



# THE MEDICI

## THE CIOMPI DISTURBANCES.

Finally, another family feud, between Albizzi and Ricci, renewed the traditional faction politics. The Albizzi had the support of the wealthier Popolo Grosso, and in consequence Ricci, supported by a few leading families including the Alberti and Medici, sought to champion the Popolo Minuto.

In 1378, one of the Medici was Gonfaloniere of Justice and he proposed new laws which in effect would give some legal protection to the dispossessed parties. The laws were made with modification owing to popular insistence.

Later in the same year new disturbances followed and Michele Lando, a wool carder, led a violent movement against the city government and proclaimed himself gonfaloniere. A new *Signoria* was elected — three representatives from each class of nobles, Popolo Grosso and Minuto. The Minuto were resentful as they had hoped to control