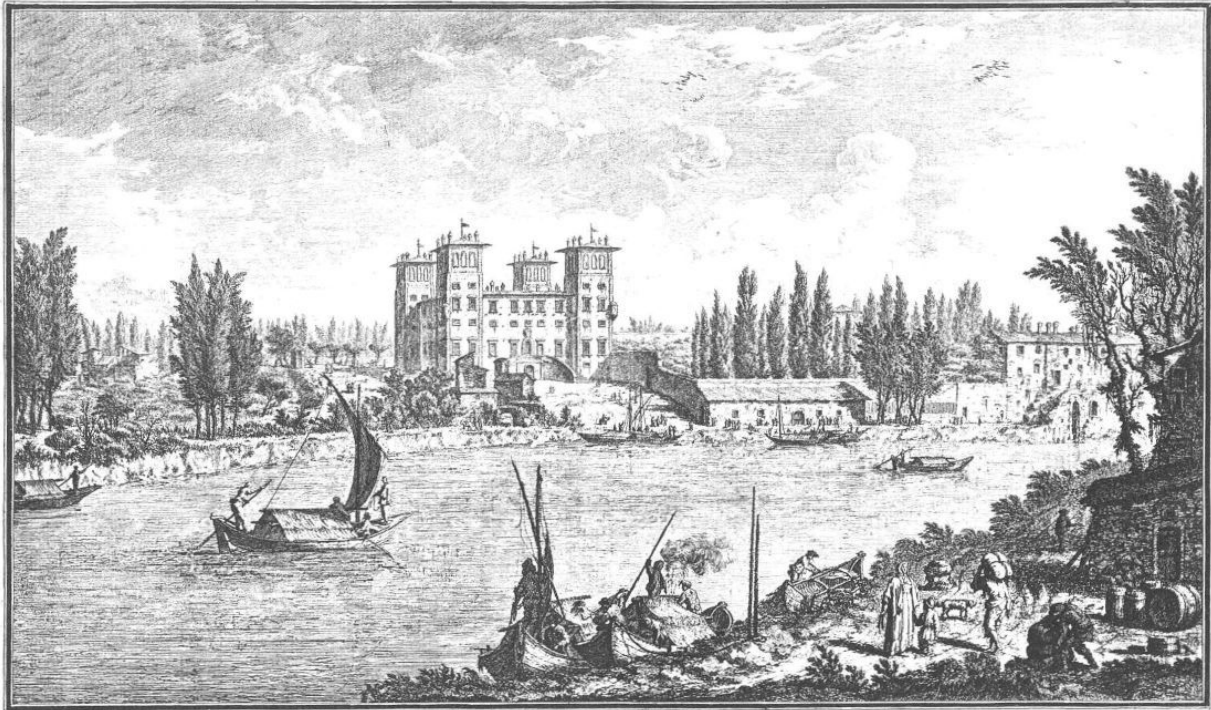
[53] Politian. *Ep.* Lib. X. Ep. 14.

[54] Translated by R. C. Trevelyan.



## VILLA DELL' AMBROGIANA

THE villa of the Ambrogiana, near the junction of the Pesa and the Arno, was built by the Grand Duke Ferdinando I, on the ruins of a more ancient villa belonging to the extinct family of the Ardinghelli. Going from Florence to Pisa by the railway none can fail to admire the villa—a huge cube with a tower at each corner—close to Montelupo. Near by is the small parish church of San Quirico, where, probably the preliminaries of the peace between the Republic of Florence, the Commune of Pistoja and the Counts of Capraja, were signed in 1204.



### **VILLA DELL' AMBROGIANA.**

The Ambrogiana was a favourite hunting-lodge of Ferdinando de' Medici, and the court spent a week or ten days there several times a year. In October 1592 the marriage of Donna Eleonora Orsini, his niece, to the Duke of Segni, son of Count of Federigo Sforza, was celebrated with great magnificence in the private chapel of the villa. After the ceremony a banquet was given in the large hall, when the Grand Ducal table was served by pages dressed in white satin, with Spanish cloaks of red velvet embroidered in gold with the Medici arms and collars of fine lace; four negroes in rich oriental costume handed them the dishes and the servants who waited on the other guests, seated at small tables round the hall, wore sky-blue liveries trimmed with gold lace and a short sword at their sides. In the evening the terrace was illuminated, fireworks were let off and a cantata was sung. For four days the court remained at the beautiful river-side villa and much game was shot in the well stocked preserves, and then the Duke and Duchess of Segni left for Florence and stayed at the Casino di San Marco, lent to them by Don Antonio de' Medici, until they returned to the Ambrogiana in December to assist the Grand Duke and Duchess to receive Cardinal de Retz.

In November 1594 Don Antonio returned from Hungary, where he had been fighting the Turks with the Tuscan contingent sent to the aid of the Emperor of Austria by Ferdinando, and joined the court at the Ambrogiana. His descriptions of battles and sieges amused the Princesses, and if he spoke as well as he wrote to his uncle during the campaign the young ladies were right to linger over their sweetmeats. In the summer of the following year Don Antonio left for Transylvania to join the Austrian army, and some of the best names of Florence appear on the roll of the killed and wounded in battle. When he returned in January he again went to the Ambrogiana to report himself to the Grand Duke who was shooting in the woods of Mount Vettolini.<sup>[55]</sup>

In October 1600 when Maria de' Medici left Florence for France as the bride of Henry IV, she rested awhile at the Ambrogiana on her way to Pisa. She must have had enough of triumphal arches, addresses, offerings of flowers and madrigals by the time she stepped on board the chief galley of the Knights of San Stefano, where a raised dais had been prepared on the poop for the future Queen of France, with a gilt chair having the fleur de lis of France and the balls of the Medici embroidered on the back in jacinths, topazes and other precious stones. Nine years later the Grand Duke Ferdinando died, and the court retired to the Ambrogiana for the first weeks of deep mourning.

Cosimo III, decorated the villa with numerous paintings of animals and flowers by the two Scacciati and by Bartolomeo Bimbi of Settignano, which no longer exist. He seldom went there, perhaps on account of its proximity to the high road, or else because of the wind "which blows there, and will blow to all eternity," as his doctor, the well-known poet Redi, wrote to a friend.

The last record of court festivities I can find in connection with the Ambrogiana is on April 1791, when Ferdinando III, second son of the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, who succeeded his brother as Emperor of Austria after governing Tuscany with wisdom and liberality for twenty-five years, met his bride Louisa Maria of Bourbon at the villa and escorted her to Florence.

Now the fine old villa has fallen from its high estate and is used as a prison. The forests where Ferdinando I, shot and hunted have long since

been destroyed, and the picturesque little hill-village of Capraja has forgotten that her name was really *Cerbaria*, from the thick and wild woods surrounding the hill whence she frowns defiance at her enemy Montelupo on the opposite side of the river. Cerbaria is first mentioned in a concession by the Emperor Otho III, to the Bishop of Pistoja in 998, and again in 1155 in a diploma of Frederic II. It must have been well nigh impregnable in those days, and the narrow, steep tortuous streets, which are only practicable to mules in single file, are most picturesque. Gradually the name was changed to Capraria, then to Capraja (Capra, a goat), and when the Republic of Florence built the castle of Montelupo on the heights opposite, the proverb arose: “Per distruggere questa Capra, non vi vuol altro che un Lupo.” (To destroy this Goat, a Wolf is necessary.)



The ruined church and castle of Montelupo on the opposite side of the river is well worth a visit, and the view thence is very fine. Down by the Arno the potteries still exist where those quaint plates with straddling men at arms and wonderful purple horses, and the *bocale* or wide-mouthed jugs inscribed with pithy sentences, were once made. These jugs were in such common use that they gave rise to the proverb: “E scritta nei bocale di

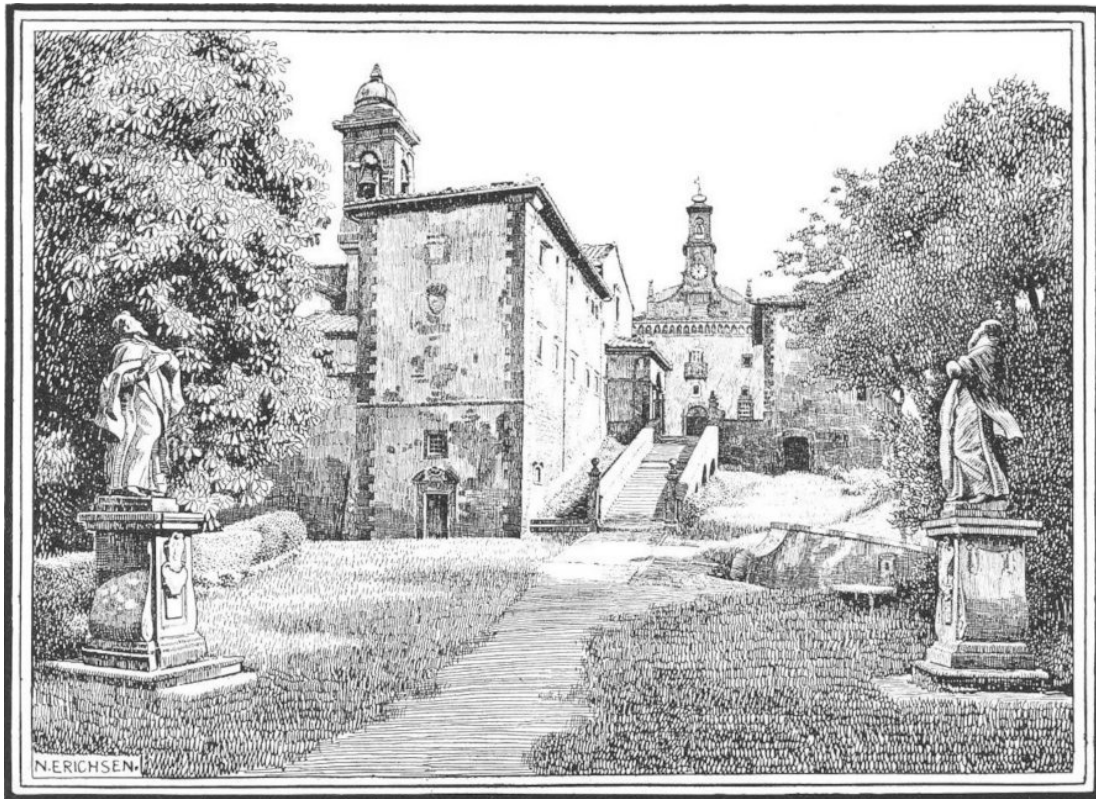
Montelupo” (It is written on the jugs of Montelupo), to indicate that a thing is of public notoriety.

**FOOTNOTES:**

[\[55\]](#) See *Don Antonio de' Medici al Casino di San Marco*, by Count P. F. Covoni. Firenze, 1892.



**VILLA di PRATOLINO.**



## VILLA DI PRATOLINO

THE villa of Pratolino, about six miles from Florence on the high road to Bologna, lies on the eastern slope of Mount Uccellatojo and owes its existence to the Grand Duke Francesco I, who bought the estate of Benedetto di Buonaccorso Ugucione in 1569 and squandered enormous sums upon the villa and the garden, which he filled with statues, grottoes, fountains and *jeux d'eaux* of every description. The peasantry around were reduced to misery by the large amount of ground he threw out of cultivation to make the park, and by the destruction of their cattle in hauling marble, stone and sand up the long steep hill from Florence. Bernardo Buontalento was the architect, and Baldinucci tells us that "all the architects of that day declared that never had so simple, yet so elegant a building been seen." The rooms were frescoed by Crescenzo Onofrio Romano, Francesco Petrucci, Pier Dandini and Giovanni da San Giovanni, while the best landscape gardeners of the day were employed to lay out the beautiful gardens and

park. Stefano Della Bella has left some delightfully fantastic engravings of the grottoes wherein graceful ladies and tall cavaliers are disporting themselves; of a gigantic tree with a platform high up in its branches on which a gay company is supping; of various fountains; of a long alley, shaded, not by trees but by arches of water under which stately lords and ladies are walking; and of several statues. A rare pamphlet, by Bernardo Sgrilli, gives elaborate plans of the villa and describes the marble statues standing in niches cut out of evergreen hedges; the wonderful animals lurking in caves which suddenly spouted water over the unwary admirer; and the cunningly devised grottoes containing life-like figures or groups. In one a shepherd piped to his flock, in another a knife-grinder sharpened a scythe; then there was a fortress whose walls suddenly became alive with soldiers firing volleys at an imaginary enemy whilst cannon boomed from the embrasures and the rattle of drums was heard; in others a pretty shepherdess tripped daintily along and filled her pails with water at a well, disdainingly to look at a lovesick swain who played plaintive airs on his bagpipes; Vulcan made sparks fly from his anvil; a miller ground corn at his mill; a huntsman encouraged his hounds, "baying as though they were alive"; birds sang sweetly in the boughs of fairy-like trees; gliding serpents, hooting owls and "other most beautiful and stupendous inventions too many to enumerate were set in motion by diverse hidden machines driven by water." But if any unwary spectator sat down on an inviting bench, or took refuge from the sun in a cool grotto, streams of water would pour on him from every side and he was drenched to the skin in an instant.<sup>[56]</sup>

Of all these marvels nothing remains but the beautiful park with its magnificent trees, and a few of the rare shrubs planted by Francesco, a passionate collector of curious plants and animals, who was in correspondence with all the famous botanists of the day; and the huge statue of the Apennines, cunningly built of large blocks of stone by Giovanni da Bologna. (?)

Bianca Cappello, the second wife of Francesco I, was fond of Pratolino, where she passed the summer months to escape the heat in Florence. No less a person than Torquato Tasso has sung its beauties in many charming sonnets, mingling praises of the place with adulation of the all-powerful Venetian:

“Pleasant and stately grove,  
Your scented foliage spread forth cool and green,  
For here beneath your screen  
This noble maid to couch on grass doth love.  
Together join your boughs, beeches and firs;  
Ye too link yours together, pine and oak,  
Thou, sacred laurel, and thou myrtle bright:  
Guard from all harm those fairest locks of hers  
And keep her from fierce noonday’s fiery stroke;  
Mingle your green with golden glancing light.  
Shades gentle and serene,  
Nobler is this your victory o’er the sun  
Than that each night by pale Astræa won.”<sup>[57]</sup>

Bianca was helpful to the unhappy poet, who in return indited madrigals in her honour. “Had Your Royal Highness not experienced both good and evil fortune, you would not so well understand the misfortunes of others,” he writes to her in 1586. People who wished to make presents to the Grand Duchess occasionally asked Tasso to write a madrigal to be sent with the gift, thus enhancing its value. Among others, a Florentine lady, Caterina Frescobaldi, sent Bianca a magnificent dress embroidered with eight different designs, and to each was pinned an appropriate poem. In the collection of fifty madrigals, privately printed in 1871 from the copy given by Tasso to the fair Venetian, he plays fancifully with her name Bianca, turning it into Alba, Candida, Bianca Luna, etc.; this play upon words renders it difficult to translate them into English.

“Behold Love’s miracle,  
That my White Dawn should shed  
Glory, which doth the light by Day’s Dawn spread  
In radiance far excell.  
Dawn’s glory is not her own, the Sun knows well;  
For that himself doth lend her;  
But from herself hath my White Dawn her splendour.”

When on his way from Bologna to Florence in 1580 Montaigne visited Pratolino and quaintly remarks, “the Grand Duke has used all his five senses to beautify it.... The house is contemptible as seen from afar, but very fine when you come near, though not so handsome as some of ours in France.... But marvellous is a grotto with several chambers; this surpasses anything we have seen elsewhere. It is all encrusted with certain stuff they say was brought from the mountains which is fastened on with invisible nails. Not only does the movement of water make music and harmony, but it causes various statues to move and doors to shut, animals also plunge in to drink, and other such devices. In one moment the whole grotto is filled with water, every chair squirts it over your thighs, and fleeing therefrom up the steps to the villa, if they choose they can start a thousand jets and drench you to the skin.” Montaigne goes on to describe the statues and the gardens, and particularly notices the ingenious manner of storing ice and snow, much as is done at the present time, invented by that universal genius Bernardo Buontalento, and the building of the huge statue of the Apennines, then nearly finished. Twelve years later Sir Henry Wotton writing to Lord Zouch in June about the feast day of St John says: “it was somewhat more than ordinary upon the arrival of the Count di Santa Fiore in the court here, who is espoused unto Leonora Ursina, but of the marriage day no speech; for the Grand Duke hath desire to celebrate the marriage of his Niece, and the other, both in one day, because they have been jointly brought up together and (for congruity sake) aparall’d all days alike. The fore-named Earl is nephew of the lively Cardinal Sforza.... In person not tall nor low, and one of the worst faces a man shall ordinarily see, so that some think Leonora Ursina would be contented to revoke the match, and take her first offer.” In August he writes again, “since my last unto your honour (contrary to the expectation of all) is the marriage of Leonora Ursina accomplished at Pratolino, where the Cardinal Sforza arrived on the 16 of August, and gave the ring on Sunday last. I hear the Gentlewoman to be in some pensiveness of mind and to have abandoned her Cythera, on which she was wont to play; having rather been the wife of the Prince of Transylvania than of the Count of Santa Fiore, but that, since she saw him, or rather (as some say) since she tried him. To grace her husband the better, they style him Duke Sforza, which here we laugh at.” The court, he notes in a later letter, “is still at Pratolino attending unto the fresh air.”<sup>[58]</sup>

It must have been this same Prince of Transylvania who in the summer of 1597 sent an ambassador to Florence called Sigismondo Sarmorago with gifts for the Grand Duke Ferdinando I, (who had succeeded his brother Francesco) and his wife Christine of Lorraine. They were at Pratolino, and the ambassador climbed the long hill from Florence followed by a pair of magnificent iron-grey Turkish horses and two very large dogs with collars *alla Turca* set with precious stones for the Grand Duke, and a wonderful Indian naked spotted dog for the Grand Duchess, whose collar was resplendent with pearls and diamonds.

Pratolino, or rather its garden, seems to have astonished all beholders; John Evelyn stopped there on his way to Bologna from Florence in 1645 and notes in his Diary:—

“The house is a square of four pavilions, with a fair platform about it, balustrated with stone, situate in a large meadow, ascending like an amphitheatre, having at the bottom a huge rock, with water running in a small channel, like a cascade; on the other side are the gardens. The whole place seems consecrated to pleasure and summer retirement. The inside of the Palace may compare with any in Italy for furniture of tapestry, beds, etc., and the gardens are delicious, and full of fountains. In the grove sits Pan feeding his flock, the water making a melodious sound through his pipe; and a Hercules, whose club yields a shower of water, which, falling into a great shell, has a naked woman riding on the backs of dolphins. In another grotto, is Vulcan and his family, the walls richly composed of corals, shells, copper, and marble figures, with the hunting of several beasts moving by the force of water. Here, having been well washed for our curiosity, we went down a large walk, at the sides whereof several slender streams of water gush out of pipes concealed underneath, that interchangeably fall into each other’s channels, making a lofty and perfect arch, so that a man on horseback may ride under it, and not receive one drop of wet. This canopy, or arch of water, I thought one of the most surprising magnificences I had ever seen, and very refreshing in the heat of the summer. At the end of this very long walk, stands a woman in white marble, in posture of a laundress wringing water out of a piece of linen, very naturally formed into a vast laver, the work and invention of M. Angelo Buonarotti. Hence we ascended Mount Parnassus, where the Muses played to us on hydraulic organs. Near this is a great aviary. All these

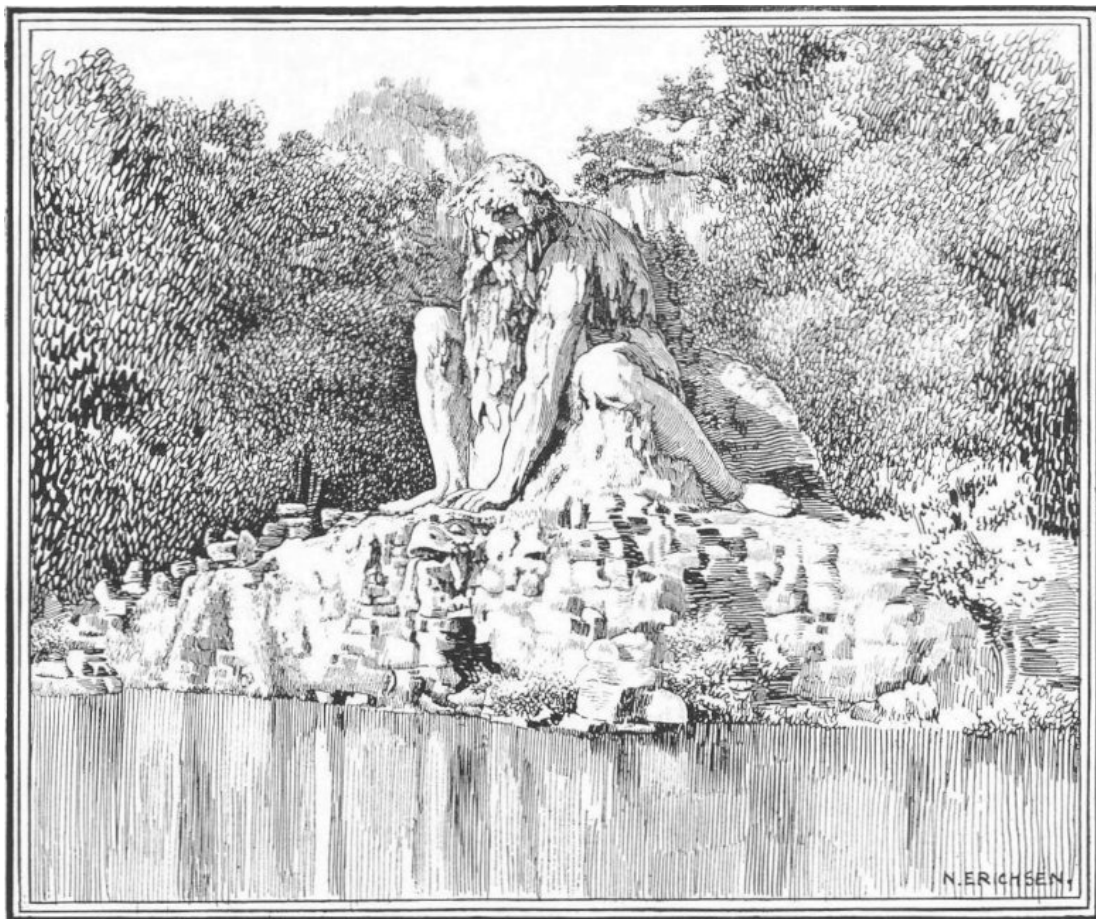
waters came from the rock in the garden, on which is the statue of a giant representing the Apennines, at the foot of which stands this villa.”<sup>[59]</sup>

Cosimo III does not seem to have frequented Pratolino, but his son Prince Ferdinando, who even as a child showed an extraordinary talent for music, had a special love for the place. He sang well and played various instruments, and to his father’s anger often spent the carnival in Venice when no less than six theatres were open, four for opera, two for prose. An old writer tells us “he was such a master of counterpoint that a most difficult sonata being put before him at Venice, not only did he read it off at sight, but to the astonishment of all played it through from memory afterwards.”

After his marriage with Violante of Bavaria he decided to build a theatre at Pratolino, the big room there being unfit for the operas he wished to give. He called in the architect who rebuilt the cathedral at Pescia, Antonio Ferri, and an admirable theatre was erected on the third floor of the villa, the Prince himself directed the painting of the scenery and the making of the stage machinery. He corresponded with composers, singers and poets, and often suggested changes in the *libretti*, or the addition of a song for the reigning favourite of the hour. An army of singers and musicians were in his pay and several musical critics, whose duty it was to travel from city to city in search of fresh talent. Every year saw the birth of at least one new opera, and Scarlatti composed no less than five for Pratolino. In a long letter to Prince Ferdinando about one called Lucio Manlio, he explains: “where it is marked *grave* I do not mean *melancolico*, where *andante* not *presto* but *arioso*, where *allegro* not *precipitoso*, where *allegro* not so fast as to exhaust the singers and drown the words, where *andante lento*, I exclude the pathetic, but desire a charming vagueness which should not lose the *arioso*; and none of the airs are to be melancholy. In my theatrical compositions I have always attempted to make the first act as it were, a child beginning to learn how to walk, the second, a youth already sure of himself, the third, a young man who gallantly attempts, and by his ardour succeeds, in every undertaking. Thus have I done in Lucio Manlio, the eighty-eighth opera composed by me in less than thirty-three years, which I should like to crown as the Queen of all the others. If I have failed to succeed, at least I have had the courage to attempt this; let Your Highness

deign to accept it as Your vassal; as a maiden forlorn and homeless, to be guarded from the shocks and tricks of fortune....”

Prince Ferdinando de' Medici died in 1713 before his father and the theatre was closed for ever. A hundred years later another Ferdinand, but of the family of Lorraine, called in a Bohemian engineer of the name of Frichs, who made new roads, threw many farms out of cultivation, planted trees and finally persuaded the Austrian Grand Duke to destroy the Medici villa built by Buontalento. Ferdinand died in 1824, before the new villa designed by Frichs had been begun, and Pratolino became the private property of his successor, Leopold II, as compensation for large sums advanced from his privy purse for the bonification of the Maremme of Massa and Grosseto. Not only were the foundations of the old villa blown up, but all the water-works and grottoes, save one, were destroyed; some of the statues were removed to Florence, many were stolen, others broken up and used to fill in cisterns and under-ground grottoes.



When in 1872 Prince Paul Demidoff bought Pratolino from the house of Lorraine he added to the old *Paggeria* or villa of the pages, and restored other smaller villas in the magnificent park; but his death in 1885 put a stop to further work, and the present villa is not worthy of its beautiful surroundings or of the memories of bygone splendour.

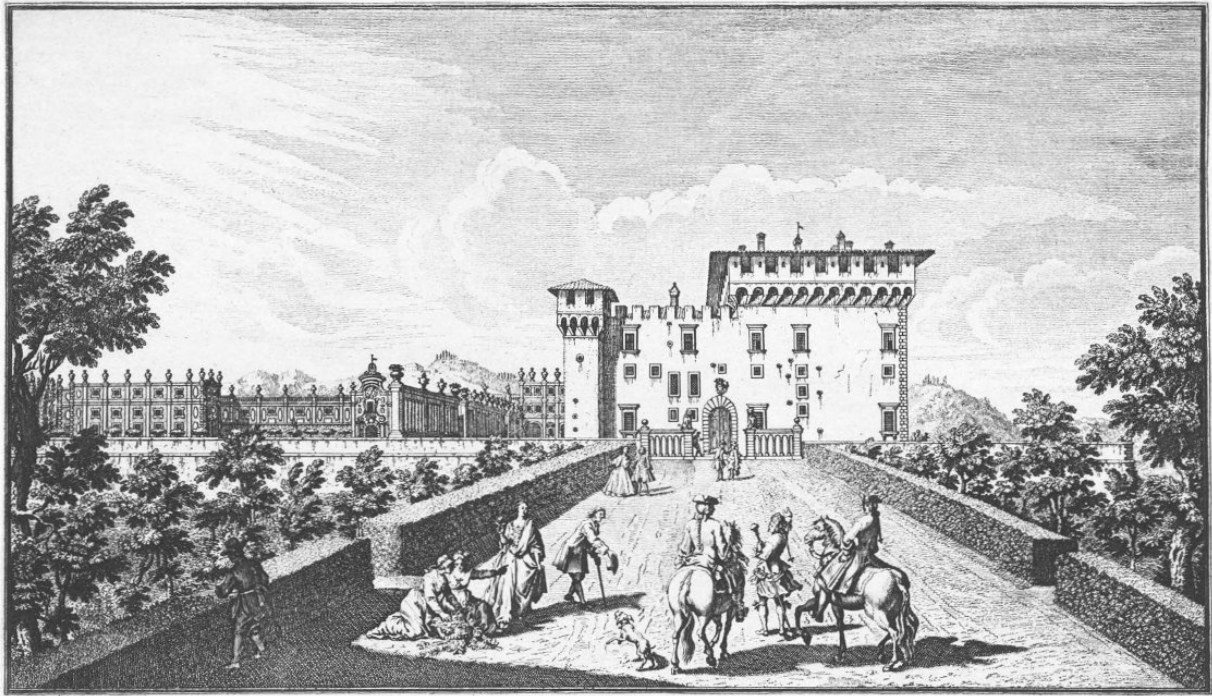
### FOOTNOTES:

[56] *Descrizione Della Regia Villa, Fontane, e Fabbriche di Pratolino.* Bernadone Sgrilli. Architetto Fiorentino. Nella Stamperia Ducale. Firenze, 1742.

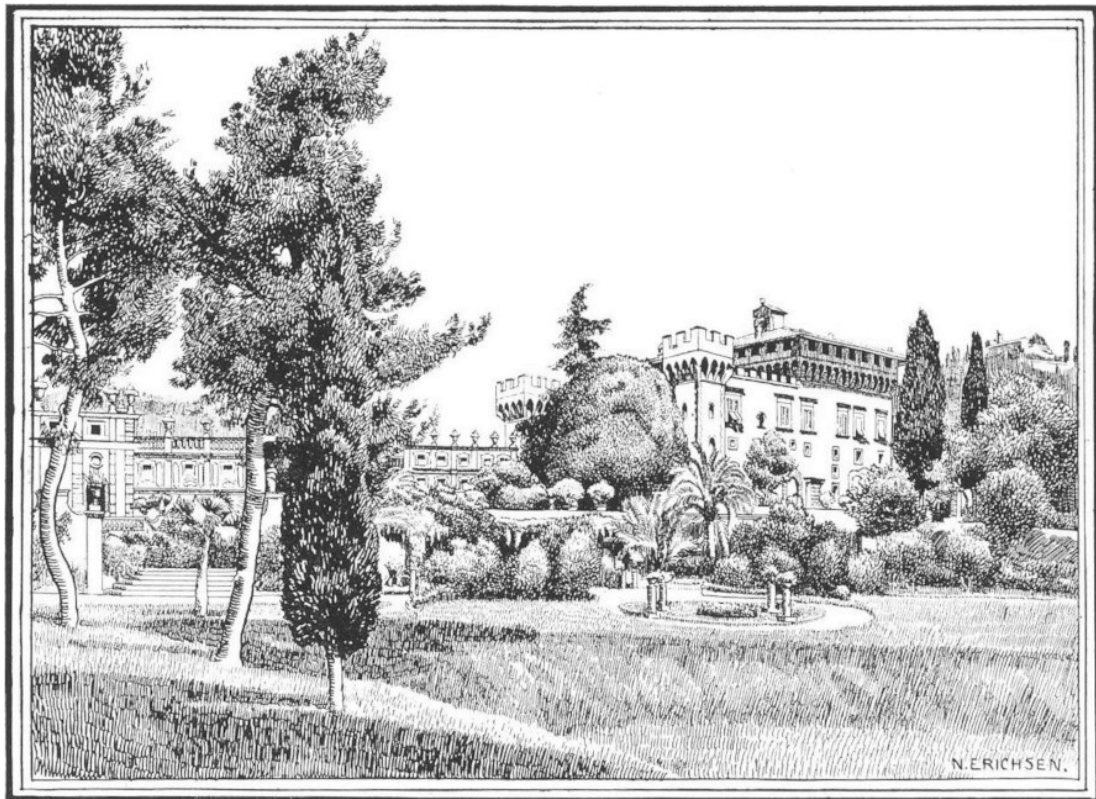
[57] The translations are by R. C. Trevelyan, from *Cinquanta Madrigalli Inediti*, del Signor Torquato Tasso, alla Gran Duchessa Bianca Cappello nei Medici. Firenze, M. Ricci, 1871. Ediz. di CCL Esemplari non venale.

[58] *Reliquæ Wottonianæ*, pp. 672, 690.

[59] *Diary of John Evelyn*. Vol. I. p. 190.



**VILLA SALVIATI.**



## VILLA SALVIATI

IT is strange no records remain about either the building or the builder of Villa Salviati, one of the finest and most widely known villas round Florence. But a search among archives and chronicles has only elicited the meagre facts that in 1100 a fastness stood on the site of the present villa and was owned by the Montegonzi, who about the year 1450 sold it to Messer Alemanno Salviati. It was then described as “a strong castle with towers and battlements,” which suggests the idea that the last members of the Montegonzi may have transformed their twelfth century fastness into a fortress-villa, and the rich and powerful Salviati no doubt added to its splendour and magnificence. One is tempted to think the great architect Michelozzi must have been called in, so strong is the resemblance of Villa Salviati to his known works Cafaggiuolo and Careggi. Certainly it belongs to his epoch, 1396-1472, and the bastion-like walls, the towers and machicolations give the impression that he who commissioned the villa

lived at a time when a dwelling-house in town or on the hills within sight of the city, had also to be a fortress and serve as a place of refuge during civil strife. The only positive information about the villa we have from Vasari, who tells us that in 1529 it was besieged and burnt during the siege by the Florentine mob, when all the fine sculptures by Giovan Francesco Rustici were destroyed; but like Careggi its massive walls must have withstood the fire. In more modern times a pent-roof, as at Careggi and Cafaggiuolo, was placed above its battlements in the vain endeavour to hide its war-like aspect, and layers of pink and chocolate coloured paint now give a somewhat artificial and mean appearance to what really is a magnificently proportioned and boldly conceived fortress-villa. The principal block of building rises in the form of a massive tower, crenelated and with bastioned walls sloping out on to the grass terrace, while the remainder rises round a courtyard with elegant Renaissance arches and capitals of grey Fiesole stone, and then broadens out at each corner into a tall tower whence, in days of trouble between noble and citizen, the retainers of the Salviati must have often watched for the sign of coming danger.

Certainly as we walk round the villa, especially on its north side where it looks towards the double-peaked hill of Fiesole, seen somewhat bleak on a winter's day, our mind is full of mediæval Florence, of a time before the nobles built such peaceful dwelling-houses with terraced gardens as the Villa Palmieri for instance, just in sight across the narrow valley of the Mugnone. Viewed only from this its austere aspect the Salviati villa would be beautiful indeed, but unlike any other we know of it possesses a very different side of which Zocchi shows us something. An eighteenth century owner, feeling perhaps that the somewhat menacing look of his ancestral villa ill coincided with the more joyous tastes of his day, laid out the enchanting rococo orange houses with graceful balustrade ornamented with vases and a clock tower. Joined on to the villa at right angles and built in so opposite a style, it yet fascinates by very contrast, leading the eye gradually to feast with delight upon the terraced gardens laid out with such taste by Jacopo Salviati in 1510. From under the heavy foliage of the ilexes, trimmed and trained so closely as to let no glimpse of sky be seen between their branches, we look out across the city of Florence to the hill of San Miniato, a view, it is true, familiar to everyone who has walked on these slopes, but what a different foreground we have here! Where in Italy can one see not only so fair a city, bell-towers, domes and palaces, the late

afternoon sun playing soft lights about them so that they seem distant, ethereal and shrouded in a thin faint film of golden mist; but between us and this fairy city lie two small lakelets, one below the other, their shining limpid water catching every glint of light till the sun shall have dropt behind the Signa hills. All the winds are hushed in this dell. They move the leaves and sway the branches of the narrow wood above, but here reigns a peace such as one finds in northern valleys, even the thin sharp shadows across the pools, from the clumps of white plumes of the pampas grass and the aloes in flower upon the banks, lie still on the unruffled surface of their waters.

The rich and powerful family of Salviati descended from a doctor, Messer Salvi di Maestro Guglielmo di Forese di Gottifredo, of great reputation in Florence towards the end of the thirteenth century. His two sons, Cambio and Lotto, both became Priors of the city, and altogether the Salviati had sixty-three Priors and twenty-one Gonfaloniers in their family. A grandson of Lotto, named Forese, was extremely popular, and distinguished himself first as a diplomatist and afterwards as Captain-General of the Tuscan Romagna in 1397; and his descendants served the Republic with honour as soldiers or as envoys and ambassadors. The only one of the family whose name is still a by-word in Florence was Giuliano, son of Francesco Salviati and Laudomia de' Medici. One of the first to incite the mob to plunder the Medici palaces and deface their arms when driven from Florence in 1527, he afterwards became the boon companion of the dissolute Duke Alessandro, and he it was who insulted Luisa Strozzi at a masked ball and paid for it by being maimed for life by her brother; whilst his wife was always supposed to have been instrumental in poisoning the beautiful and virtuous woman who had resented the infamous behaviour of the Duke and of Salviati. Fortunately that branch of the family ended with his daughter. A very different man was his cousin Jacopo Salviati, married to Lucrezia, daughter to Lorenzo the Magnificent and sister to Leo X, with whom Jacopo was a favourite. He was the one man amongst the envoys from Florence who dared to raise his voice at the court of Clement VII, against creating the bastard Alessandro de' Medici absolute Lord of Florence, and against building the great fortress of San Giovanni, now called Fortezza da Basso, to dominate the town. Setting forth how at the death of Leo X, the citizens of Florence had preserved the State for the Medici, he contended that the best and surest fortress was the love of the

people, who are content when food is abundant and justice properly administered. And when Filippo Strozzi argued against him Jacopo turned round saying, "Filippo, either you speak not your thoughts, or if you think as you speak you think amiss"; then as though gifted with the spirit of prophecy he continued, "God grant that in advocating the building of this fortress Filippo is not preparing his own grave." "For these words," as Varchi who describes the scene writes, "the Pope called him no more to council, and those citizens who once bore him on the palms of their hands avoided him ... and his dependants who had received favours from him turned away when they saw him in the distance."

Maria, daughter of Jacopo Salviati, married Giovanni de' Medici surnamed Delle Bande Nere, and was the mother of Cosimo I, to whom she in vain preached moderation and respect for the law. Three of her brothers joined the anti-Medicean faction and were implicated in every attempt to dethrone their nephew; but Messer Alamanno, the youngest, was one of the most trusted counsellors of the two Dukes Alessandro and Cosimo and left enormous wealth to his son Jacopo. Clement VIII, created Lorenzo Salviati, Jacopo's son, a Marquis after he had bought the castles and lands of Giuliano and Rocca Massima, and Urban VIII, made his grandson Jacopo, who married Donna Veronica Cybo, daughter of the Prince of Massa, Duke of Giuliano. The following account of the marriage by a contemporary was, according to that excellent Italian fashion, privately printed in honour of a marriage some thirty years ago. I have translated the whole letter for the curious insight it gives into the manners of that day.

"Being sure of giving Your Excellency agreeable tidings, I send a detailed account of the marriage of my Lord the Duke of Salviati and of my Lady Donna Veronica, which causes the people the more joy that my Lords the Prince and the Princess are so gratified thereat.

"My Lord the Duke was to be in Massa on the 27th and sent one of his gentlemen on the day before to announce his arrival; he sent to the Duchess his wife four most beautiful dresses with jewels to match; one was white, one of flax-flower blue, one turquoise and one crimson, all enriched with gold and as yet uncut. At the same time I was sent by Their Excellencies to meet the Lord Duke and kiss his hands. We arrived at sundown at Massa, and at Salto della Cervia the Lord Marquis of Carrara,<sup>[60]</sup> accompanied by many gentlemen and 100 archibusiers of Massa on horseback, met H.E.,

and soon afterwards the Prince himself with many gentlemen and 80 archibusers of Carrara and his usual bodyguard came in sight. When we reached Nostra Signora del Monte the salvos of artillery from the castle began which made a fine effect, as besides the heavy artillery, which Y.E. knows of, and the 200 spingards, the Prince had placed 500 musketeers, who repeated the salvos, and thus the castle seemed no less terrific than pleasing.

“When we reached the palace the Duke retired to his apartments and sent to ask permission of the Prince, my master, to present some flowers he had brought from Florence to his bride; these were enclosed in a gilt enamelled glove box, and in other velvet cases were a ring with a splendid diamond, a necklace of very large diamonds, a jewel of large diamonds with a feather also of diamonds and a large pearl at the tip; these, with the chain of diamonds which the Duke had already sent with his portrait in a jewelled box, certainly were worth more than 15000 scudi. That same evening my comedy was acted and proved a success. The wedding was on Monday morning, and when the bride and bridegroom left the palace and entered the Piazza a squadron of 1000 musketeers fired a salute, which was repeated at the bestowal of the ring and when they returned to the palace. The ring was splendid, my Lord Duke not permitting that the one sent before the marriage should be used, but this other special one. The Duchess was attired most richly in white, adorned with the jewels given to her the day before. My Lord Duke was habited in blue, but the extreme richness of the suit rendered it useless and of such weight that it could only be worn for a few hours and he was begged by all to change. If the first was rich the second was not less elegant, and every day H.E. wore a new suit each one more beautiful than the last; and he bestowed one on that silly buffoon of a doctor, who was present at all the marriage feasts, of cloth of gold embroidered also in gold, and the said doctor made a good meal one morning, filling himself with doubloons and zecchins given him by all the Seigneury who were at table.

“On the night of the marriage there was a splendid entertainment; seventy-four ladies were there unmasked and forty-eight came masked, divided in companies of six, variously costumed in appropriate and pleasing dresses. Although the room was large four rows of seats were none too many and all passed with great order and contentment. Next day at a game

my Lord Duke gave, with a pretty pretext, a bottle containing 500 zecchins to the bride. That and the following days were spent in feasting and festivity, and for an improvised masquerade the Duke caused a hat to be made for my Lady Duchess with a rich garland of diamonds and under the brim he placed a very large diamond worth 14000 scudi. The Duke asked to see the castle and was received with much honour, and left a good present to each soldier and bombardier and a chain worth 100 scudi to the Castellan.

“The charitable gifts to convents and other institutions are also worthy of note, amounting to some hundreds of scudi. On the palace guard and the company of archibusiers which accompanied him to the confines of Tuscany with my Lord the Prince, he also bestowed largesse. Not only has he given to all but he also caused his bride to give to many; among others to her sister-in-law Princess Fulvia<sup>[61]</sup> she gave two of those dress-lengths sent to her by the Duke and the others she left to Donna Placidia, her sister. The Duke has bestowed many chains, besides presents in money, to the officers and to many others; and the Prince, my master, has at his request condoned many punishments, pardoned many exiles and released all the prisoners who were in the castle when he visited it. The Prince also insisted on giving a horse which once belonged to the Duke, and has been cured of vicious tricks so as now to be most pleasant to ride, back to him, and with it another which he thought the Duke admired. Also knowing his love of pictures my master gave him one by Raffaele d’Urbino, besides hounds and a body-slave who waited on him here. The Princess, my mistress, gave him most finely worked linen shirts, and Don Alessandro an archibuse of perfect workmanship and great beauty.

“To sum up, my Lord the Duke has been pleased with Massa and Massa pleased with my Lord Duke, as he is open-handed and of exquisite tact in all his dealings. All thought the Duchess very handsome as is but natural, she being of this house and sister to Princess Maria;<sup>[62]</sup> and I hope Tuscany will be no less satisfied with the Duchess Salviati than is Lombardy with the Princess della Mirandola. God preserve them both in the prosperity which he has granted them.

“Bride and bridegroom took their departure on Friday morning in the Duke’s travelling carriage, which is so splendid that it would be sumptuous in a city; and were followed also by the lettiga (litter carried by mules), with

velvet lining and golden fringes, columns of silver and beautiful carving; on a par with the magnificence of all else. Twelve grooms there were in livery and many gentlemen of goodly presence. Having thus satisfied my desire to serve Y.E. in a way that I know to be pleasing unto you, I kiss your hands, wishing you every felicity.

“GIULIO BEGGIO. Massa, 5th March 1628.”<sup>[63]</sup>

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The glowing description of Donna Veronica given by the obsequious courtier of the house of Massa was not ratified by Florentine opinion. One old writer declares: “Donna Veronica was endowed with but small beauty, but *per contra* with a most violent and imperious temper and a jealous disposition. Her husband, poor man, had small joy with her.” Duke Jacopo Salviata, handsome, gallant and accomplished, a brave soldier and an elegant poet, soon found his loveless life hard to bear, and some eight years after his marriage met (for her misfortune) the beautiful woman popularly called “the fair Cherubim” from her silken, wavy, golden hair and her exquisite colouring. The following account by an anonymous writer of the time, existing in manuscript in the Marucelliana library at Florence, tells the tragic tale graphically, and has, I believe, never been published.

“All know of how much perfidy and cruelty a woman is capable when moved by a spirit of vengeance, particularly when roused thereto by offended love. I have often heard recounted a case which happened in the city of Florence, and will describe it as far as my feeble memory permits. There was in Florence a gentleman of the old and honourable family of the Canaccj named Giustino, well-known to me and to many still alive. He was considered a man of but small sense because, having several grown-up children by a first wife and being near seventy years of age, he took as his second wife a young girl called Caterina, inferior to himself in rank but endowed with marvellous beauty, daughter to a dyer from the Casentino. Now Giustino was also the ugliest, the most tiresome and the dirtiest man then in Florence, which encouraged many to solicit the good graces of Caterina who, though apparently leading a modest life, at length they said listened to Lorenzo da Jacopo Serzelli and to Vincenzo Carlini, a young Florentine who has now changed his habit and way of life, being the head

of that hospital commonly called Bonifazio. There were also two youths, familiars of Jacopo Salviati Duke of Giuliano the greatest personage for birth, enormous wealth and other admirable qualities in the city of Florence, always excepting the Princes of the ruling house, who a few years before had taken to wife Donna Veronica daughter to Don Carlo Cybo, Prince of Massa and Carrara. This lady had not much beauty, but such pride and conceit that the Duke was driven to seek for comfort elsewhere. Once introduced to Caterina, the Duke, not to excite the suspicions of his wife, excused his occasional absences by an obligation to attend one of those Confraternities which meet only at night, and in Florence are called *Bucche* (Holes), this one was named after St Anthony and situated in Pinti near Santa Maria Maddalena; and leaving it at a late hour he went to Caterina's house in Via de' Pilastrri near S. Ambrogio. But he could not prevent this reaching the ears of the Duchess, who with other qualities possessed that of jealousy in a superlative degree.

“It was rumoured, but I do not know if it be true, that the Duchess entered San Pier Maggiore one morning where was Caterina whom she knew well by sight, and as though by chance Donna Veronica placed herself by her side and in a few words bade her never again speak to her husband under pain of her dire displeasure. And Caterina replied, perchance with more arrogance and spirit than became her condition, thus increasing the ire of the Duchess and ensuring her own ruin. The Duke's love grew every day and the Duchess determined to cut the thread; rumour has it that she tried to poison Caterina, but failing, determined to take vengeance in another way; and she did it with such cruelty and barbarity that one may rightly say it was done according to Genoese fashion, and it was as follows:—

“She contrived, according to what was said at the time and it seems to be truth, to get hold of the brothers Bartolomeo and Francesco, sons of Giustino Canaccj, youths of about twenty-four or twenty-five, who though they did not inhabit, yet frequented their step-mother's house; and after much talk representing to them how her licentious life brought ignominy on themselves and their posterity and that as persons of birth and consideration it behoved them to free themselves of her presence, she promised if they would do this not only to give them every help but such protection as would save them from any peril, and as they were poor she also promised to grant them a life-long allowance. I am by no means certain that the Duchess

spake thus to both, or only to Bartolomeo the elder brother, who as we shall see was present at the misdeed and paid the penalty. It was said that the brothers, or the one, as it may have been, at first refused, but the offers being at length accompanied by threats they agreed to introduce into their step-mother's house those persons chosen by the Duchess to work their vengeance (which was in truth her own) on poor Caterina. Some imagined that one of the reasons which led Bartolomeo to assist in the murder of his step-mother was her rejection of his love. Now as such things have occurred I do not absolutely deny that it may have been so, but it seems unlikely to me that Bartolomeo would have been received in his father's house, also people would have talked much about it and I never remember to have heard it mentioned. Anyhow the Duchess got four assassins from Massa, and they entered one by one into the city so as to avoid observation and suspicion and were kept by her until the time was ripe for effecting her abominable project, which was not until the night of 31st December 1638, and was in this guise. At about three hours of the night Bartolomeo Canaccj, accompanied by the aforesaid bandits who stood at the opposite side of the street in the shade, knocked at his step-mother's door; her maid looked out of the window and asked who was there, and on his answering *friends* she recognised his voice and drew the cord of the latch; when Bartolomeo and the assassins rushed up the stairs with such fury that Lorenzo Serzelli and Messer Vincenzo Carlini, who were talking with Caterina, suspected some evil thing and springing to their feet had hardly time to fly by another staircase on to the roof, whence they escaped to a neighbouring house, before the ruffians with naked swords in their hands appeared at the door. Poor Caterina was then murdered by these infamous executors of the barbarous cruelty of the Duchess, together with her maid probably to prevent her from giving evidence. After which the bodies of these two most unfortunate women were cut into pieces, carried silently out of the house and put into a carriage; parts of the bodies were thrown down a well at the corner of Via de' Pentolini and Piazza Sant' Ambrogio, others were thrown into the Arno and found next day, all save the head of poor Caterina which those murderers carried to the Duchess for the full execution of this Tragedy as shall be hereafter set forth.

“All these particulars were seen by Carlini and Serzelli, who with hot haste had left the house where they had taken refuge and knocked at one opposite to Caterina's where lived a well-known woman commonly called

Aunt Nannina, because three of the most famous courtezans of our day were her nieces. The door was at once opened to them, and from a slit in the window of an upstairs room they saw and heard what I have related.

“Now the Duchess, by one of her waiting-women, was used to send to the Duke’s room on Sundays and other holidays a silver basin covered with a fair cloth, containing collars, cuffs and such-like things which the Duke was wont to change on those days. But on this the 1st of January, a day sacred to Christians because on it is celebrated the circumcision of Our Lord and also because according to the rites of the Roman Church it is the beginning of the year, the present sent was of a different nature. Taking the head of poor Caterina, which though bloodless and cold yet preserved the beauty which had been the cause of her death, the Duchess placed it in the basin, covered it with the usual cloth and sent it by her waiting-woman, who knew nought of the business, into the Duke’s room. When he rose and lifted the cloth to take his clean linen, let his horror be pictured when he saw such a pitiful sight. It is not my intention to describe here the lamentations, the sorrow, the anguish and the tears shed over the lifeless head of his love; they can be better imagined than writ with a pen. Knowing full well that his wife had done this deed he would have no more of her, and for many a long year refused to be where she was. When she came to Florence, he left for one of his villas, or for Rome where he had large estates; and if she went to a villa or to Rome, incontinently he returned to Florence.

“But to return to our lamentable story. When the murder was known next day and the bodies of the unfortunate women were recognised, Giustino Canaccj, the husband of Caterina, and Bartolomeo and Francesco his sons were seized and imprisoned together with another son, whose name I forget, with his wife and an unmarried daughter of the said Giustino and one married to Luigi Tedaldi as well as Luigi himself. But against those scoundrels who committed the murder, either because the court had no knowledge of them, or because they had taken refuge in flight, or for some other occult reason, no steps were taken, nor against their principal; so true is the common saying that justice acts only against the poor, and that laws are like cobwebs, which catch flies and such small creatures while large ones tear and break them. Of the above-named prisoners, Giustino, his daughters, his step-son and the other son with his wife were liberated after a

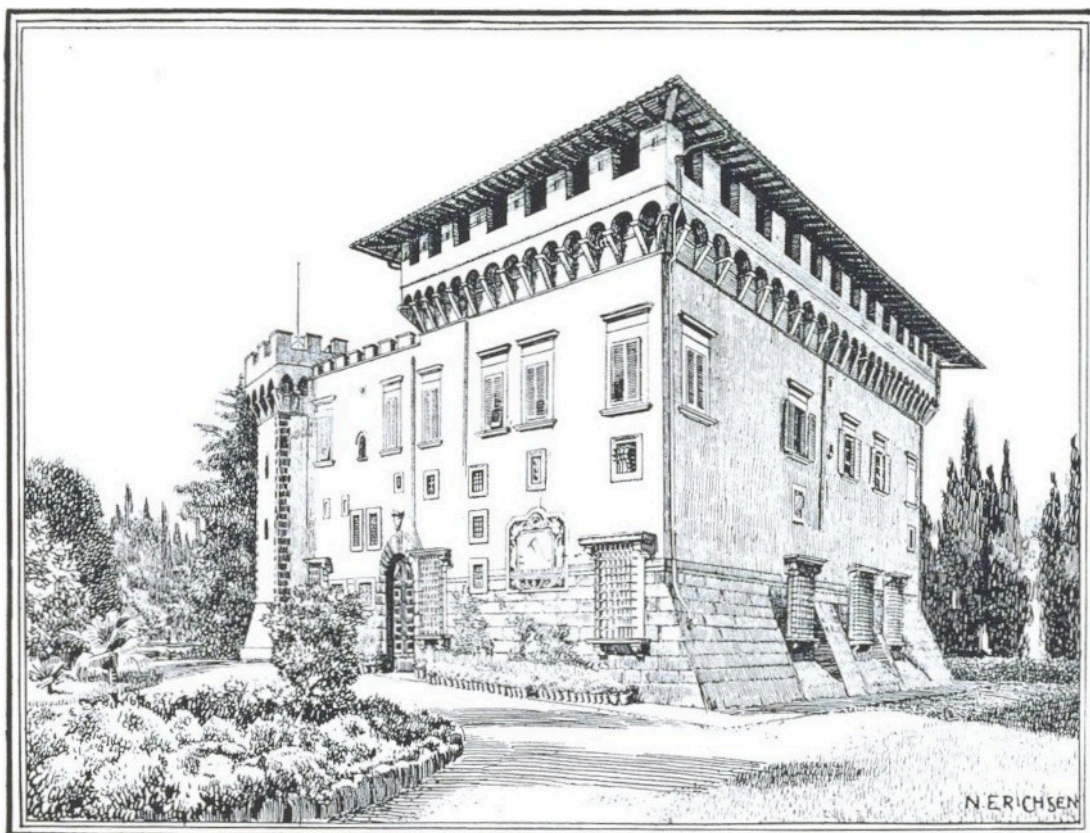
time as innocent; but Bartolomeo and Francesco were kept in prison and subjected to torture. Francesco, either really innocent and not present at the murder, or more prudent, or perchance more fortunate, confessed nothing and after many months was set free; but Bartolomeo, they say, whether truly or not will never be known, confessed to have aided in this terrible affair and on the ... of 1639 was beheaded in the doorway of the Bargello. Small applause did justice get for this execution, good citizens being scandalized that the less guilty one who had been, as we say, dragged into the business by the hair of his head and was known to have been a poor wretch of small wit, and thought to have been tortured into saying more than he knew, should suffer capital punishment; while the real delinquent, the principal and head of it all, received no punishment save perchance from her own conscience and sense of shame. It is true, and it was said at the time, that Madame Christine of Lorraine, grandmother to the Grand Duke Ferdinando II, a princess of great learning, good and pious, and very zealous in the cause of justice, horrified by so atrocious a deed wished to have the Duchess arrested; but as soon as the murder had been committed she fled to her villa of S. Cerbone, and warned of her danger left for Rome; so justice contented itself with exiling her, but the sentence was soon commuted.

“Such was the end of the barbarity and cruelty of Duchess Veronica which I have described at length, not from any love of evil-speaking, but from the desire to enlighten posterity. The more so that it was said that justice, if it merits the name, in order to save the great bore heavy on the weak and, as we say, to throw dust in the eyes of the public, drew up two statements, one true which remained hid, one false which was published to the world. Let those who read these my recollections remember that our proverbs are always apt, and that whoso forgathers with great people is the last at table and the first at the gallows.”

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Cardinal Gregorio, the last of this branch of the Salviati, left his villa in 1794 to his niece Anna, married to Prince Borghese. Her two sons Prince Cammillo Borghese and Prince Don Francesco Aldobrandino inherited it at her death in 1809, and the three sons of the latter, Prince Marc' Antonio

Borghese, Prince Cammillo Aldobrandini and Duke Scipione Salviati sold it to Mr Vansittart in 1844. Later the old place once more changed hands and became the property of the Duke of Candia, better known as Mario, whose glorious voice, charming and courtly manners and great personal beauty will be remembered by many of my readers. When Garibaldi was in Florence he paid a visit to Mario and Grisi, and a remarkably ill-painted picture still hanging in the corridor of Villa Salviati commemorates the scene. M. Hagermann, a Swede, bought the villa from Mario, and his heirs have lately sold it to Signor Turri.



### FOOTNOTES:

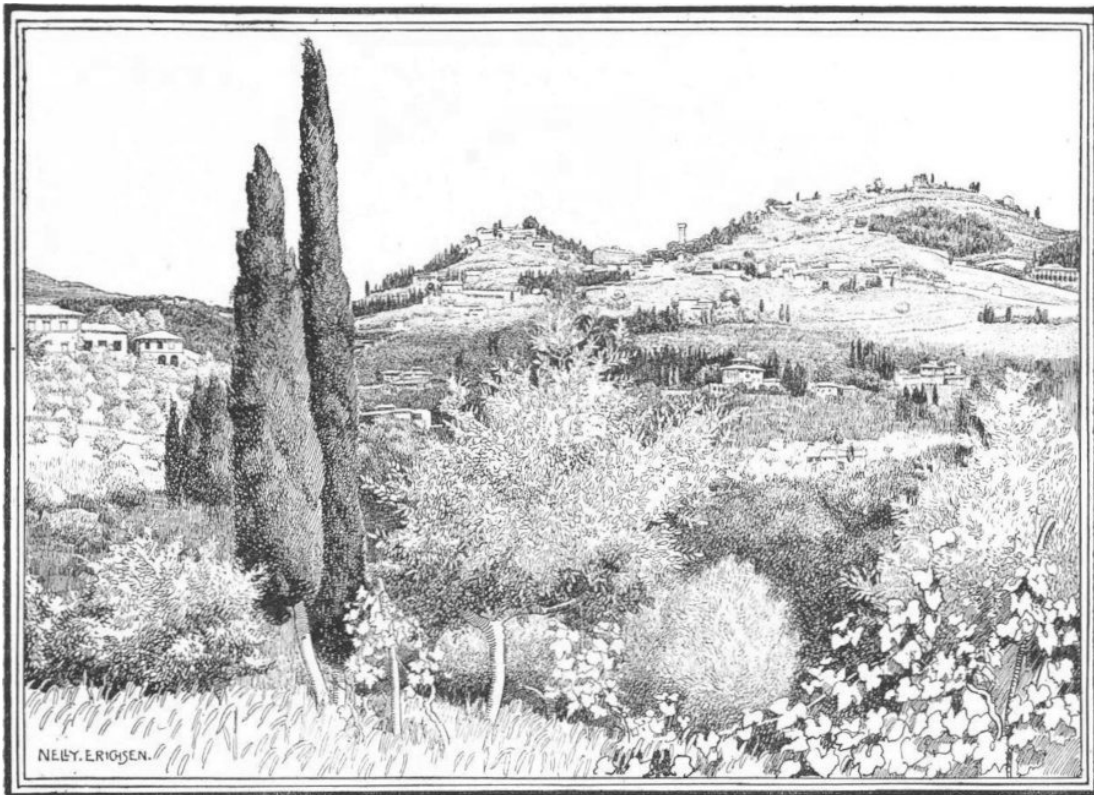
[60] Eldest son of the Prince of Massa, of whom Donna Veronica was the fourteenth child.

[61] Daughter of Alessandro I, Duke of Mirandola, married to Alberico, brother to Veronica.

[62] Married in 1626 to Galeotto, son of Alessandro I, Duke of Mirandola.

[63] Le Nozze di Jacopo Salviati con Veronica Cybo, descritte da un contemporaneo, MDCXXVII. In Lucca co' Torchi di B. Canovetti, 1871.

Al Conte Ottavio Sardi nel Giorno delle sue Nozze con la Nobile Donzella Olimpia Fatinelli offre congratulandosi Giovanni Sforza, VII Settembre MDCCCLXXI.



## VILLA DI FONT' ALL' ERTA

THE name of this whole district is Camerata, derived, says Salvini, from “camere” or deposits for water-conduits. Villani thinks Fiesole had two suburbs—Villa Arpina and Villa Camarti—the latter being the scattered village now called Camerata; but Boccaccio recounts that long before Fiesole was built or thought of, the forests which clothed the hills around were the favourite hunting-grounds of the fair goddess Diana. He describes her crinkly golden hair, tall, lithe figure, beautiful eyes and face “shining like the sun,” when in the month of May she met her nymphs—

“By the fair waters of a limpid Fount  
With flowers and grasses ever freshly decked,  
Still welling from the foot of Cecer’s mount,  
Just where from midday Throne with rays direct  
The Sun looks down....”<sup>[64]</sup>

“This,” writes Roberto Gherardi, “is the fountain now called Font’ all’ Ertà, at the foot of Monte Ceceri looking due south, below the villa of the Signori Pitti-Gaddi; of which one can only now see some pieces of wall, and some ruins and vestiges in the public road at the beginning of the slope; but the people are still alive who assure me that about the year 1710 the course of the water which came from a tank a little above and from other springs near by, was deviated because it chilled the land below and damaged the crops of the podere. At the time of our Boccaccio I find that this podere with Houses, Tanks, &c., extending to the end of the plain of San Gervasio, was sold on the 5th June 1370 by Giovanni di Agostino degli Asini to Messer Bonifazio Lupo, Marquis of Soragona and a Knight of Parma, who at that time was admitted a citizen of Florence. Being moved by a spirit of much-to-be-praised piety and a feeling of gratitude towards the Florentine Republic, he obtained from the same on the 20th December 1377, as is stated by Ammirato in his XIII. book, permission to found the hospital in Via San Gallo of the said city, called precisely Bonifazio from the name of so pious a benefactor.”<sup>[65]</sup>



**COSIMO I, DE' MEDICI.**  
**By PIETRO POLO GALEOTTI.**  
*(Villa di Petraja).*



**ALESSANDRO DE' MEDICI.**  
**By DOMENICO DI POLO.**  
*(Villa di Cafagginolo).*



**FERDINANDO I, AND**  
**CHRISTINE OF LORRAINE.**  
**By MAZZAFERRI.**  
*(Villa di Pratolino).*

When Florence became the capital of Italy the old Via di Font' all' Erta was done away with and a broad boulevard took its place. Remains of an old water-conduit and cistern of Roman work were unearthed below the tank mentioned by Roberto Gherardi; a rusty sacrificial knife, some human bones and a few bits of Roman pottery were also found near by. On

moonlight nights “the White Spectre,” as the peasants call it, a dim form—a cloud of white mist—floated hither and thither over the spot, but the uneasy spirit has not been seen since the new road was made.

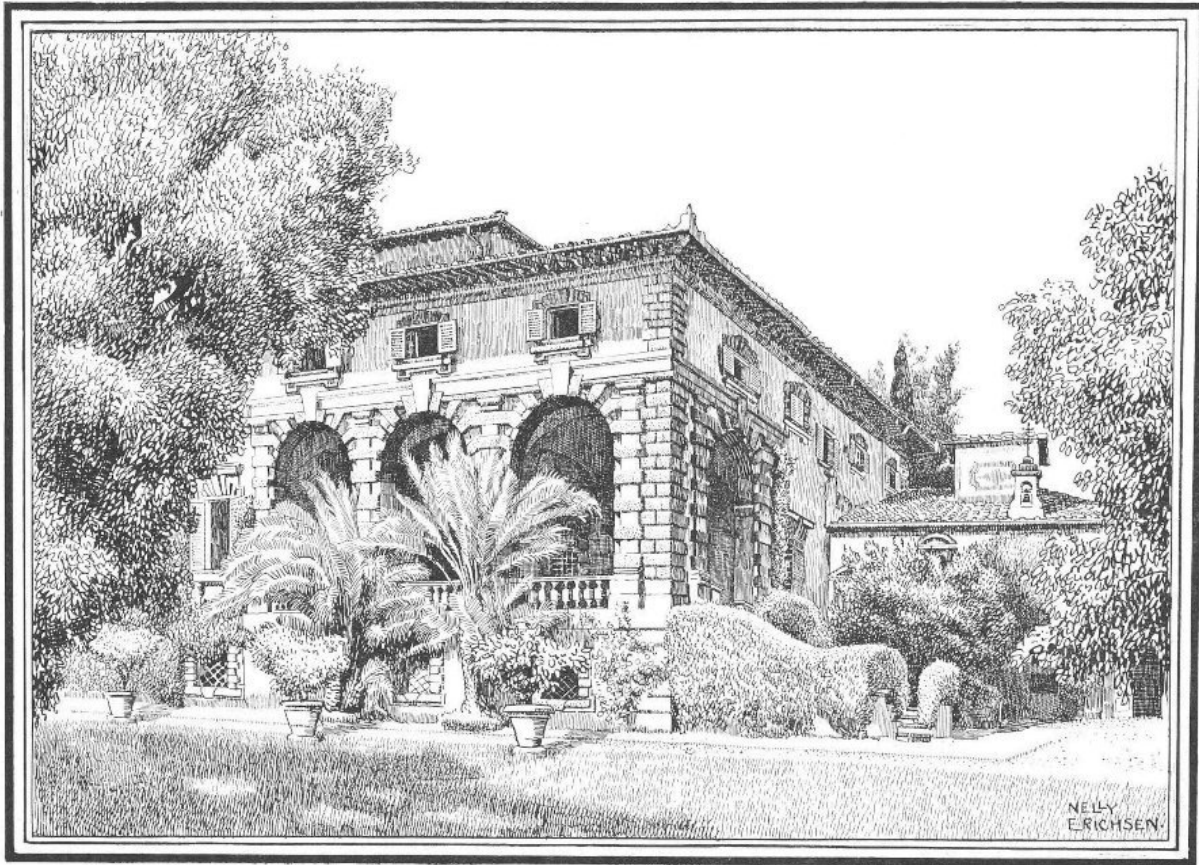
Font’ all’ Erta then came into the possession of the Nuti, and Bernadino Nuti sold it in 1506 to Taddeo Gaddi, a grandson of the great painter Taddeo who was an intimate friend of Dante. Taddeo the elder made a large collection of manuscripts of the Divine Comedy which he afterwards left to his son Angelo who, discarding the brush for trade, established a banking-house at Venice with some of his brothers and at last persuaded his father also to join him. Thenceforward, remarks Litta, Taddeo only painted occasionally, from habit. Angelo died at Venice in 1378 (or 1387), leaving his riches and manuscripts to his nephew Angelo, who increased the collection by purchase and by copies made with his own hand. Taddeo, Angelo’s son, as already said bought Font’ all’ Erta in 1506. He was three times elected a Prior of the Republic of Florence, and in 1496 was one of the Ten Magistrates of Liberty and Peace at the time of the war with Pisa. In 1527 he received Antonio Bonsi, the ambassador sent by Pope Clemente VII, (who declared that unless he returned to Florence he would not be buried in consecrated ground) “to try to reason and treat with the city. But no sooner did he (Bonsi) arrive at Camerata in the villa of the Gaddi, than the Signoria, declining to hear him or to listen to any explanations, sent Messer Bartolomeo Gualterotti to tell him to depart immediately, and Andrea Giugni to accompany him out of the state and to see their orders were obeyed.”

Clemente paid for the reception of his ambassador by creating Taddeo’s son Niccolò a cardinal in May 1527; but at Bologna two years later Niccolò lost the favour of the Pope by warmly pleading the cause of the Florentine envoys, and became an avowed enemy of the house of Medici. In 1532 Taddeo Gaddi died and Font’ all’ Erta went to his son Sinibaldo, one of the richest citizens of Florence and allied by marriage with the Strozzi. When Duke Alessandro de’ Medici was murdered in 1537 by his cousin Lorenzino, Cardinal Niccolò Gaddi was one of the chief promoters of the efforts made by the exiled Florentines to restore the republic. Leaving Rome with the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi he hastened to Florence to collect troops and partisans. But the young Cosimo was too wily. Cardinal Salviati had to fly the city, Ridolfi hid in his own house, and “Gaddi,”

writes old Varchi, “went like a plucked fowl to his brother’s villa at Camerata,” where he lay in hiding for some days and then left for Bologna.

Sinibaldo Gaddi was forced by Cosimo I, to contribute large sums “for the needs of the state,” but in 1556 the Duke made him head of the *Monte* or Government bank as a kind of compensation. He died in 1558 and his son Niccolò inherited Font’ all’ Erta and made it what we now see. Scipione Ammirato mentioning him in a letter says: “he is now at his villa turning it into a palace more suited to the city than to the country.” Ammannati is believed to have designed the magnificent loggia and to have superintended the improvements and alterations of the villa.

Niccolò Gaddi must have been a remarkable man. He was sent by the Duke Cosimo I, as ambassador to the Dukes of Ferrara and Mantua to announce his promotion by the Pope to be Grand Duke of Tuscany, and afterwards went to Rome to attend the ceremony of the coronation. In 1578 he was created a Senator and was one of those charged to reform the statutes of the guild of the merchants. A man of great learning and knowledge of art, his library, picture gallery and museum of antiquities were only second to those of the Medici. His garden, stocked with rare trees, shrubs and medicinal herbs, was beautiful and Florence owes the institution of her botanical garden chiefly to him. Niccolò was twice married, but his children died young, and the sons of his sister Maddalena, who had married a Pitti, became his heirs with the obligation of adding his name to their own. In 1755 the remnants of his fine library were bought by the Emperor Francis I, of Austria, Grand Duke of Tuscany, from Gaspero Pitti-Gaddi. 355 manuscripts were given to the Laurentian library, 727 manuscripts and 1451 rare editions of old books to the Magliabecchiana, and 28 manuscripts relating to public affairs to the Archives.



That Niccolò Gaddi loved Font' all' Erta, generally called the “Paradise of the Gaddi,” and was proud of it, is shown by the following extracts from his will written five days before his death.

“In the name of God, on the ninth day of June 1591 Indiction 4. Gregorio XIII, the Holy Pontiff, and of His Serene Highness Ferdinando Medici Grand Duke of Tuscany, I Niccolò di Sinibaldo Gaddi Cavalier of San Jacopo make my testament as follows:—

“Firstly I commend my soul to God and my body to be placed in Sta. Maria Novella, in my place of burial.”

Chapter XL says: “And I also order that within two years of my death my heirs shall have finished the Hall and the Loggia of the Palace in Camerata and removed the well from the wall of the Hall, without however filling it up, and made another in the wall of the small courtyard of the kitchen, searching there for water, but should it not be found they are to go to the spring and find the old well. Maestro Lorenzo who builds organs, and

Maestro Zanobi Grazia Dio mason, and Maestro Fanelli stone-cutter, are informed of my intentions, therefore let them be carried out according as they may direct. And in addition let the arms of Strozzi<sup>[66]</sup> and of Gaddi be placed at the corners of the said palace, and some memorial of him who made and restored them, and I will that the men shall not be taken, even for one day, off the work until all is finished....”

Chapter LXIII says: “... I will that in the Hall of the Palace of Camerata an inscription shall be put up to my memory in such fashion and in such a position as shall be judged proper by the most excellent Signore Piero Angeli, whom I beg to do me the favour of visiting the said Palace, and my heirs shall receive him with the honour due to his most rare merits.”

Either “the most excellent Signore Piero Angeli” never went to Font’ all’ Erta or the heirs neglected to carry out the orders of Niccolò, for inscription there is none. It is said that in the carnival season faint sounds of old-fashioned dance music are heard there in the dead of night, and the rustling of silk robes and silvery laughter. But all attempts to see the ghostly dancers from the balcony running round the top of the lofty hall have failed.

In 1770 the villa was bought by Marchese Ponticelli of Parma who sold it to Niccolò Gondi, and in the drawing-room still hangs a portrait of the fascinating Paule Françoise Marguerite de Gondi who married the Duc de Crequy, de Bonne, de Lesdiguières, &c., &c. She is pretty in a *piquante* French style, and wears coquettishly a blue robe trimmed with ermine. Round the top of the room are frescoes by Maso da San Friano (Tommaso di Antonio Manzuoli). The Loggia which gives access to the villa is magnificent; it looks due south, over Florence and the valley of the Arno. Two fine old date-palms growing against it have withstood many a hard winter and give grace and beauty even to Ammannati’s splendid building. Count Pasolini who bought the villa in 1850 put up a fine Venetian lantern out of an old Contarini galley under a Della Robbia Madonna in the Loggia.

The villa stands high, about a mile from Florence, and a winding carriage road shaded by elms leads up from the plain ending in an avenue of tall cypresses. Thence the view of the hill of Fiesole is enchanting. Beautiful Doccia with its long line of arches lies bathed in sunshine, and just below is the villa where St Louis Gonzaga stayed with Pier Francesco del Turco to learn the Tuscan tongue. Landor’s old villa, now belonging to Professor

Willard Fiske, faces us, with the valley of the Ladies below its garden wall, and the Affrico murmuring through its grounds. Visions of the fair Fiametta and her companions arise as one remembers how on the sixth day, after Elisa had crowned Dioneo king and laughingly told him it was time he should find out what a charge it was to rule over and guide women, the three youths sat down to play at draughts while she led the Ladies to an unknown valley. Leaving the "sumptuous palace" they walked about a mile, and "entering by a narrow path on a side where a crystal clear streamlet ran, they saw it to be as beautiful and delightful, especially at that season when the heat was so great, as can be imagined. And according to what some of them told me afterwards the level part of the valley was as circular as though drawn with compasses, yet it was an artifice of nature and not made by human labour. Little more than half a mile in circumference it was surrounded by six hills of no great height, and on the summit of each one was a palace built much in the shape of a small castle. The sides of the hills sloped towards the plain, as we see the seats in theatres from the top row descend in successive flights, always restricting their circles. And these hillsides, at least all those facing south, were clothed with vines, olive, almond, cherry and other fruit trees, and not a palm of ground was lost. Those looking to the north had copses of oak saplings, ash and other trees, green and straight as they could be. There was no other approach to the level plain than the one by which the Ladies had come; it was full of fir-trees, cypresses, bays and a few pines, so well placed and so well ordered as though planted by the greatest of artists. Little or no sun entered there, even when high in the Heavens it only just touched the earth clothed with sward of finest grass and rich in purple and other flowers. Besides this a rivulet, which was not a less delight, came from a valley dividing two of those small hills; it trickled down steep rocks of sandstone, and made in its fall a sound most delightful to hear, while the spray, from afar, seemed to be live silver broken into the lightest of showers. On reaching the level the rivulet gathered into a pleasant channel, rushed rapidly to the centre of the plain and there formed a lakelet, such as now and again townfolk, who have the art, make in their gardens for fish-ponds. The depth of the lakelet was not more than up to the breast of a man, and so clear that not only the gravel bottom could be seen, but many fishes darting about here and there.... When the Ladies had observed everything they commended the place exceedingly and the heat being great, seeing the lake before them and having no fear of

being seen, they decided to bathe ... and all seven disrobed and went down into the water, which hid their lovely white bodies no more than a thin glass would hide a crimson rose. Without causing the water to become turbid, they went hither and thither after the fish, which had scant hiding-places, trying to catch them with their hands. Having with great joy taken some, they remained some time in the water and then came forth and dressed.”

Returning to the Palace the Ladies described the valley and its lake in such glowing terms that next morning another expedition was agreed upon: “the sun’s rays had hardly begun to show when they started; never had the nightingales and other birds seemed to sing so gaily as on that morning. Accompanied by the song of birds they went as far as the Valley of the Ladies where they were greeted by many more, who appeared to them to rejoice at their coming. Walking about the valley and examining it more minutely it seemed to them so much the more beautiful than on the day before as the hour of the day was the more suitable to its loveliness. And when they had broken their fast with good wine and sweetmeats, in order not to be behind the birds they began to sing, and the valley sang with them always repeating the same songs they uttered, to which all the birds, as though loth to be vanquished, added sweet and novel notes. But the hour for eating having arrived and tables, according to the King’s pleasure, being set under the tall and spreading trees near to the lovely lakelet, they seated themselves; and whilst eating watched the fish swimming in the lake in great shoals.”<sup>[67]</sup>

Font’ all’ Erta is intimately connected with the making of the kingdom of Italy. Count Giuseppe Pasolini, who began public life in 1848 as minister of Commerce, Agriculture and the Fine Arts to Pius IX, a post he only occupied for a few months, bought it as already mentioned in 1850, when he frankly joined the party of “Young Italy.” There Ricasoli, Minghetti, La Marmora, Peruzzi, and all the liberal men of Italy often met together, and English well-wishers of Italy were frequent guests. In 1860 Count Pasolini became Governor of Milan for the King of Italy, and two years later he entered the Farini ministry for a short time as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Then he was named Prefect of Turin, a post he resigned after voting the transfer of the capital to Florence in 1864. His high character, undoubted ability and conciliatory manner caused him to be chosen for the difficult post of Commissary General of Venetia in 1866, and he entered Venice on

the 20th October, two days before the plebiscite which was all but unanimous in favour of union with Italy—641,758 votes against 69. In 1867 Count Pasolini retired into private life, but in obedience to the King's express request he accepted the Presidency of the Senate in March 1876. In December the same year he died at his family place near Ravenna aged sixty-one, leaving Font' all' Erta to his daughter Angelica, Countess Rasponi della Testa.



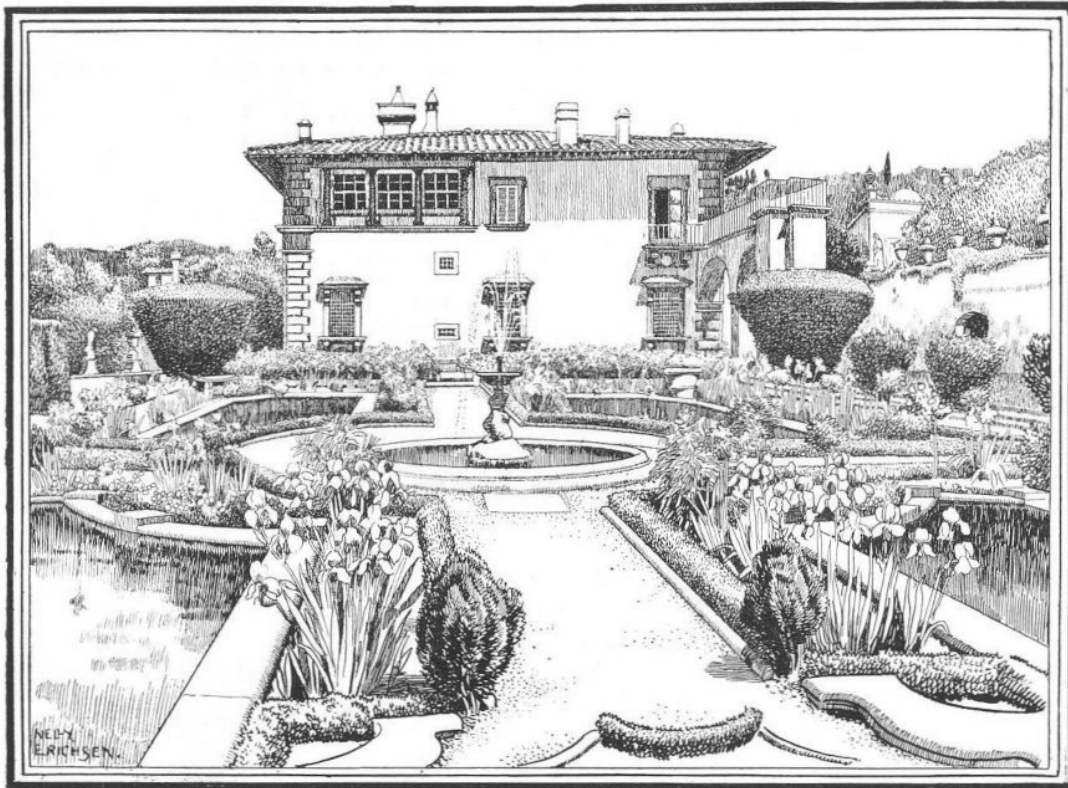
### FOOTNOTES:

[64] *Ninfale Fiesolano*. Giov. Boccaccio. Firenze, 1834. Vol. XVII. p. 9. Translated by R. C. Trevelyan.

[65] *La villeggiatura di Majano*. M.S. Roberto Gherardi, 1740.

[66] The mother of Niccolò Gaddi was Lucrezia, daughter of the Senator Matteo Strozzi, and his second wife was Maria Strozzi.

[67] *Il Decamerone*. Gio. Boccaccio. Firenze, 1827. Giornata Sesta, Novella X. p. 172, *et seq.*

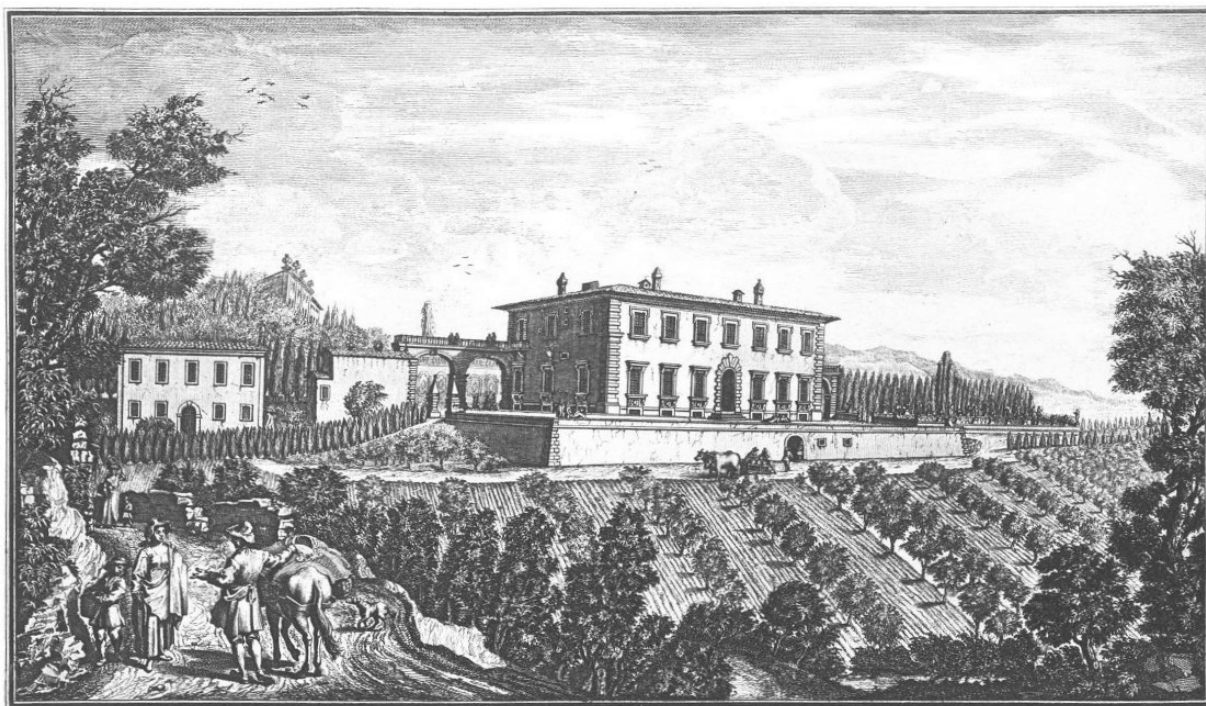


## VILLA DI GAMBERAIA

NOTHING definite is known of the history of this charming villa which stands among giant cypresses and gnarled ilexes on a terrace high above Settignano and overlooks the Val d' Arno. From the name Gamberaia some have attempted to connect it with the great sculptor Antonio Rossellino, who with his brother Bernardo, the architect, was born in Settignano and whose family name was Gamberelli. But Antonio who, writes Varchi, "was so refined and delicate in his works, their beauty and smoothness being so perfect that his manner can in truth be called natural and absolutely modern..." died about 1479, whereas Gamberaia cannot have been built much before 1600. Not far off a small house is still standing which has always been pointed out as the one inhabited by the two artist brothers. It is unlikely that any of their descendants should have made a fortune large enough to build such a villa as Gamberaia or to lay out such a garden, without some record being left. Popular tradition, which is all we have to

depend on, declares that several rills and springs of water formed a small lake or pond near by where the country folk used to catch crayfish (Gamberi), hence the name Gamberaia, the abode of crayfish. It is true that over one of the doors is a coat of arms bearing three crayfish on the right side and two half moons on the left, but I am informed by a competent authority that it is a fancy shield of late times and that the arms of the Gamberelli have six crayfish and a badge with three fleur de lis, as may be seen in Vasari's life of Rossellino. Over a door in the large entrance hall is the inscription *Zenobius Lapius Fundavit MDCX*, and by the courtesy of the present owner of Gamberaia I have been lent a legal document about water rights, which has been a disputed question for nearly three hundred years. In digging the foundation of an out-house this winter (1900), a broken shield with the Lapi arms has been discovered. From this fact it would appear to be most probable that the builder of the villa was Zanobi Lapi; the pity is that the name of his architect is not forthcoming. In the centre of the villa is a small courtyard with elegant columns sustaining an arcade out of which open vaulted rooms, and on the north and south side of the villa project very original flying balconies supported on three arches. A small spiral staircase, hidden in the square column furthest from the house on one side, leads down from the first floor into the terrace garden. Zanobi Lapi died in 1619, nine years after he had built his villa, and left it to his nephews Jacopo di Andrea Lapi, and Andrea di Cosimo Lapi, but failing heirs male he directed that his property was to be divided between the families of Capponi and Cerretani. Jacopo and Andrea evidently inherited their uncles' love for Gamberaia, as they at once began to buy up rights to the water from neighbouring proprietors, and to make conduits and large reservoirs to conduct it to various fountains and grottoes. In 1623 they bought a house and a podere, or farm, called La Doccia, which was especially rich in springs. Jacopo died the following year leaving a young son; the lands and the houses in Florence were divided between the cousins, but the villa of Gamberaia remained in their joint possession. "The most illustrious Signore Cosimo Lapi, a noble Florentine" then began to lay out one of the most characteristic seventeenth century gardens in the neighbourhood of Florence, with grottoes inlaid with shells of different kinds and various coloured marbles, statues, vases, fountains and *jeux d'eaux* of every description. In the archives of Florence are several contracts made by him, between 1624 and 1635, with his neighbours for the

purchase of springs and rills of water belonging to them, and the right to make conduits through their lands for the conveyance of the water to Gamberaia. In 1636 he had a lawsuit with a certain Signora Aurelia, a widow, who complained that he had deprived her of necessary water by the deep trenches and reservoirs dug near the confines of her property. The result of this inordinate love of fountains and curious *jeux d'eaux* was, that when "the most illustrious Florentine Andrea Lapi" died in 1688, his son was obliged to heavily mortgage the estate to pay off his father's debts. Jacopo's son Giovan Francesco died in 1717 without heirs male, and the Lapi property was divided between the Capponi and the Cerretani; the latter taking three *podere*, or farms, and some small houses in Florence, the Capponi the villa of Gamberaia and two *podere*.



**VILLA DI GAMBERAIA.**

Remains of conduits, tanks and reservoirs in several properties near Gamberaia still remain to attest the considerable works made by Andrea Lapi for supplying water to his beloved villa. He no doubt planted the noble cypresses that tower like dark green steeples on either side of the long bowling alley that runs for some four hundred feet behind the house, ending to the north in one of those elaborate half grottoes, half fountains, inlaid with shells and decorated with stone figures of impossible animals and

queer people in high relief of which Francesco de' Medici set the fashion at Pratolino and at Castello. To the south the long green walk ends in a delightful old stone balustrade with solemn grey stone figures, from whence the view over the fruitful, gently rolling hills crowned with villas or peasant houses is beautiful.

The terrace garden looks down on Settignano, a little village that can boast of more famous children than most large towns. Desiderio da Settignano, whose every work shows, as Vasari says, "that grace and simplicity that pleases everywhere and is recognised by everyone," was the son of a stone-cutter of Settignano. He was so popular that for months after his death sonnets and epigrams were laid on his tomb by admirers.

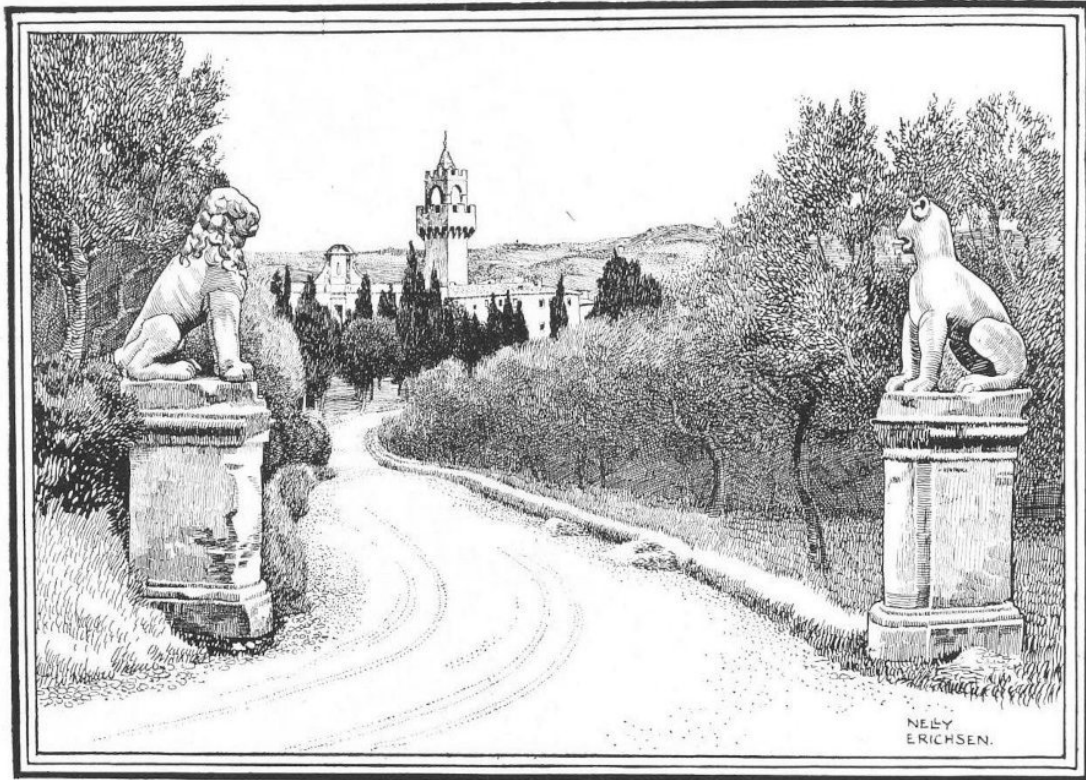
Excellent architects were Meo Del Caprina and his brother Luca; the former worked at Ferrara and Rome, and designed the cathedral of Turin; the latter fortified Librafratta and other Pisan towns. Simone Mosca da Settignano was said to have been equal to Greek and Roman sculptors, he worked with Antonio da San Gallo in Sta. Maria della Pace at Rome and in the Farnese palace; also at Arezzo, Loreto, and at Orvieto, where he was induced to settle with his family and devote himself to the service of the cathedral. His son Francesco, called Moschino, "being born almost with the mallet in his hand," sculptured some figures in the dome of Orvieto "to the wonder and astonishment of all beholders." Simone Gioli, pupil of Andrea Sansovino, was another admirable sculptor, and his son Valerio carried on the family tradition. Antonio di Gino Lorenzi was also from Settignano, he helped his master Triboli to make the famous fountain at Castello and executed the monument of Matteo Corte in the Campo Santo of Pisa. Moreni, in his *Dintorni di Firenze*, gives a list of architects, sculptors and painters, too long to insert here, who were born in the little hill village. But all pale before the tremendous personality of Michelangelo Buonarroti, "the deathless artist," as John Addington Symonds calls him. Brought to Settignano when but a few weeks old, his foster-mother was the wife as well as the daughter of a stone-cutter. "I drew the chisel and the mallet with which I carve statues in together with my nurse's milk," he told Vasari. His father's small grey house with a loggia and a tower<sup>[68]</sup> lies below the terrace of Gamberaia, and forms a fitting foreground to the view of Florence backed by the chain of the Apennines.



After various vicissitudes Gamberaia was bought a few years ago by Princess Ghyka, who is restoring the beautiful old-fashioned garden to its pristine splendour with infinite patience and taste.

### **FOOTNOTES:**

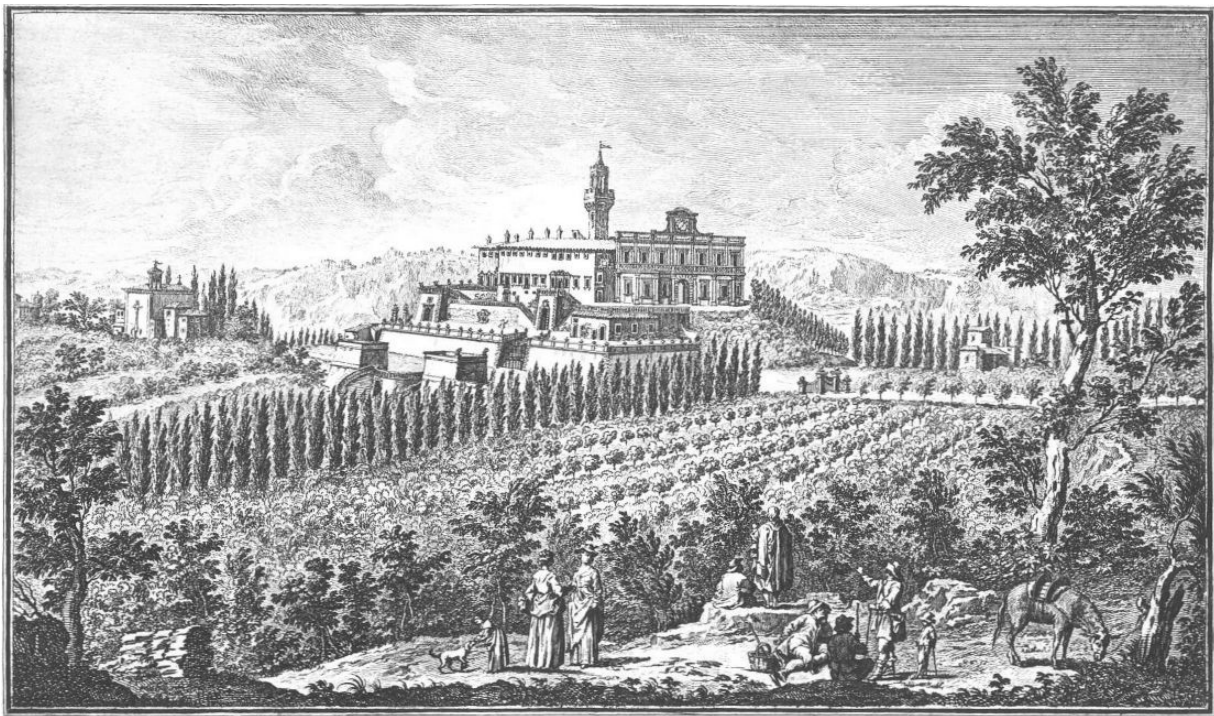
[\[68\]](#) It now belongs to Signor Chiesa.



## VILLA DI MONTE GUFFONE

MONTE Guffone was built at a time when castles and watch-towers were needed on the Tuscan hills, and the Acciajuoli, rivals of the Peruzzi and Bardi, determined to have a fortress-villa that should be a visible sign of their power and magnificence. The site chosen for it was the hilly country near San Casciano, between the river Pesa and the streamlet Virginio, a little off the high road to Volterra, commanding a varied landscape of vast woods of pine and oak, farms surrounded by olive-groves and vineyards, and hill-set villages with winding roads overhung with rosemary bushes. The first glimpse of Monte Guffone seen across the misty waves of olives is of a grand and shapely massed group of building, resting like a citadel on the shoulder of the hills. From its midst rises a tall tower closely resembling that of Palazzo Vecchio—with the difference that it starts straight from the ground. Upon nearing the villa there is a delightful sense of variety, as successive generations of the Acciajuoli have given it a

different character until finally it has become a beautiful but somewhat baroque seventeenth century villa. Still, when walking on the broad balcony which probably covers the ancient bastions, there is the feeling of a great house built for defence, and the tower has been left untouched in a courtyard into which look large Michelangelesque windows framed with dark stone and set at regular intervals one from another, forming a perfect piece of work of its kind, and contrasting pleasantly with the mediæval watch-tower. On the northern side of the villa a façade has been added giving it almost an ecclesiastical appearance, enhanced by the group of sedate and sombre cypresses and ilexes growing at one corner of this otherwise joyous looking building. To the same period belongs the grand stone staircase on the garden side, leading down to a grotto encrusted with shells and ornamented with statues of the seasons, which even in their present shattered condition recall the past almost Medicean splendour of the place. The wall slopes out with spreading bastions forming an entrance to the grotto as though the architect had remembered the gateway of some Etruscan city, and above the arch is set a shield, supported by cupids, with the lions of the Acciajuoli house.



**VILLA DI MONTE GUFFONE.**

This once magnificent villa, now let out in tenements to poor people, was built, or at all events enlarged, early in the fourteenth century by the Grand Seneschal Acciajuoli, whose family first appears in Florentine history in the thirteenth century as merchants, rivalling, if they did not surpass, the Bardi and the Peruzzi in wealth. One of them, Niccola, stands gibbeted to all time by Dante. He and Baldo d'Aguglione, aided by the Podestà, tore out a sheet of the public records of the city in order to destroy the proof of certain frauds committed. Ironically Dante refers to the "well-guided city," praising the old days—

“... when still  
The registry and label rested safe.”

Unlike the present Florentines, who are never happy away from the shadow of their Duomo, the Acciajuoli thought nothing of going to far distant lands or of taking service with foreign princes. Thus Dardano, son of Lotteringo, passed most of his youth at Tunis as treasurer to the Bey. In 1305 he was back in Florence leading his fellow-citizens against Pistoja, and soon afterwards went as ambassador to Naples to offer the Lordship of Florence to the King, Robert of Anjou; two years later he returned there to beg assistance against Ugucione della Faggiuola who threatened to make himself master of the city. A cousin of his, Niccola Acciajuoli, left Florence for Naples at the age of twenty-one to negotiate a loan, and by his extraordinary personal beauty, grace and intelligence, won the heart of Catherine, titular Empress of Constantinople, widow of the Prince of Taranto; her brother-in-law the King, who recognised his capacity and diplomatic talents, appointed him the guardian of her three children. In 1338 Niccola accompanied Louis, the eldest of his wards, to Achaia in Greece, and for three years conducted the war against the Turks with great ability; but the death of King Robert, who left the kingdom of Naples to his niece Joan, proved the stepping-stone to his fortune. Married against her will to Andrew of Hungary, a coarse, uneducated man entirely under the dominion of his rude Hungarian followers, Joan had fallen passionately in love with her cousin Louis, Prince of Taranto; and when Andrew was strangled whilst asleep popular rumour connected Acciajuoli with the murder; the Queen married her cousin Louis, and Niccola became the

trusted minister of the crown. The King of Hungary soon appeared on the scene to avenge the death of his brother, and finding he was too powerful to be opposed Acciajuoli persuaded Queen Joan and her young husband to take refuge in his splendid villa Monte Guffone near Florence. After passing some weeks with him they went to Avignon to implore the aid of Pope Clement VI, but the plague, which broke out in Naples soon afterwards, proved a more efficient ally; the King of Hungary fled from the stricken city and Niccola conducted Louis and Joan back to Naples where they were received with great demonstrations of delight. He was created Grand Seneschal of the Kingdom, Count of Melfi, etc., etc., and placing himself at the head of the army drove the Hungarians back to their own country. Peace was finally made through the intervention of the Pope, and then Acciajuoli set himself to free Sicily of the Spaniards; but during his absence the King was turned against him by the Neapolitan courtiers, and in dudgeon he threw up all his appointments and retired into private life. When, however, the Pope laid the kingdom under an interdict on account of unpaid taxes, he at once offered himself as mediator. Innocent VI, received him with extraordinary honours; raised the interdict at his request, gave him the Golden Rose (the first time a private person had been thus distinguished), named him a Senator of Rome, Count of the Campagna and Rector of the ecclesiastical Patrimony, and then sent him to Milan as envoy to Bernabo Visconti to obtain the restitution of Bologna. Finding diplomacy of no avail, Niccola put himself with the Papal Legate at the head of the papal troops and soon entered Bologna in triumph. Returning to Naples he lived in almost royal state until his death at the early age of fifty-six.

Besides Monte Guffone, Niccola Acciajuoli built the magnificent Certosa near Florence after the design of Orcagna, and the first of the family to be buried there was his handsome, brilliant son Lorenzo, “a Knight and a great Baron” Matteo Villani calls him in his description of the funeral. The body was sent from Naples and on the 7th April 1354 was taken “on a knightly hearse, one great charger being in front and one behind covered with silken housings emblazoned with the Acciajuoli arms, while the hearse was covered with rich hangings and a baldaquin of silk and gold, and over the coffin was fine crimson velvet; the horses were ridden by squires dressed in black, and preceding the hearse were seven squires on great chargers, their draperies trailing on the ground, with the aforesaid arms on their breasts in beaten silver. The two first squires bore plumed helmets, the third carried a

standard and the other four had each a large banner with the Acciajuoli arms." In 1366 Niccola also was buried at the Certosa near his son with great pomp.

Donato, a cousin of Niccola, had been sent to Corinth as governor, and in 1392 his brother Neri was created Duke of Athens, Lord of Megara, Plataea, Thebes and Corinth. Neri's illegitimate son Antonio inherited only the Lordship of Bœotia and Thebes, while Athens returned to the crown of Naples. The Venetians immediately seized it, but Antonio, worthy scion of a splendid race, soon drove them out and held the place for himself. He was succeeded by his cousin Neri who, dethroned by his brother Antonio, only got back his estates after the death of the latter. Neri's son was a child when his father died and Sultan Mahomet II, refusing to acknowledge his title to the throne, named Francesco, Antonio's son, in his stead. His tyranny was so intolerable that the Sultan ordered him to be strangled and thus, after seventy years of sovereignty ended the Acciajuoli rulers of Greece. Demostene Tiribilli-Giuliani, from whose work *Le Famiglie Celebre Toscane* I have gathered the above facts remarks, with a fine disregard of history, "no one mentions Athens after this, indeed its existence was hardly known until our day, when it became the capital of Greece."

The Acciajuoli constantly figure in the history of Florence as Gonfaloniers, Vicars, Ambassadors, Envoys, Cardinals and Bishops; and one of the saddest and most romantic stories of the eighteenth century has an Acciajuoli as its hero. Roberto, eldest son of Donato Acciajuoli, handsome, clever, brave and fascinating, had long admired Elisabetta Mormorai, wife of Captain Giulio Berardi. On the death of her husband he declared his love and the beautiful widow accepted him. But he reckoned without his uncle Cardinal Acciajuoli, who had made up his mind that his handsome nephew should make an alliance in Rome which might help him in his designs on the papal chair. Prayers, admonitions and threats being of no avail, the Cardinal induced the Grand Duke Cosimo III, to imprison Elisabetta in a convent; upon which Roberto contracted a canonical marriage with her by letter and fled to Milan where he published it, demanding at the same time justice from the Grand Duke, the Archbishop, the Cardinal and his own father. In Lombardy the validity of the marriage was upheld, while in Florence it was declared to be a mere engagement. The lady was removed from her convent to a fortress, upon which Roberto,

while the papal chair was vacant in 1691, wrote a circular to all the cardinals, imploring justice from them and from the future pope. All Italy was interested in the unhappy lovers and blamed the high-handed Cardinal and his slavish abettor Cosimo III. In vain Cardinal Acciajuoli tried to excuse himself by throwing all the blame on his relations, his conduct lost him the chance of being made pope, while the Grand Duke was accused of arbitrary and unjust conduct and of truckling to the private spite of a cardinal. Cosimo determined to revenge himself, but for the moment he set the fair prisoner free who immediately joined her husband in Venice, where everyone pitied them and blamed the Grand Duke, by whom formal application was made to the Republic to deliver up the lovers, accusing them of want of respect to their sovereign. They fled, but their steps were dogged, and at Trent they were arrested disguised as friars and taken back to Tuscany, where Roberto Acciajuoli was condemned to perpetual imprisonment in the fortress of Volterra and the loss of his patrimony, while Elisabetta was given the choice of repudiating her marriage or being immured in the same prison. In the hope of mitigating his sentence she chose the former and ended her days in tears and misery, while Roberto died in the most terrible prison of Tuscany, as anyone who has visited the *Mastio* of Volterra will know.

This is but one of the many instances of Cosimo's tyranny. An insensate bigot, he was entirely under the dominion of priests and monks who ruined the country and destroyed its morality. Few princes have been more hated by their subjects and their own family, or with better reason.

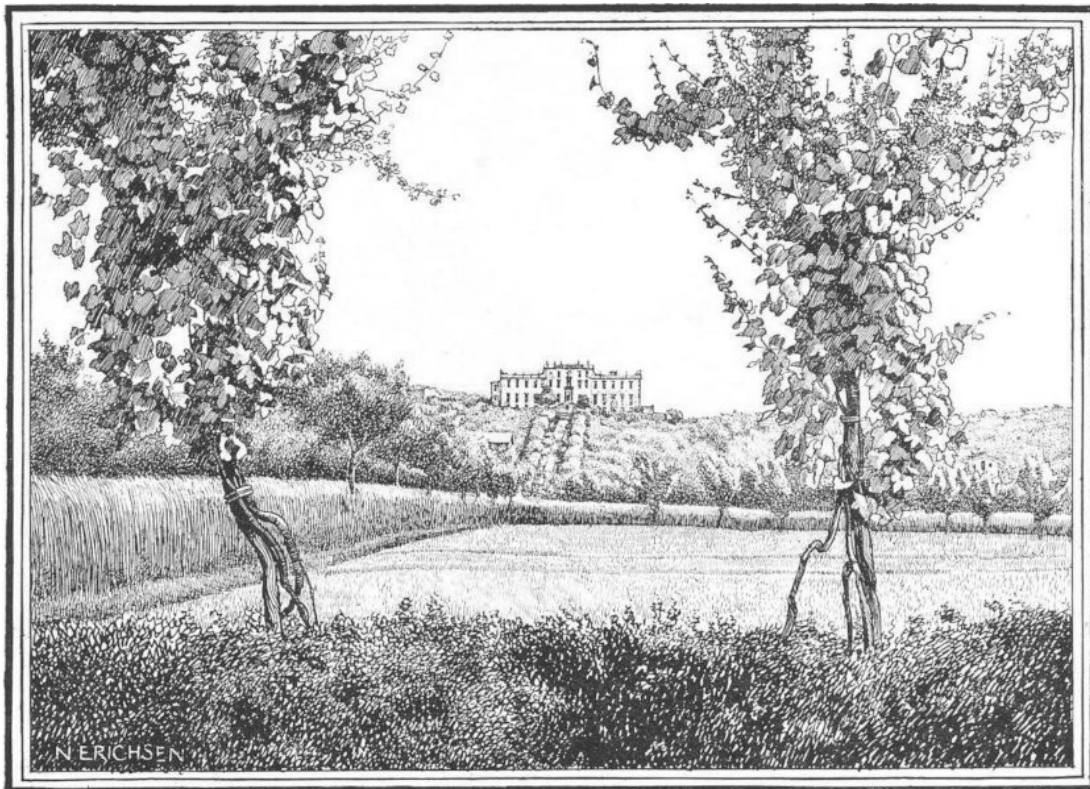
In the lovely Val di Pesa near Monte Guffone occurred the pretty scene so charmingly described in a long letter by that witty Tuscan, Ser Matteo Franco, chaplain to the Medici, who bandied sonnets and "strambotti" with Luigi Pulci. The austere, rather disagreeable Clarice, wife of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who had not been fitted by her education in the stately Orsini palace at Rome for the brilliant pleasure-loving life at Florence, was returning from some baths near Volterra when, as Matteo Franco writes, "... we met paradise full of festive and joyous angels, that is to say Messer Giovanni, Piero, Giuliano and Julio on pillions with their attendants. And when they saw their mother they threw themselves off their horses, some by themselves, some with the help of others; and all ran forward and were lifted into the arms of Madonna Clarice with such joy and kisses and delight

that I could not describe in a hundred letters. Even I could not refrain from dismounting; and before they got on their horses again, I embraced them all and kissed them twice; once for myself and once for Lorenzo. Darling little Giulianino said with a long O, o, o, ‘where is Lorenzo?’ We answered, ‘he has gone on before to Poggio to see you.’ Then he: ‘Oh no never,’ almost in tears. You never beheld so touching a sight. He and Piero, who has become a beautiful boy, the finest thing, by God, you ever saw, with such a profile he is like an angel, and rather long hair which stands out a little and is pretty to see. And Giuliano red and fresh as a rose, smooth, clean and bright as a mirror, joyous yet contemplative with those large eyes. Messer Giovanni also looks well, his colour is not so high but clear and natural; and Julio has a brown and healthy skin. All, in short, are happiness itself. And thus with great content a joyous party we went by Via Maggio, Ponte a Santa Trinita, San Michele Berteldi, Santa Maria Maggiore, Canto alla Paglia and Via de’ Martegli; and entered into the house *per infinita asecola asecolorum eselibera nos a malo amen.*”<sup>[69]</sup>



## **FOOTNOTES:**

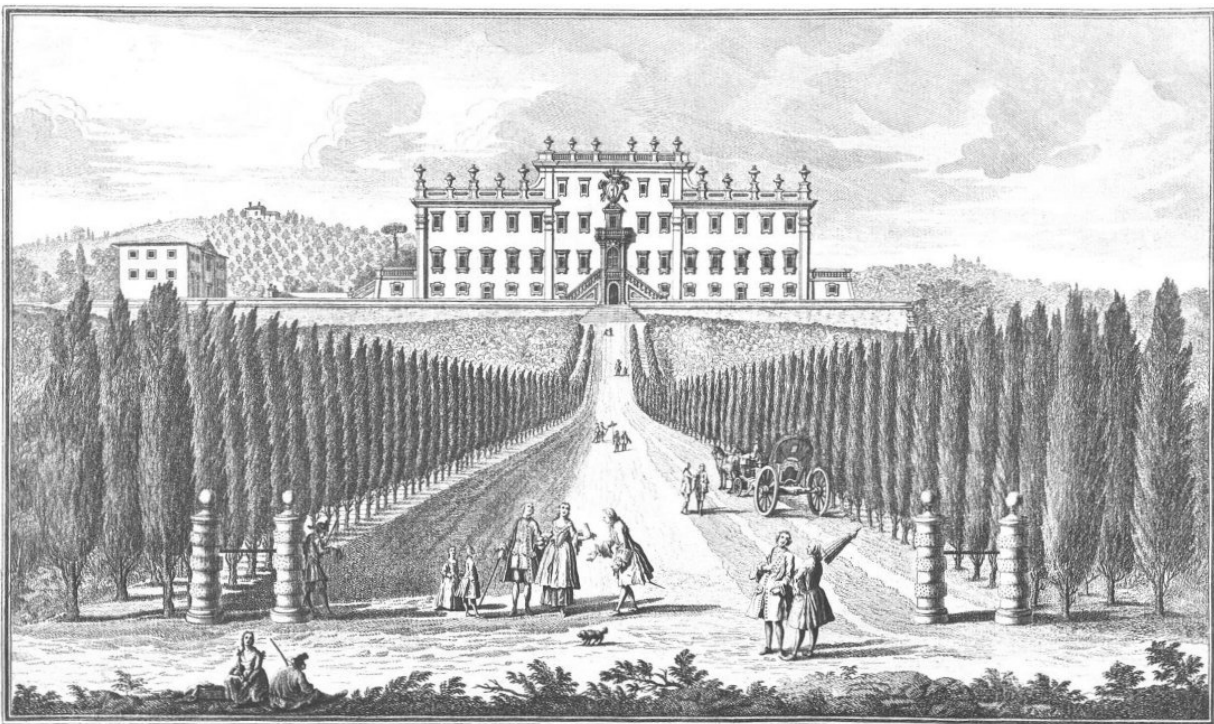
[69] See *Florentia*. Isidoro Del Lungo. Firenze, 1897. P. 424.



## VILLA DI CASTEL-PULCI

ABOUT six miles from Florence on the high road to Pisa stands the fine villa of Castel-Pulci, now a lunatic asylum. In ancient times the Pulci owned large possessions in the Val d'Arno, but the first notice I have found of them is in 1278 when Jacopo di Rinaldo Pulci was denounced to the captain of the Guelph party in Florence for failing to keep a weir in the Arno near Ponte a Signa in proper repair. His son Mainetto sold this weir to the monks of the great Badia<sup>[70]</sup> a Settimo, who in 1313 also bought an island in the river from Giovanni and Ponzardo, sons of Mainetto. Like so many of the great Florentine houses the Pulci failed in 1321 and villa and lands were seized by the cardinal Napoleone Orsini, one of the creditors. His heirs sold the estate to the Marquis Rinnucini who enlarged and beautified Castel-Pulci, which was bought by the government some fifty years ago.

Luigi Pulci, born on the 3rd of December 1431, was the author of the *Morgante Maggiore*, the first burlesque romance in European literature and the prototype of that form of poetry which Ariosto brought to perfection. His two elder brothers were also poets; Luca wrote the *Ciriffo Calvaneo* and the *Driadeo d'Amore*, and was considered by Varchi superior to Luigi, while Giovio calls him *poeta nobile*. Bernardo, the eldest, was among the first to write pastoral poetry in the vulgar tongue; he also made a good translation of the Eclogues of Virgil, and wrote a poem on the passion of Christ and many plays. His wife Antonia was a poetess of no mean fame in the same style. Verino celebrates the three brothers thus:



**VILLA DI CASTEL-PULCI.**

“Carminibus patriis notissima Pulcia proles.  
Qui non hanc urbem Musarem dicat amicam,  
Si tres prodicat fratres domus una poetas?”

Luigi Pulci was an intimate friend of the Medici and formed one of the brilliant company surrounding Lorenzo il Magnifico, who mentions him in his poem on hawking:

“Luigi Pulci ov’è, che non si sente?  
Egli se n’andò dianzi in quel boschetto,  
Che qualche fantasia ha per la mente,  
Vorrà fantasticar forse un sonetto;”

Many were the jokes made by Lorenzo’s witty chaplain, Ser Matteo di Franco, a canon of the cathedral of Florence, and a favourite of Pope Innocent VIII, on the name of his friend Pulci (Pulex, a flea). He used to say of Luigi, who was very thin, “famine is as naturally depicted on his countenance as though it were a work by Giotto.” They wrote facetious sonnets to each other which were published in the fifteenth century and immediately placed on the Index, but a reprint of this rare volume was made by Marchese De Rossi in 1759. Both were admirers and intimate friends of Angelo Poliziano (to whom, by the way, some have erroneously attributed the *Morgante Maggiore*).

Luigi Pulci’s poem, which Lord Byron admired sufficiently to translate, tells of the hatred borne by the perfidious Ganellone to the chaste and generous Orlando and the other Christian Paladins. Charlemagne, deceived by Ganellone, whose envy, dissimulation, feigned humility and capacity for lying is admirably portrayed, sends him to Spain to treat for the cession of a kingdom for Orlando with King Marsilio. Instead of this he plots with the Spaniards for the destruction of Orlando, who is killed at Roncesvalle. Morgante the giant, after being baptised by Orlando becomes his faithful squire; the other giant Maggutte is a jovial pagan, laughing at everybody and everything, who ends his life in peals of loud laughter. The poem was composed for the amusement of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the accomplished mother of Lorenzo de’ Medici, herself a poetess. “Luigi Pulci,” writes Symonds, “assumed the tone of a street-singer, opening each canto with the customary invocation to the Madonna or a paraphrase of some church collect, and dismissing his audience at the close with grateful thanks or brief good wishes.

“But Pulci was no mere *Canta-storie*. The popular style served but as a cloak to cover his subtle-witted satire and his mocking levity. Tuscan humour keeps up an *obbligato* accompaniment throughout the poem. Sometimes this humour is in harmony with the plebeian spirit of the old

Italian romances; sometimes it turns aside and treats it as a theme of ridicule. In reading the *Morgante* we must bear in mind that it was written canto by canto to be recited in the palace of the Via Larga, at the table where Poliziano and Ficino gathered with Michelangelo Buonarroti and Cristoforo Landino. Whatever topics may from time to time have occupied that brilliant circle, were reflected in its stanzas; and this alone suffices to account for its tender episodes and its burlesque extravagances, for the satiric picture of Margutte and the serious discourses of the devil Astarotte. The external looseness of construction and the intellectual unity of the poem, are both attributable to these circumstances. Passing by rapid transitions from grave to gay, from pathos to cynicism, from theological speculations to ribaldry, it is at one and the same time a mirror of the popular taste which suggested the form, and also of the courtly wits who listened to it laughing. The *Morgante* is no *naïve* production of a simple age, but the artistic plaything of a cultivated and critical society, entertaining its leisure with old-world stories, accepting some for their beauty's sake in seriousness, and turning others into nonsense for pure mirth.”<sup>[71]</sup>

Close to Castel-Pulci, on the spur of a hill overlooking the Valle Morta (a name probably alluding to a battle fought there in 1113) on one side and the valley of the Arno on the other, is Monte Cascioli, now a farm-house, once the strong castle of the powerful Lords of Fucecchio. Here Count Lottario and his mother Countess Gemma held court in 1006 and gave large donations to the Badia a Settimo. Their descendant Ugo joined Ruberto Tedesco, Vicario of Tuscany under Henry III, against the Florentines, who marched out and fought a pitched battle in which Ruberto was killed and Monte Cascioli was stormed and destroyed.

From the terrace of Castel-Pulci one looks down upon the broad and fertile plain of the Arno, whose course is marked by lines of shimmering poplars, and the fine mass of Mount Morello rises in the distance. Close to the river bank the beautiful campanile, attributed by Vasari to Niccolò Pisano, of the ancient Badia a Settimo stands out against the green background. The Pulci once owned a strong castle near by of which no vestige remains, but the Badia had been a dependency of the great Lords of Fucecchio since 940, and was inhabited by Cluniacense monks, whose behaviour became so scandalous that in 1063 Count Guglielmo Bulgaro

appealed to his friend St Giovan Gualberto for aid, and the saintly abbot of Vallombrosa introduced his own rule. Soon afterwards, by his order, St Peter Igneus went through the ordeal by fire at Settimo in the presence of a large concourse of people. The following inscriptions may still be read bearing witness to the fact:—

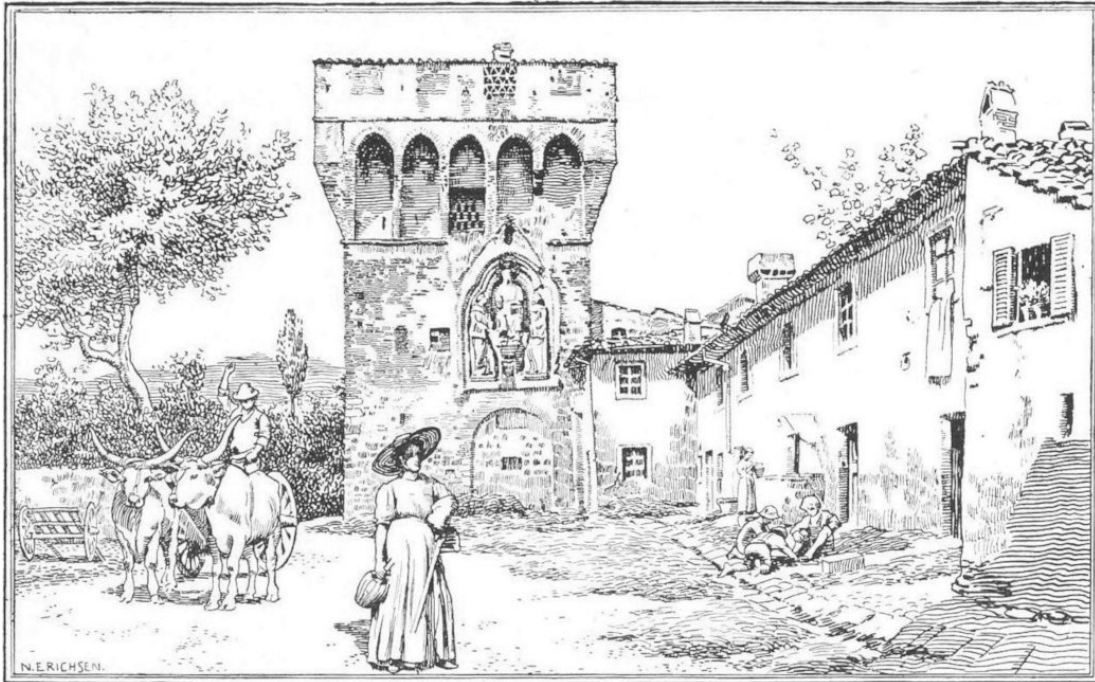
IGNEUS HIC PETRUS MEDIOS PERTRANSIIT IGNES,  
FLAMMARUM VICTOR, SED MAGIS HAERESEOS.  
HOC IN LOCO, MIRACULO S. JOHANNIS GUALBERTO, QUIDAM FUERE  
CONFUTATI HAERETICI, MLXX.

In 1236 Gregory IX, took the abbey and monastery under the immediate protection of the Holy See and gave it to the Cistercians, whose conduct was so exemplary that the Signoria of Florence entrusted them with the administration of the taxes, the maintenance of the city walls and bridges and finally gave the great seal into their keeping. The monks were made exempt from taxes and their revenue must have been large, as every abbot paid a thousand golden florins to the Pope on his investiture. The tall gatetower, once connected with the strong walls built round the monastery by the Republic of Florence, is very fine and a large and curious *alto-relievo* built up of brick and mortar, of Our Lord and two saints, is above the closed-up door. Under the feet of the Christ is a slab with the lily of Florence and an illegible inscription. Below that again is written—

“Anno Domini MCCXXXVI, S.S. Dmn. N. Gregorius IX dedit hoc Monasterium de Septimo Ordin. Cirterc. cum esset liberum et exemptum ab omni regio patronatu, quod in plena libertate a dicto Ordine pacifice possidetur.”

Badia a Settimo must have been magnificent with its moat and three other towers, each of which had a drawbridge. Now much of the ancient structure lies under fifteen feet of mud deposited by the perpetual inundations of the Arno, the monks' refectory has been divided into cellars, the fine old abbey-church with its solemn, almost Egyptian-looking, columns is a *tinaia* where wine is made and the original height can only be seen by an excavation which has been dug round one of the columns. The monastery is a private villa, and the lovely cloister with its slender pillars, beautifully carved capitals and expanse of grass serves as a playground for

the children. The present church was built in the thirteenth century at right angles to the ancient abbey-church and nearer to the campanile, on artificially raised ground. The steps which led up to the door are already deep under the earth and the bases of the columns supporting the loggia in front of the church are more than half buried. The high altar is a fine piece of *pietra dura* work, and round the top of the choir is a pretty frieze by one of the Della Robbia, of four-winged heads of angels alternating with a kneeling lamb holding a banner, emblem of the guild of wool manufacturers. In the left hand chapel is a small ambrey, or receptacle for the holy oil, by Desiderio da Settignano, of most exquisite design and workmanship; the walls of the chapel are frescoed by Giovanni di San Giovanni, and above the altar is kept a silver casket containing the bones of St Quentin. The saint was beheaded at Paris a thousand or more years ago and transported his bones by some miracle to a church on the opposite side of the river; not liking his quarters he moved in 1187 to the high altar of the ancient abbey-church, but still dissatisfied he placed the silver casket every morning in this chapel, which was the greatest miracle of all as the chapel was only built late in the thirteenth century. "And here he still is," said the sacristan, "but without his head, which he could not find when he left Paris." A short corridor behind the high altar leads into the old chapel of Lapi des Spinis, built according to an inscription in 1315. Dim traces of frescoes by some follower of Giotto are still to be seen, but the chapel is so silted up with mud that the present floor very nearly touches the level of the spring of the groined arches of the roof.



## FOOTNOTES:

[70] Abbey.

[71] J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy. Italian Literature.* Part I. p. 440.



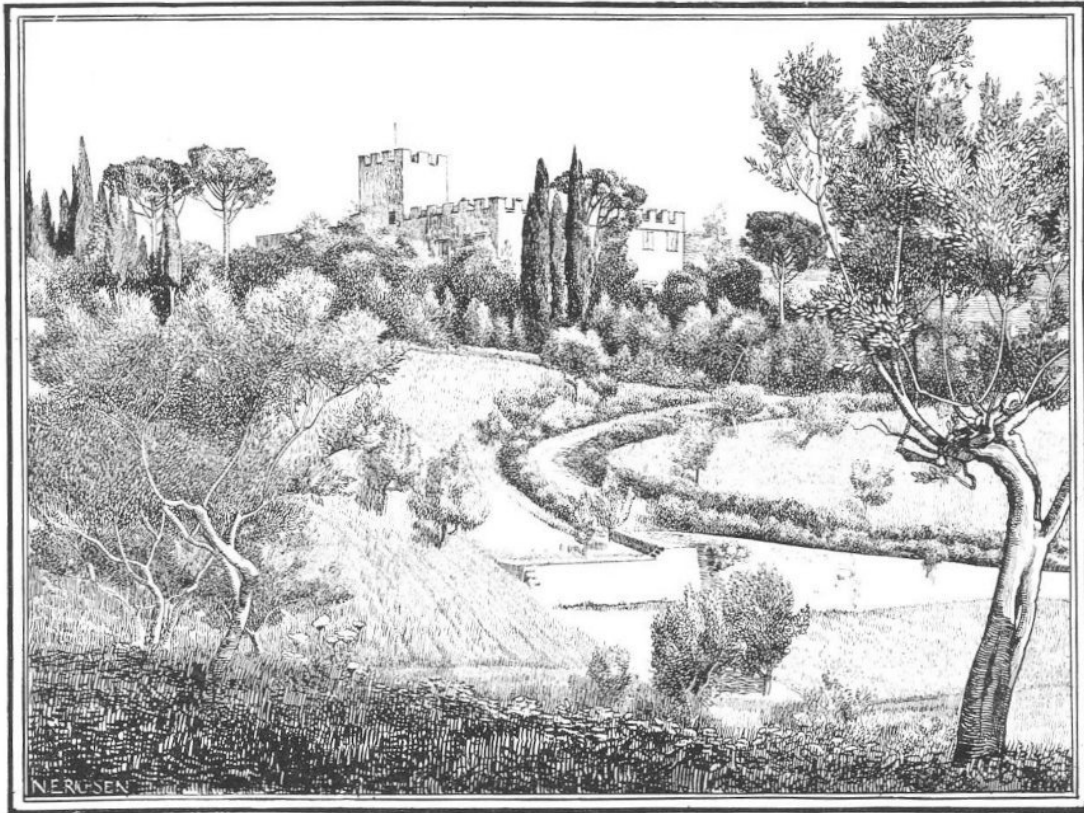
**BOCCACCIO,**  
By ANONIMO.  
*(Villa di Poggio Gherardo).*



**MICHEL ANGELO,**  
By LEONE LEONI.  
*(Villa di Gamberaia).*



**DUKE FEDERIGO OF  
URBINO, By ANONIMO. *(Villa  
di Rusciano).***



## VILLA DI POGGIO GHERARDO

NEARLY two miles due east of Florence, above the Settignano road, stands the old castellated villa of Poggio Gherardo on an eminence which overlooks the valley of the Arno. In 1321 Meglino di Jacopo di Magaldo Magaldi died, leaving by will part of this ancient possession of his family, *i.e.* “the podere of Poggio and the buildings above the said podere where now are, and have been in times gone by, the Loggia, the Tower, the Well, the Water-channels, the Courtyard and all the Garden and Orchard, with the Fields and Pergole which are enclosed and surrounded in part with walls, &c.”, to the Congregation of the Visitation; with the obligation to build an oratorio or chapel in the said house in honour of St Zebedeus, and to support a resident priest to say mass every day for the repose of his soul. Also the priest on each anniversary of the death of Magaldo was to invite all the members of the house of Magaldi to dinner. They, however, brought

a lawsuit against the Congregation of the Visitation, who appealed to the Cardinal Legate of Pope John XXII, (who was at Avignon) setting forth that by the time they had paid the expenses of the lawsuit with borrowed money nothing would be left, and asking permission to sell the estate which many would like to buy, *cum sit in loco carissimo situatum*. Thus they would be able to pay everything and to carry out the wishes of the pious Magaldo as far as the daily mass was concerned. So the villa and land was sold to Messer Bivigliano del già Manetto de' Baroncelli and his brother Messer Silvestro for 3100 golden florins on the 14th January 1331. The Baroncelli did not long enjoy their purchase. They, with the Buonaccorsi, were interested in the great banking house of Acciajuoli which was declared insolvent in 1345. Poggio must have belonged to the Albizzi for a few years, as Andrea di Sennino Baldesi bought the villa and one podere from them in 1354, his brother Baldese having already purchased other parts of the estate from the Baroncelli five years before. In 1400 the Zati became lords of Poggio and in 1433 they sold it to Gherardo di Bartolomeo Gherardi. He changed the name from Palagio del Poggio to Poggio Gherardi, or Gherardo (it is called both in the archives), and his descendants held the place for 455 years. Mr Henry James Ross bought it in 1888 and has made its name known as the home of a fine collection of orchids.

Many illustrious men did the Gherardi give to the service of Florence. Gherardo was three times Gonfalonier of the city; his son Francesco was a brave soldier and led the troops of the Republic against the Siennese in 1495 when he stormed Montepulciano and took Giovanni Savelli, their Roman captain prisoner, whom he brought, with many nobles and captains of Siena, in triumph to Florence. His brother Bernardo Gherardi, Gonfalonier in 1434, was a strong partisan of the Medici, and his influence caused the exile of Cosimo de' Medici to be cancelled. The Republic sent him as ambassador to Venice, Ferrara and Rome, and when he died in 1459 he was buried at the public expense. Seven different Gherardi were Gonfaloniers of Justice, and the name occurs frequently in the old history of Florence.<sup>[72]</sup>

Tradition says the old castle stood many a siege and that Sir John Hawkwood was guilty of destroying the eastern wing, only partially rebuilt some two or three hundred years ago. It probably was one of the frontier castles which in ancient times defended Florence from the people of Arezzo

and of the Casentino. The line of castles, with their towers, can still be traced, from Castel di Poggio perched high on the hill above past Vincigliata and Poggio Gherardo, across the valley and up the opposite bank of the Arno.

Poggio Gherardo stands about 300 feet above the plain. From the gate, with its marble busts of the four seasons, a winding road flanked by roses on either side—a glory to behold in springtime—leads up through olive-groves and vineyards to the spinny which crowns the hill and protects the villa from the north wind. Over the door are the arms of the Gherardi and the entrance hall is the “Loggia” mentioned in the *Decameron*, the arches of which were built up two or three hundred years ago. In the courtyard the well, eighty feet deep, “of coldest water” still exists; but alas, the “jocund paintings” in the rooms have disappeared.

From the southern terrace garden the view is wonderful, especially if you see a purple, orange and blood-red sunset away to the west, behind the mountains of Modena and the cloud-like white masses of Carrara. Florence lies mapped out at one’s feet, with Galileo’s tower, San Miniato, Monte Uliveto and Bellosguardo keeping watch over her. When the air is clear the point of Monte Nero above Leghorn can be seen in the far west, while to the east Vallombrosa forms a background for Settignano and the house of Michelangelo—ninety-three miles as the crow flies. The course of the Arno in the valley below is marked by rows of tall poplars, and hundreds of villas, shining brightly in the sun, are dotted about in the plain and on the hillsides, while line after line of opalesque hills fade away towards the fertile vale of the Chianti. Eastwards are Monte Pilli and the Incontro, so-called because St Francis and St Dominic are supposed to have met there, and beyond them again, as already said, is Vallombrosa.

From the eastern terrace one looks down on the small streamlet Mensola, celebrated in Boccaccio’s *Ninfale Fiesolane*, rushing down to meet her lover Affrico, who comes from the Fiesole hills on the west to join his tears with hers. Near the banks of the Mensola stands one of the oldest churches in Tuscany, San Martino a Mensola. The *body* of the Irish Saint Andrew, who founded a monastery here in the seventh century, lies under the high altar clothed in old brocaded robes, while his *ashes* are supposed to be under a side altar in an exquisitely painted wooden box; through the small iron grating one can see, by the light of a taper, beautiful slim youths with

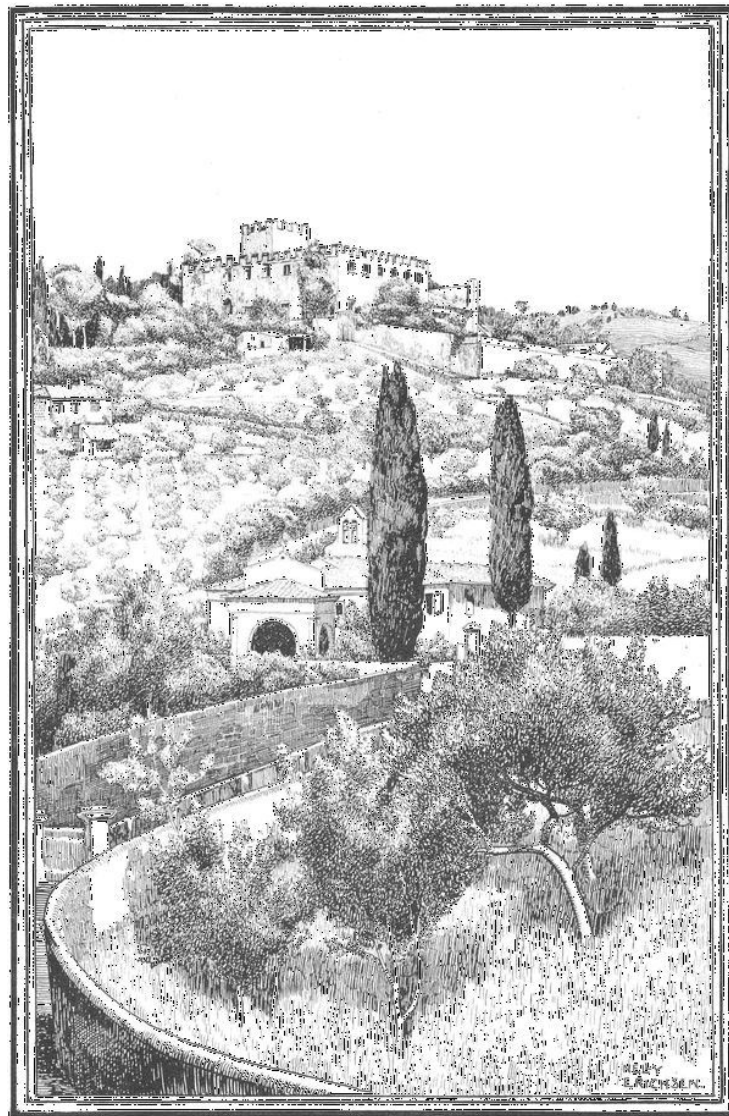
curled hair walking in a garden of orange trees laden with big fruit. In the church are some fine pictures, one attributed to Orcagna was given by the Zati, once lords of Poggio Gherardo. The old, square, machicolated castle has always been identified by students with the first “palagio” in which the joyous company of seven ladies and three youths took refuge when they fled from the plague in Florence in 1348.

“Wandering in idleness, but not in folly,  
Sate down in the high grass and in the shade  
Of many a tree sun-proof—day after day,  
When all was still and nothing to be heard  
But the cicala’s voice among the olives,  
Relating in a ring, to banish care,  
Their hundred tales.

Round the green hill they went,  
Round underneath—first to a splendid house,  
Gherardi, as an old tradition runs,  
That on the left, just rising from the vale;  
A place for luxury—the painted rooms,  
The open galleries and middle court  
Not unprepared, fragrant and gay with flowers.”<sup>[73]</sup>

In 1740 Roberto Gherardi wrote a long-winded but curious account of his own villa and of many others on the Fiesolean hills called *La Villeggiatura di Majano*. It has never been printed, but if for nothing else his MS. is valuable as suggesting that Giovanni Boccaccio was born near the banks of the Mensola. He writes, “... our celebrated master of Tuscan eloquence, Messer Giovanni di Boccaccio di Chellino da Certaldo, who in his earliest days, and afterwards in the flower of his youth passed much time in a small villa with a podere belonging to his father but a few paces below the hamlet of Corbignano, which podere on account of the rill dividing it which runs into the Mensola, and of the specified frontiers, and the two parishes San Martino a Mensola and Santa Maria a Settignano, in whose jurisdiction it lies, can only be, when you study it well, the villa of Signor Berti at

Corbignano at present in the possession of Signor Ottavio Ruggeri, as can be verified by the contract of sale existing in the archives of Florence of the 18th May 1336 when our Boccaccio was twenty-three years old. I believe that under the guise of Ameto, Boccaccio tells us he was born among the neighbouring hills of Majano. In this forest Ameto, a wandering youth, used to visit the Fauns and Dryads who inhabited there; he, remembering that perhaps he was born in the neighbouring hills, was constrained thereto by a certain carnal love, and honoured them sometimes with pious offerings." Villa Boccaccio was let out in small apartments to poor people for years; it now belongs to Mr Kenworthy Browne, and traces of ancient frescoes were found in some of the rooms when he restored it.



As before said Poggio Gherardo is generally identified as the place Boccaccio had in his mind when he describes how on a Wednesday morning “as the day was breaking, the ladies with various of their serving-maids, and the three youths with three of their followers, left the town and went on their way; they had not gone more than two short miles from the city when they arrived at the place they had already decided on.<sup>[74]</sup> This said place was on a small height, removed a little distance from our roads on every side, full of various trees and shrubs in full greenery and most pleasant to behold. On the brow of the hill was a palace with a fine and spacious courtyard in the middle, and with loggie and halls and rooms, all, and each one in itself beautiful, and ornamented tastefully with jocund paintings; surrounded with grass plots and marvellous gardens, and with wells of coldest water, and cellars of rare wines; a thing more suited to curious toppers than to sober and virtuous women.”

Here Pampinea was crowned queen with “an honourable and beautiful garland of bays,” and here she commanded Panfilo to begin the series of immortal tales known all the world over as the *Decameron*. At the end of the first day Pampinea ceded the garland, emblem of royalty, to “the discreet maiden Filomena” and the joyous company went slowly down to a stream (the Mensola) of clear water, “which descended from a hill and flowed through a valley shaded by many trees, amidst live rocks and green grass. Here bare-footed and with bare arms they went down into the water and disported themselves, then the hour of supper being at hand they returned to the palace and supped with great contentment.” Music, singing and dancing whiled away the hours until the queen was pleased to command the torches to be lit and that everyone should seek repose.

The second day passed in like manner, and when the tenth and last tale came to an end, Filomena took the garland from off her own head and crowned Neifile queen, who said: “As you know to-morrow is Friday and the next day Saturday, days apt to be tedious to most people on account of the viands ordered to be eaten; besides Friday was the day on which He who died for our life suffered His passion, and it is therefore worthy of reverence. For this I consider it to be a proper and virtuous thing that we should rather say prayers to the honour of God than invent tales. And on Saturday it is the custom for women to wash their heads and remove any dust or dirt that may have settled there during the labours of the week; also

they used to fast out of reverence for the Virgin Mother of God and then in honour of the coming Sunday rest from any and every work. Being therefore unable on that day to fully carry out our established order of life I think it would be well done to refrain from reciting tales also on that day. And as we shall then have been here four days, if we are desirous to avoid being joined by others, I conceive that it would be more opportune to quit this place and go elsewhere and I have already thought of a place and arranged everything.”

All commended the words and the project of the queen, and so it was established, but they looked forward with longing to Sunday. On that morning “with slow steps the queen, accompanied and followed by her ladies and by the three youths, and led by the song of maybe twenty nightingales and other birds, took her way towards the west by an unfrequented lane full of green herbs and flowers just beginning to open to the rising sun. Gossiping, joking and laughing with her company, she led them, after proceeding some two thousand paces, to a beautiful and splendid palace before the half of the third hour had passed.” (One and a half hours after sunrise.)

The “unfrequented lane” may yet be followed from Majano across the Affrico towards San Domenico. Here and there an old oak tree recalls the forest that once existed, and nearly every villa and village within sight is connected with some illustrious name. The joyous company probably passed—

“Where the hewn rocks of Fiesole impend  
O’er Doccia’s dell, and fig and olive blend.  
There the twin streams of Affrico unite,<sup>[75]</sup>  
One dimly seen, the other out of sight,  
But ever playing in his smoothen’d bed  
Of polisht stone, and willing to be led  
Where clustering vines protect him from the sun.  
Here, by the lake, Boccaccio’s fair brigade  
Beguiled the hours, and tale for tale repaid.”

Thus sang Walter Savage Landor, whose villa “Il Frusino,” now belonging to Professor Willard Fiske, stands just above the small plain where once

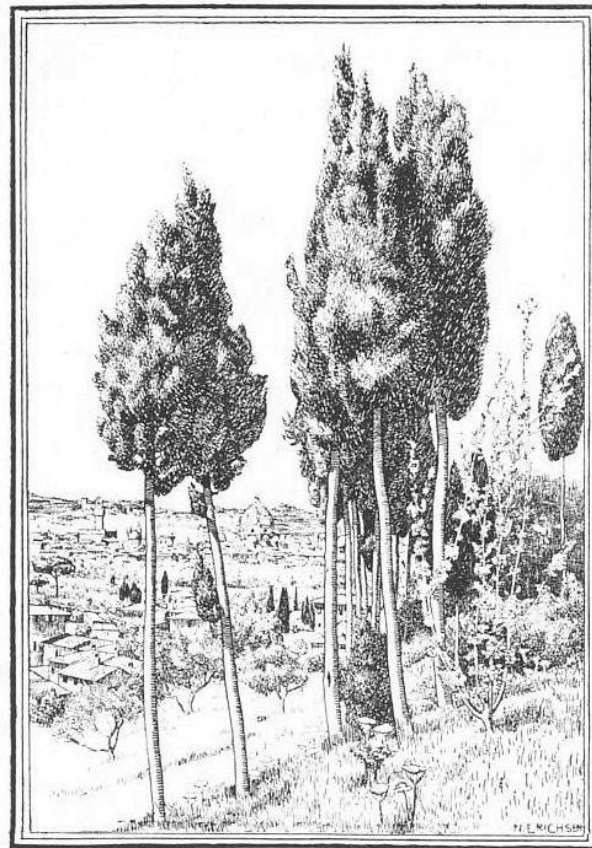
was the lake of the “Valle delle Donne,” already silted up in the sixteenth century.

About that same time the remains of the strong castle of Majano were destroyed; the birthplace of the poet Dante da Majano whose poems in praise of his Nina (one of the first Italian poetesses) are well-known. She was a Sicilian, and although they never met she always called herself “la Nina di Dante.” He exchanged poems with Dante Alighieri, Chiari Davanzati, Guido Orlandi and others. Another poet, Meo di Majano, was born in the tiny hamlet, and “the not less prudent than virtuous sculptor,” Benedetto [da Majano] “the greatest master who ever held a chisel,” as Vasari calls him, and his brother the architect Giuliano. Macchiavelli had a house near by, and the Valori owned much property near Majano. The Villa Marmigliano is still standing, where the great platonist Marsilio Ficino was for so long the guest of Niccolò and Filippo Valori and where he finished his translation of Plato. Pico della Mirandola and Poliziano often came from the Medici Villa at Fiesole to visit their friends, and in one of his letters Ficino describes a walk on these hills with “our Pico” and their talk about a salubrious villa. The latter pointed out one as fulfilling all his desires and Ficino tells him “it is said to have been built by that wise man Leonardo Aretino, and just beyond was the abode of Giovanni Boccaccio.” Only divided by a small valley from the Valori lived the brothers Benivieni. Roberto Gherardo describes their villa, now belonging to Sir Willoughby Wade, as “the most ancient Villa della Querce, since 1272 in the possession of the Signori Baldovini Riccomanni, who bought it from Ciencio di Seminetto de’ Visdomini and sold it in 1483 to Michele Benivieni.” “Happy house of Benivieni,” exclaims Poliziano, “beloved of Apollo, favoured with all the celestial gifts. Of four brothers, you, Maestro Antonio, are a second Esculapius or Chiron; the second diligently studies the virtues of plants and herbs; the third, Girolamo, is a tender and learned poet; and Domenico, still a lad, gives himself with a gravity beyond his years, to poetry and the study of Aristotle.”

Lower down, on the other side of the little valley is the Salviatino, once belonging to the Dukes Salviati, whose good wine is immortalized in that jocund poem *Bacco in Toscana*.

“Lovely Majano, lord of dells,

Where my gentle Salviati dwells.  
Many a time and oft doth he  
Crown me with bumpers full fervently,  
And I, in return, preserve him still  
From every crude and importunate ill.  
I keep by my side,  
For my joy and pride,  
That gallant in chief of his royal cellar  
Val di Marina, the blithe care-killer;  
But with the wine yclept Val di Botte  
Day and night I could flout me the gouty.”<sup>[76]</sup>



## FOOTNOTES:

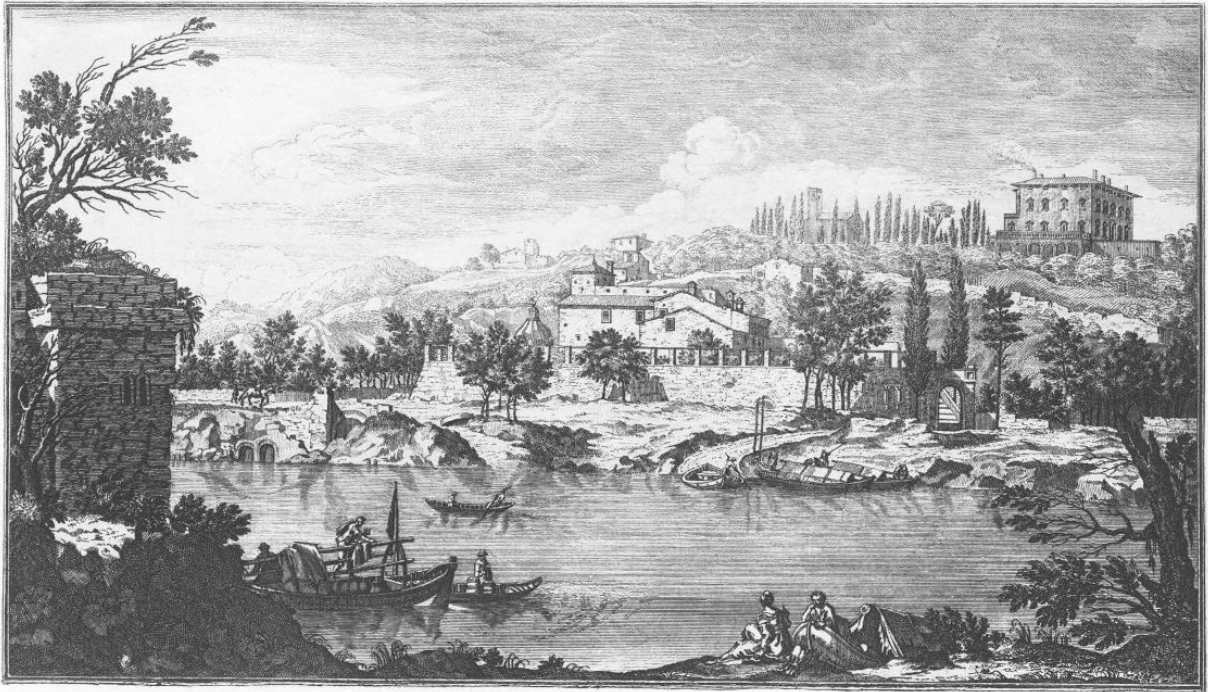
<sup>[72]</sup> *Famiglie Celebre Toscane*. D. Tiribilli-Giuliani, riveduto dal Cav. R. Passerini. Firenze, 1862.

[73] Samuel Rogers. *Italy*. P. 136.

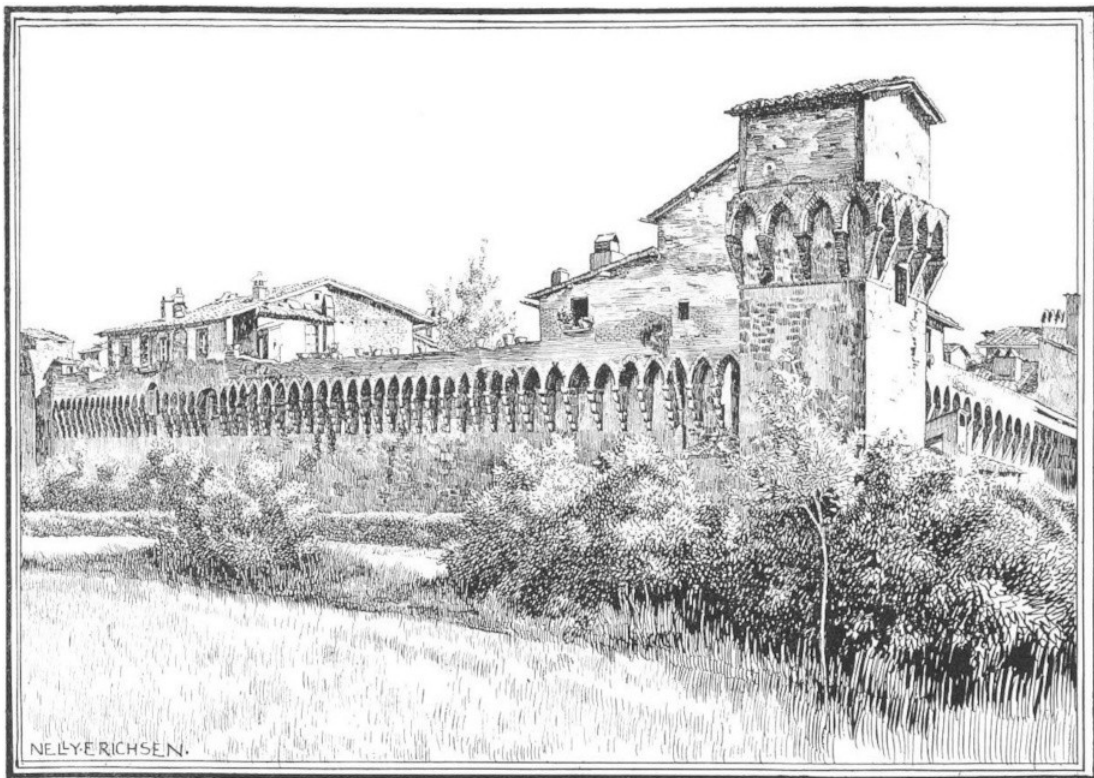
[74] Pampinea in the Introduction to the *Decameron*, after describing the horrors of the plague and the licentious life of the few inhabitants left in the town, suggests going to “our estates in the country, of which we all have a great many.” She was probably a Baroncelli—if one may attempt to identify personages or places in the *Decameron*.

[75] The Affrico and the Affricuzzo.

[76] *Opus cit.* See note page 70.



**VILLA DELLE SELVE**



## VILLA DELLE SELVE

THE stately Villa delle Selve, built by Buontalenti, stands high on the crest of a hill overlooking the Arno below Signa about nine miles from Florence. The first mention of it is in the archives of the monastery of San Pier Maggiore where it is stated that the Commune of Florence, in the interest of the creditors of the Acciajuoli bank, sold “a podere with a hut, a brick kiln, etc., at a place called Le Selve in the parish of San Martino a Gangalandi for 270 golden florins.” It afterwards came into the possession of the Strozzi. And when Filippo Strozzi and his wife Clarice left Rome by stealth and sailed to Pisa, a messenger met them with letters from the Cardinal of Cortona and from Niccolò Capponi urging them to come to Florence, so Filippo, a prudent Florentine “decided,” writes old Varchi, “after much meditation not to be the one who, as the saying is, picks the chestnuts out of the fire, but determined to send Madonna Clarice on to feel the way; she being a woman and a Medici would, he conceived, not run the

same risk as himself.... Clarice, as courageous as she was proud, accepted the commission without waiting to be entreated, and leaving Piero and Vincenzo her sons, in Empoli under the charge of their tutor Ser Francesco Zeffi, she went accompanied by only Antonio da Barberino and Maestro Marcantonio da San Gemignano to dine at Le Selve near Signa, a most favourite villa of Filippo's and from thence the same evening proceeded to Florence."

Marchese Filippo di Averardo Salviati bought the villa from the Strozzi and in 1611 lent it to his friend Galileo Galilei, who unfortunately for himself had resigned his professorship at Padua to accept the appointment of court mathematician in Florence. It is a curious fact that two of the greatest of Italians, Giovanni Boccaccio and Galileo Galilei, had a common ancestor in Bonajuto, Lord of Pogna in the Val d'Elsa. Bonajuto's son Chellino was grandfather to Boccaccio; another son, Giovanni, was the father of a celebrated doctor Maestro Galileo from whom descended Vincenzo Galilei, a musician of some repute and author of a dialogue on music printed in Florence in 1581, he married Giulia Ammanati, and their son—the famous Galileo—was born in Pisa in 1564. A descendant of a third son of old Maestro Galileo was governor of Pisa in 1837 and most bitterly resented any allusion to his relationship with a man who had been in the prisons of the Inquisition. The arms of the two families are identical, save that the red ladder of the Galilei is placed vertically on a gold ground while that of the Chellini is diagonal.<sup>[77]</sup>

The room occupied by Galileo at the Selve communicates by a winding staircase with an upper terrace where he used to spend the nights in watching the stars. Here he discovered the spots on the sun and its revolution upon its axis, the ring of Saturn, the phases of Venus and Mars and their rotation round the sun, and here he wrote his treatise on the planets, the history of the sun-spots and other works. He loved the country and country pursuits, and his favourite recreation was working in the garden; very proud was he of his skill in pruning vines and fruit trees and he used to declare there was no better preservative of health than living in the open air. A wall at the back of the villa with a peculiar curve is said to have been built under his supervision. If two people whisper in a low voice at the ends each can hear the other distinctly.

In 1614 Filippo Strozzi died at Barcelona and Galileo left the villa he loved so well. About the same time a Dominican friar, Tommaso Caccini, preached a sermon in Santa Maria Novella denouncing Galileo and all professors of mathematics. “Mathematics are of the devil,” he exclaimed, “and mathematicians as the authors of all heresies should be driven out of every state.” Monks and theologians denied the existence of the Medicean planets, some even insisted that the moon shone by her own unaided light.<sup>[78]</sup>

From the broad terrace of the villa the view is magnificent, “you see half the world” the peasants say. Below is the glinting river fringed with tall poplars and on the summit of the hill on the opposite bank stands the huge Medicean Villa Artimino surrounded by ilexes. To the right is the picturesque old bridge across the Arno connecting Ponte a Signa with Beata Signa; further away still the grey machicolated walls and towers of Lastra a Signa stand out against the fruitful green plain. In the far distance Poggio a Cajano rises like a giant above the village clustering round it, and the trees look like shrubs beside the villa where Francesco I, and his second wife, “the infamous Bianca” as her brother-in-law called her, died on the 19th and 20th October 1587.

Lastra a Signa owes its walls, built in 1377, to the English condottiere Sir John Hawkwood; he advised the Republic of Florence to erect them as a defence against the Pisans who some years before, aided by English auxiliaries, had taken and burnt the strong castle of Gangalandi near by. Twenty years later Alberigo, a captain in the pay of Galeazzo Visconti Lord of Milan who was at deadly feud with the Republic of Florence, besieged and took Lastra a Signa. The walls were restored again in time to keep part of the army of the Prince of Orange at bay for some time in 1529. Francesco Ferrucci, whose head-quarters were at Empoli five miles lower down the river, had garrisoned the place with some of his best troops, and as long as their ammunition lasted they beat off the Spaniards. Whilst treating for the surrender, five hundred more Spanish Lances arrived with scaling ladders and battering-rams, made a breach in the walls (which still exists) and cut the defenders to pieces.

Beata Signa on the opposite bank of the river, owes its name of Beata (Blessed) to a shepherdess. Giovanna was a good and holy maiden who tended her flock of sheep on the banks of the Arno and worked miracles in

days long past. Her mummified body still lies under an altar in the picturesque church, and on Easter Monday the pretty old-world *Festa degli Angeli* is held in her honour. The confraternities of neighbouring parishes bring offerings of oil, for the lamp kept always burning before her tomb, in small barrels slung pannier fashion on a donkey. On a little platform above the barrels stands the Angel, the prettiest small child of the parish, supported by an iron upright ending in a hoop. Crowned with roses and carnations, decked with the pearl necklaces of the peasant women and often with a pair of white wings fastened to its shoulders, the Angel on the donkey form the centre of many processions which wind along the country lanes with banners flying and generally a band playing. As each procession arrives in the little townlet of Beata Signa it files into the old church, the Angel and the barrels of oil are lifted off the donkey in front of the altar of the Blessed Giovanna, the band plays its loudest and sometimes the donkey brays, which causes great amusement.

Near by the Villa delle Selve, nestling amid elms and cypresses on a spur of the same hill, is the church of Le Selve adjoining a monastery of Carmelite friars suppressed, like so many others, by Napoleon I. The abbot's rooms are now inhabited by the village priest and the monk's garden, with a fine old well in the centre and surrounded by two-storied cloisters, has been turned into a nursery for olive trees. The church, said to have been restored by Buontalenti, possesses a nave of considerable height and beauty terminating in an apse and under the high altar is a small crypt where St Andrea Corsini celebrated his first mass. The young priest fled from the grand preparations made in Florence, and took refuge with the monks at Le Selve; when at daybreak trembling with religious fervour he raised the chalice to his lips a vision of Our Lady appeared to him; smiling graciously she bent her head and said *Tu est servus meus*.

A miraculous crucifix is in the church, and every fifty years the *Festa* of the Crucifix of Providence is celebrated in the month of April. Just before sunset the crucifix is borne out of the church followed by a long line of priests, little acolytes in snow-white robes and stalwart peasants dressed in their best carrying banners and canopies. The steep hill down to Ponte a Signa is all strewn with rose leaves, irises and sweet herbs, and the long procession winds down to the river and returns with flaring torches like a huge fiery serpent, creeping up the hill beneath the olives and cypresses

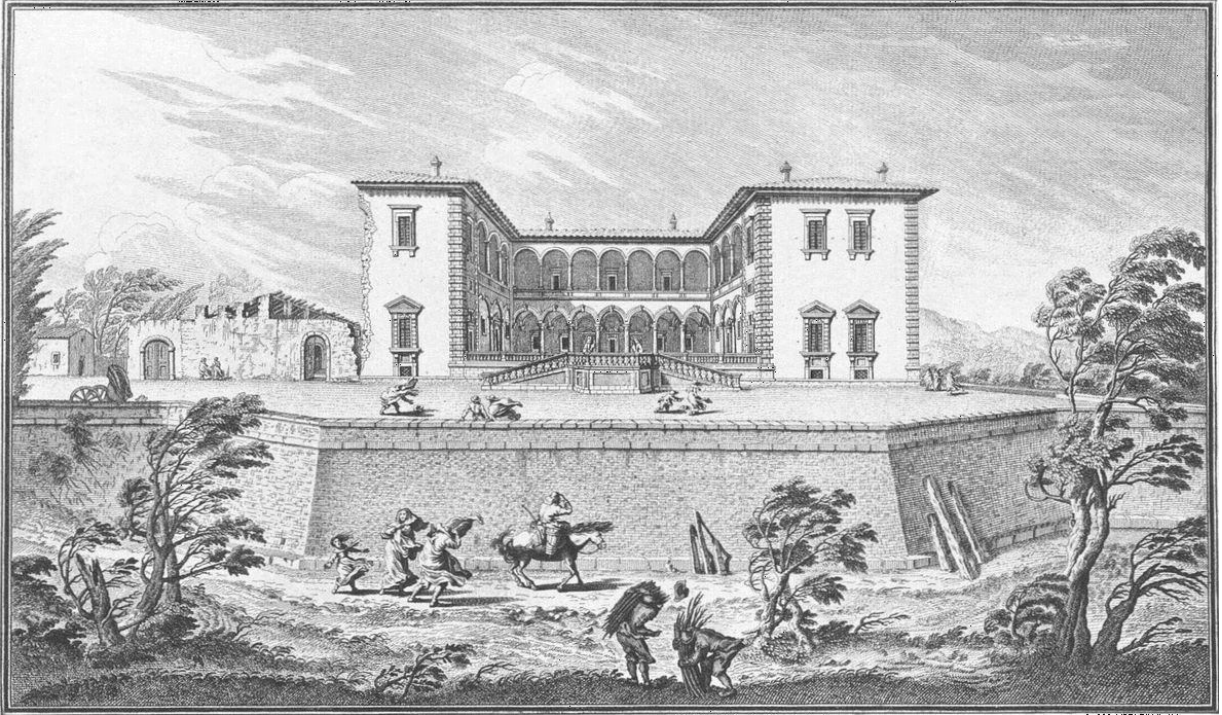
when the stars come out. The peasants put candles in their windows and the stately villa, now the property of the Contessa Cappelli, becomes a blaze of light.



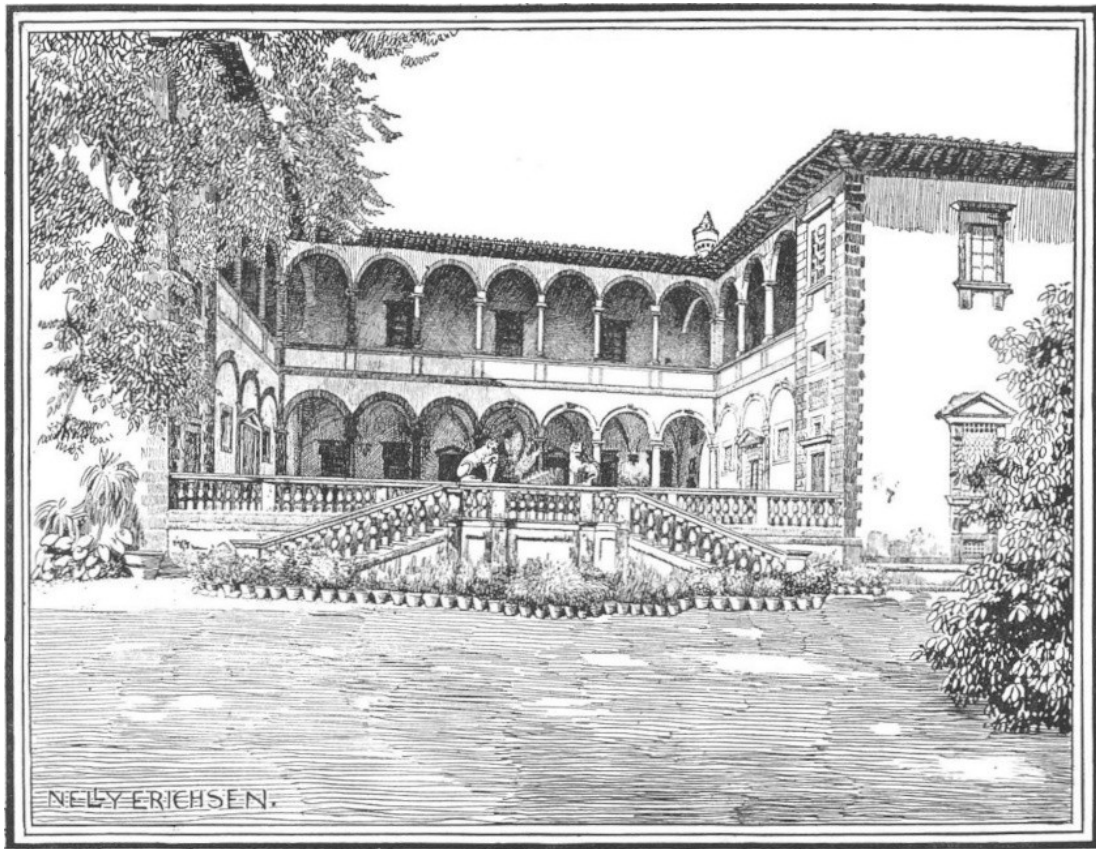
### FOOTNOTES:

[77] See *Marietta de' Ricci*. A. Ademollo. 2a Edizione con aggiunte di L. Passerini. Firenze, 1845. Vol. III. p. 816, and Vol. IV. p. 1216.

[78] *Vita di Galileo Galilei*. G. B. Clemente de' Nelli. Losanna, 1793.



**VILLA I COLLAZZI**



## VILLA I COLLAZZI

ON a ridge of the hills which rise above the fortress-convent built by Niccolò Acciajuoli for the monks of the Certosa, once stood a castle of the Buondelmonti; but all trace of it has long since disappeared and on the site stands the famous Florentine Villa I Collazzi, now belonging to Signor Bombicci-Pomi. When Messer Agostino Dini commissioned his architect to build him a house, the time for strongholds and mediæval castles had passed away, and the villa which rose upon the Tuscan hillside was characteristic of the century of Michelangelo. Such is the grandeur and beauty of I Collazzi, with its imposing double flight of steps leading from a broad terrace up to the courtyard, with its two wells crowned by fine old iron work, its lofty arcade and the large vaulted rooms wherein one feels a race of giants ought to live, that many have attributed its building to Michelangelo. But there are a few blemishes in the finish and detail of the

decoration which, though by no means detracting from the general beauty of the whole structure, are easily recognised by a student of the Master, and lead him to suppose it to be rather a work of one of his scholars. The Dini papers have been lost, used to light the fires a century ago some say, and the only clue we have to the architect is from Baldinucci who tells us that Santi di Tito, scholar of Bronzino in painting and of Vasari in architecture, “worked for Agostino Dini at Giogoli ... for this same Agostino he also painted one of his finest altar pictures,” which is still in the chapel of I Collazzi. But those who support the theory that Michelangelo built the villa, say that Santi di Tito only completed the work begun by his great forerunner. The building raised upon the lonely Tuscan hill within a few miles of Florence, yet not within sight of her towers, is the finest villa of its kind to be found in all the countryside. There is nothing to spoil the impression of grandeur and beauty; the unfinished wing on the left of the courtyard only seems to give variety of line and grouping as one approaches between a long avenue of cypresses so closely planted together as to form a sombre green wall shutting out all else but the villa in front. Across the broad terrace, raised on high bastioned walls above the vineyards, the villa faces the valley of the Arno where villas are strewn like diamonds on the sunlit hills, and higher up towards the north the mountains behind Pistoja with their thick covering of snow show palely against the sky. The view opening out wider as the eye travels towards Prato seems even sunnier and more brilliantly coloured, for the country round here is subdued in tints, losing the sunlight early, and the shadows lie almost black on the ilex and pine woods near by. So striking is the monotonous scene of rounded pine-covered hills that the name I Collazzi (small hillocks) suggested itself to the Dini family for the fine villa they built in lieu of the modest abode which satisfied all their desires in those early days when great Florentine families lived simply and frugally, and the lady passed her time in looking after her household and teaching her daughters to sew and say their prayers. If the girl’s daily task was not done in time, “cuffs would fly, or even a cane would cleanse her skirts of dust,” says an old writer. Conversation with men, even with near relations, was not permitted; in some houses the girls were not allowed to play with their brothers and at table they never spoke save in answer to their parents. If an entertainment was given they were shut up in their own room, and looking out of the window was severely prohibited as it might lead to loss of reputation.

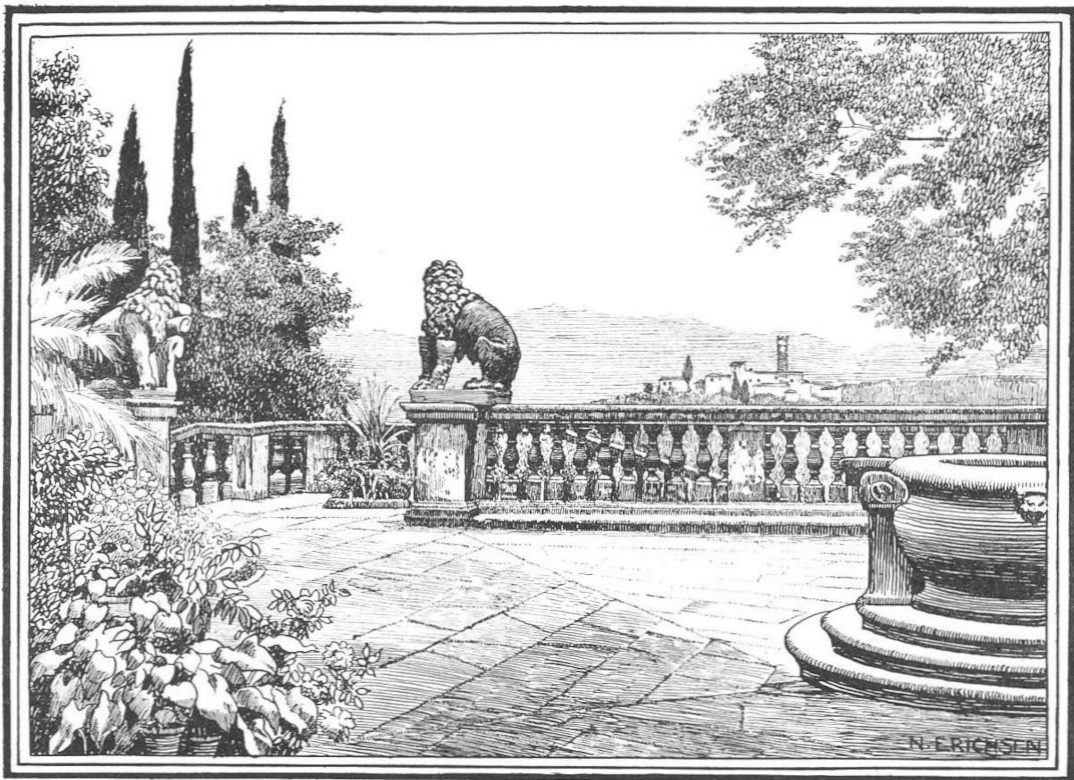
But things changed in the sixteenth century when Messer Agostino Dini built for himself this villa suited to a noble Florentine, and like many another spent too much money on bricks and mortar. No doubt the Dini were among the people blamed by Senator Vincenzo di Giovanni di Niccolò Giraldi who, writing to a friend in 1598, deploras the gradual extinction of simple old Florentine customs in favour of Spanish grandeur and magnificence. "Now," he writes, "little girls wear dresses of fine cloth, not only in Florence but in the country, more suitable to brides than to children, and expect to be waited on by men and maid-servants. Going afoot is out of fashion, and that they may not accustom themselves to so rustic a custom they take the air in a carriage.... There are not more grains of sand in the bed of the Arno after a flood, than there are ornaments and flimsy vanities on their heads in order to augment the natural love of dress inherent in woman. And when of marriageable age they no longer rise with the sun to go to early mass, but lie abed so as not to lose their sleep or spoil their complexions. As to work, I am told the girls sometimes fashion pretty and delicate things but coarse sewing, such as our wives did, they will not look at, for such work and the making of their beds of a-morning is not noble, so is left to the maids.... When the blessed and much desired husband arrives none can describe the grandeur and comforts that are indulged in. Dresses of cloth of gold and of thick silk trimmed with gold lace of diverse kinds are bought for the bride, without reflecting whether they are suited to her own or her husband's condition. She must be on a par with others, for there is no longer any difference between one person and another, or between high and low rank. People say such a one spends of his own and so may do as others do; it would be a small evil if he only spent what was his, but often now-a-days it becomes apparent that he spends what belongs to others. Then a carriage and fine horses are a necessity, for whoso takes a wife and does not set up a carriage would be flouted by the women and pointed at as ill-bred and miserly. So they pay their visits in Florence in noble fashion with great comfort, scornfully pitying the poor women of bygone times who trotted round on their own feet wearing coarse and heavy gowns only fit, as they consider, for peasants. The house must correspond and be furnished according to modern ideas. The walls are hung from floor to ceiling with damask, and fine pictures are needful; above all the chairs, when not covered with velvet, must at least be covered with silk so that the ladies may sit softly. Whoso takes a wife must also keep a good table, not

served with homely dishes, which are plebeian, for the ladies of the present day insist on delicate food, not for gluttony—oh no—but because it keeps them healthy and of good heart, and consequently enables them to have fine and well-made children. If linen has to be sewn for the husband or babes the work is commonly sent to the convents, and then the husband is told there is so much to pay for such work and so much for the other and he has to loose his purse-strings or confront a pouting face.

“With what majesty do the ladies now drive in their carriage, a peacock when he rustles and spreads his tail is not so proud and puffed up. A new custom too has been introduced in order to have more frequent occasion for going about the town. Visits are paid to brides, even by those who are not relations, and thus the women can spy out other folk’s business, which is always attractive. If the house be not nobly furnished they jeer at the master thereof and call him a miser; but if it be better found than their own they return home discontented and begin to grumble, saying: ‘I have been to see such a one and her house is beautiful; she has this and the other and all is in good taste; but we live worse than artisans, so that I no longer dare invite anyone as I will not have it said that I, who am as good as many of them, and had a marriage portion large eno’ to enjoy what they have—but as it must be so, *pazienza*.’ And the poor wretch of a husband has to swallow it all, and either be constantly tormented, or content his wife and do what he dislikes or perchance cannot afford; for at length the perpetual clapper of the bell at night would break even the head of a ram, which is proverbially hard.

“The ladies now all carry fans attached to golden chains when they leave the house, and not only in the streets do they flutter them but in the churches, as an aid to devotion while hearing mass. I have been told by a lady of honour and veracity, not in fun but in sober earnest, that she has seen women’s smocks trimmed round with lace exactly like Monsignori’s surplices. When they leave town for their villas, if the carriages are too large and heavy to go the whole distance, a lettiga<sup>[79]</sup> is necessary because mounting a horse savours of rusticity, though I have seen my mother-in-law, wife of Messer Luigi Capponi, and the wife of his brother Alessandro, who were not exactly plebeians or beggars, going to their villa in Val d’ Elsa some twenty miles from Florence on the horses of their factor or peasants.

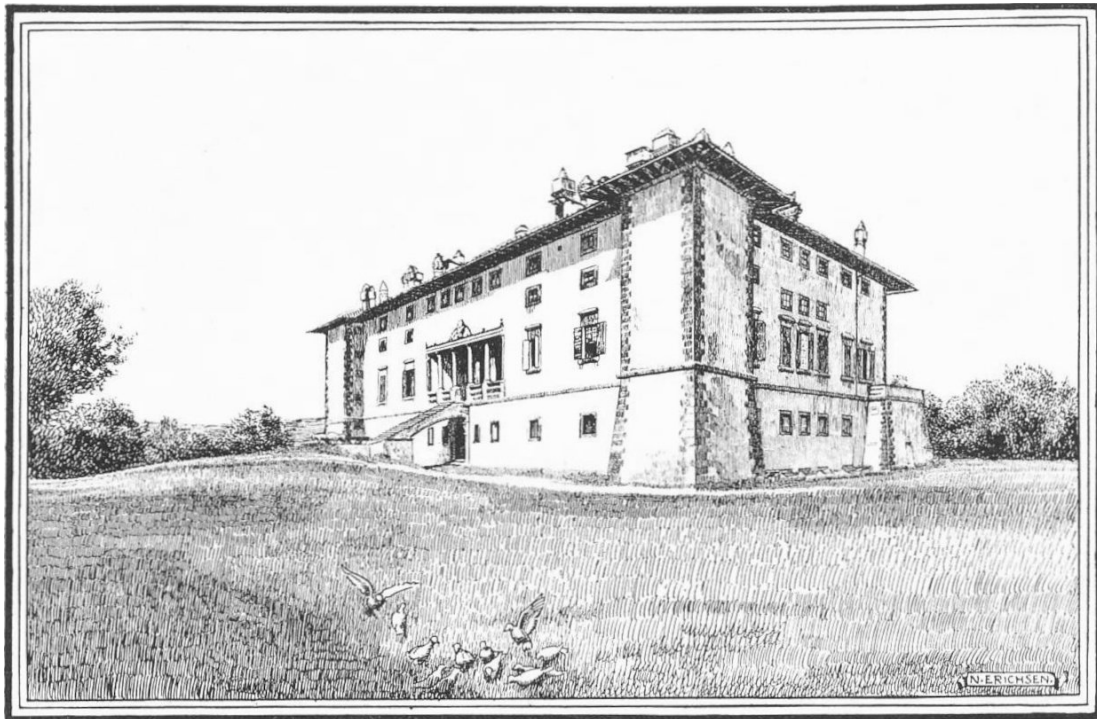
“Intending to write only about women I will but just mention that the young men of the present day imitate them in many things. They are lovers of ease, of amusements and of show; carriages are even more used by them than by the women and certainly more than is warranted by their youth. They emulate the maidens in dress, love comfort and anoint themselves with perfumes, in short they enjoy life and stint themselves in nothing, without thinking about increasing or preserving their estates. If they cannot live like princes, at least they try as far as they can to show how noble they are; their desires are those of emperors, their purses are those of beggars. Yet I do not imagine that our city will be less rich, for I know that land cannot run away nor money take wings; but I conceive that they may change masters. Soon our fine villas, if this style of life be persevered in, will be in the possession of shopkeepers, apothecaries, grocers and the like. The nobles will either live obscurely in Florence or retire to some small villa still left to them, to quarrel with their peasants over the division of the harvest, or pass the day in trying to shoot a hare or a few small birds to diminish the butcher’s bill; in short with a little smoke and no substance they will eke out their wretched life to the undoing and ultimate disappearance of their caste....”<sup>[80]</sup>



## FOOTNOTES:

[79] A sedan chair borne between two mules.

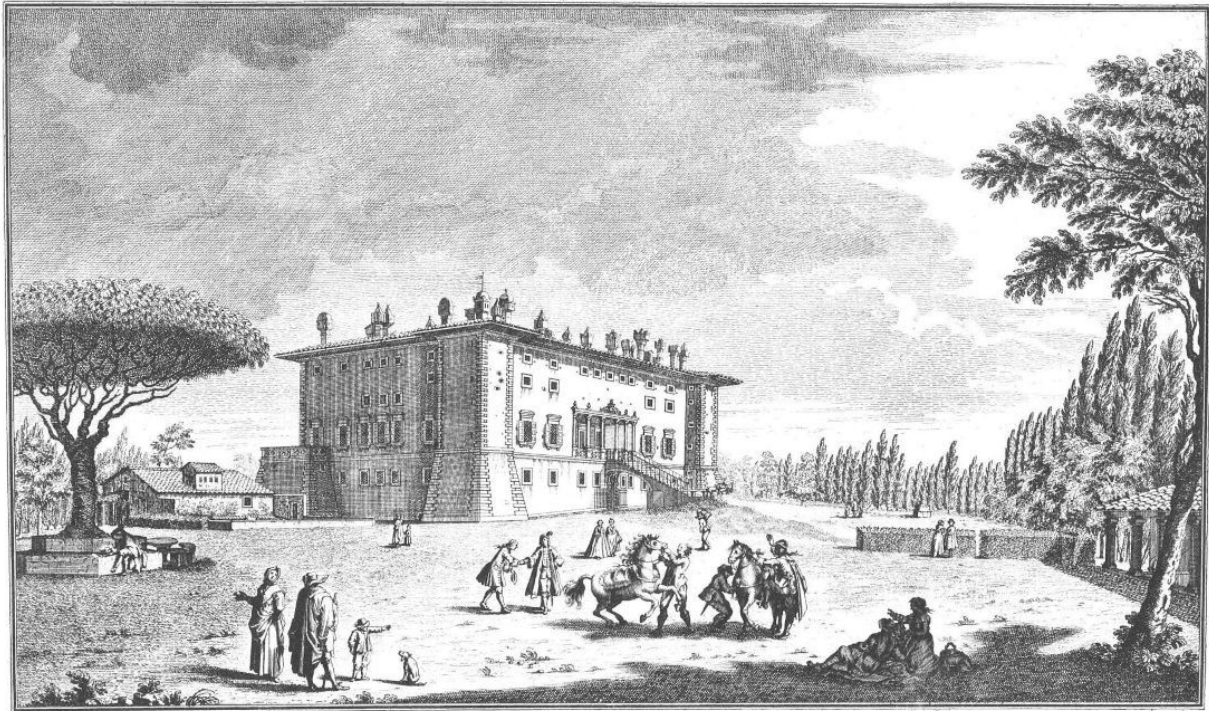
[80] *Di Certe Usanze delle Gentildonne Fiorentine, nella seconda Meta del secola XVI. Lettera di Vincenzo Giraldi. Nozze Gori-Moro. Edizione integra di LXXX esemplari. Firenze, Carnesecchi e Figli.*



## VILLA FERDINANDA A ARTIMINO

LONG ere the Medici thought of building yet another princely villa on the Florentine hillside, or Cosimo I came to hunt in the woods above Signa, Artimino was a famous portion of the Arno valley and is continually mentioned in the oldest of the Tuscan chronicles. Its name may have come from the narrow defile (arctus minor) where the Arno forces its way through the barrier of hills at the Gonfolina and Artimino juts out into the valley like the prow of a ship, its foot bathed by the Ombrone and the Arno. It is really a spur of the great Mount Albano and so far back as the days of Cicero it had achieved a certain importance, for we find in his nineteenth epistle to Attico the mention that Silla had proclaimed Artimino, together with the territory of Volterra, public property in order to divide it amongst his soldiers. The hill of Artimino attracted not only the leaders of passing armies but numerous Roman families, who found the groves of ilex and oak upon its summit delightful sites for villas when they left the towns during the summer months. The valley of the Arno in those days may have suggested the same thoughts to a Roman poet as later to Ariosto, when he

looked down from some Medicean terraced garden upon the “gay Arno,” and the palaces strewn so thickly over the hillsides. It is believed that the group of villas then standing on Artimino’s hill made quite a little community, and a certain record of life there has been preserved to us in a quantity of bronze idols, cinerary urns, necklaces and coins, mosaics and leaden tubes for conducting water of what may have been public baths found in the grottoes of the hillside. Scanty as is the history of the place in Roman times it begins to emerge in the tenth century, when Otto III, gave over Artimino and its church San Leonardo to the Pistojan bishop Antonino; and from this time we may date the building of its castle which was to serve as a protection to the frontiers of Pistoja against the ever encroaching raids of the Florentines. Now the Fattoria or agent’s house, a few peasants’ houses, part of a tower and an old wall, probably part of the ramparts whence the soldiers watched the valley far below for the approach of an enemy, are all that remain to recall the ancient village of Artimino. A stretch of country lane between the vineyards and an avenue of cypresses growing in a half circle behind the village now symbolise an age of securer peace, and between the straight, bare stems we see the little parish church of San Leonardo a little lower down on the hillside, with its loggia of rounded arches under which the peasants linger when they meet for mass on a Sunday morning. Its square campanile, so strongly built and tall, might easily have served as a watch-tower in the time of trouble.



**VILLA FERDINANDA A ARTIMINO.**

The strong position of the old castle above the Arno valley caused it to be connected with several Florentine events during the prosperous but troubled times of the Commonwealth. Up to the year 1204 the people of Artimino enjoyed a certain amount of political independence, but when the struggle began between Pistoja and Florence the latter envied the rival Tuscan city the possession of so strong a fortress, situated on the summit of a steep and precipitous mountain and commanding the narrow defile. When the Florentines invaded the lands of Artimino it appeared, says the chronicler, as though a mighty tempest had swept over the land, leaving vines, olives and fruit trees bowed beneath its passage. A little later the people of Artimino began to prey upon the neighbouring Carmignano, which continued for some time to be a deadly foe; swooping down like falcons from their eyrie, hardly a day passed without bloodshed, and at last things came to such a pass that Pistoja had to send mediators to conciliate these war-like dwellers of the hill and their truculent neighbours. "But finding it impossible to obtain anything by persuasion, the mediators were obliged to have recourse to threats in order to induce them to keep the peace, which under pain of severe penalties and fines was at last arranged on the 28th

June 1224, when the mediators returned to Pistoja where those of Carmignano swore fealty to the Consuls.”

During the war between Florence and Castruccio Castracane, the powerful tyrant of Lucca and Pistoja, Artimino had even more to suffer. Her castle being the key to the valley, the Florentines were not slow to assail it, and after a sharp fight it fell into their hands. Not content with taking two hundred prisoners, they threw down part of the castle walls and carried home in triumph the bell of the Commune which was “of great size and of most exquisite metal,” as the Florentine chronicler recounts with a certain amount of satisfaction. The evening on which Artimino fell a long streak of lurid smoke was seen above Florence, and on the previous night a great earthquake shook the city—thus did nature and war combine to cast terror in the minds of the mediæval Italians. After the battle of Altopascio Castracane gained back his castle, but no sooner did he leave it for some other military enterprise than the Florentines returned with renewed ardour to the attack. For three days the people of Artimino fought against their assailants, “but on the third,” says Villani, “the Florentines delivered the most terrible assault that ever castle sustained and the most renowned knights of the army were engaged; it lasted from midday until the first hour of the night and the pallisades and gates of the castle were set on fire. For which reason great fear fell upon the besieged and those who were badly wounded with darts, and they begged for mercy and offered to surrender if their lives were spared; and thus it was done. And on the morning of the 27th August they left and delivered up the castle. But in despite of all promises, when the knights who escorted them departed, many were killed.”

After this the Florentines took firm possession of Artimino, rebuilt its walls and kept infantry and cavalry there, as they found it a good place from whence to harass the territory of Pistoja. For some time after Castruccio’s death it was a subject of perpetual skirmishes and many were the changes of master. How eagerly the two cities desired Artimino is shown by the clause in the agreement of the Pistojesse who consented to acknowledge the suzerainty of Gualtieri for three years on condition that, together with other places, Artimino was to be added once more to their territory.

Artimino fell finally to the dominion of Florence, and to the arms of her people—a sea-horse—was added the Lily of Florence as a seal to her

submission to the mistress and tyrant of Tuscany.

The time of war passed away and with the coming of peaceful years we read no more of Artimino's villages and of her walled castle. Another building rose upon the hill whose story brings us at once to the Medicean Grand Dukes of Tuscany. It is related by that pleasant gossip Baldinucci that "His Majesty Ferdinando I, Grand Duke of Tuscany, being one day a-hunting on the hill of Artimino (on the side towards Florence where one looks upon a lovely and most extensive tract of country), seated himself on a chair and calling Buontalenti to his side said: Bernardo, just on this spot where thou seest me, I desire to have a palace sufficient to contain me and all my court; think about it and be quick." And the work was immediately begun according to his patron's desire, with the result that a royal villa soon rose upon the hill which had withstood so many sieges, "containing abundantly," continues Baldinucci, "all those delights which a Grandee can desire in his country residence."

The Medici loved the beautiful villa which was called Ferdinanda after its builder, and much money was spent in buying more land and enclosing the property with a high wall, which divided the farms from the woods preserved for the Grand Ducal hunts. Pictures were brought in numbers to fill the vast halls and in the inventory we read of priceless objects, such as "a portrait of Lorenzo d' Urbino de' Medici by Raphael, a Madonna and Child by Cristofano Bronzino, and a picture by Titian."

When in 1782 Pietro Leopoldo I, (the Austrian Grand Duke) sold Artimino to Lorenzo Bartolommei, Marchese di Montegiove, the estate consisted, as it does to-day, of about two thousand acres. Later the fine old place passed by inheritance to the noble family of the Passerini of Cortona and the villa is now owned by Conte Silvio Passerini.

The wine of Artimino was famous all over Tuscany even in the days when Redi, court physician to the Grand Duke Cosimo III, drank deeply of its vintage and sang enthusiastically of its perfections in his *Bacco in Toscana*:—

“Gods my life, what glorious claret!  
Blessed be the ground that bare it!  
'Tis Avignon. Don't say a flask of it,

Into my soul I pour a cask of it.  
Artimino's finer still,  
Under a tun there's no having one's fill:"<sup>[81]</sup>

The Villa Ferdinanda is less famous than it should be, for although some visit it and return to spread among their friends a description of its grandeur and beauty, few are tempted to climb the steep and winding road to the summit of the hill. Again—the house, although seen from a great distance, stands so high above the sea level (260 metres) that it gives only the impression of being very large and almost overbalanced by an enormous projecting roof, and but little idea is obtained of its architectural beauty. The lower part of the hill is scarred by quarries of *pietra serena* and the landscape is a little bare and arid; but as we climb the narrow winding road we soon get into a delightfully cool and remote corner of the Arno valley, where the slopes are overgrown with thick masses of broom while ilexes and a few cypresses rise above the shimmering green of the young oaks. In parts stunted oaks form a hedge, broken in parts where rocks jut out covered with trailing ivy. Every step leads us to a fairer and more extensive view. A deep azure blue of sky and plain with paler blue of the Pistoian mountains rising to the west, seen across the Artimino fields of crimson clover as we stand within the light shade of a wood where no dark shadows lie, hold the very essence of a Tuscan morning in early May. This a place from which we can best see the limitless stretch of the valley from Florence down towards the sea, the windings of the calm river and the deepening glow of colour on the hills and about the white townlets of Sesto and Prato; and as the distant murmur of the workers in the valley rise up to us, behind in the trees “The nightingale with feathers new she sings.”

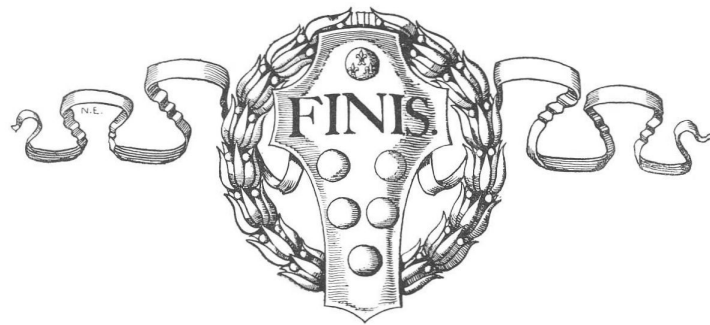
Nearing the summit we see some picturesque peasant houses resembling Lombard farms, with long finely built arcades and a smaller row of arches above. A sudden turn in the road brings us in sight of the great Villa Ferdinanda. It would be difficult either in words, or by drawings, to give an adequate idea of the sense of size together with perfect proportion, of beauty with almost severe simplicity, which we receive on approaching; and it is with astonishment that we remember our first impression when looking up at it from the plain. Buontalenti would seem to have endeavoured to build a very characteristic Medicean villa; it has a beautiful staircase going

up to the entrance in the manner of a suspended arch, there are the inevitable lions, and going into the great hall we pass through a charming arched recess. Yet the architect, by placing the villa above a wide grass slope and causing the walls to project at the base, and building the corners to resemble towers (two of which are only carried half-way up, forming terraces) recalled the feudal villa-castle of much earlier date. Unlike the usual Tuscan building, humble or pretentious, Artimino's villa has no courtyard, but is built with long vaulted rooms running through at right angles which bear curious mediæval names. There is the saloon of "the Bodyguard," that of "the Lion," with three grated windows looking out over Poggio a Cajano, another of "the Bear," with views over Montelupo and the Ambrogiana, while the entrance hall goes by the title of "the Wars." The enormous size of the villa is perhaps its most striking feature—the rooms upstairs are all large and finely built with groined roofs and huge chimneypieces, some having no doors but only a round arch to separate them. Nothing mean is to be found in any part of the place—the banqueting halls and the servants' rooms are equally fine and built on the same magnificent and simple scale. The architect had dreamed of a noble race of men who were to inhabit so sumptuous a palace.<sup>[82]</sup>

### FOOTNOTES:

<sup>[81]</sup> *Op. cit.* See note p. 70.

<sup>[82]</sup> Most of the facts are taken from a pamphlet, *Artiminius*, G. L. Passerini, printed (for private circulation only) in 1888, and from Repetti's admirable *Dizionario Geografico Fisico Storico della Toscana*. Firenze, 1835.



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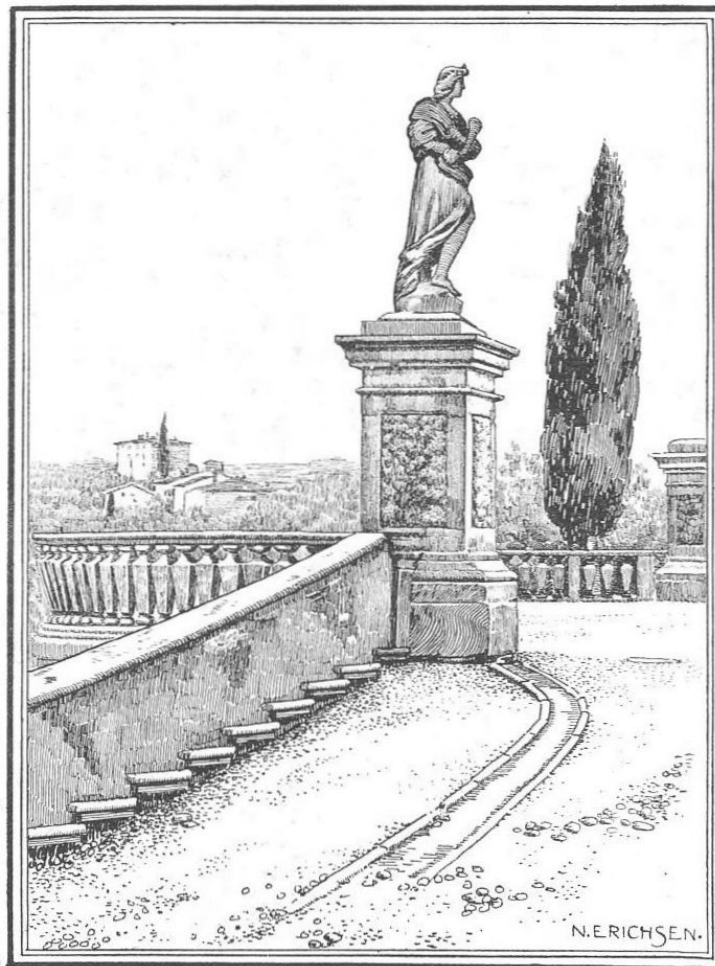
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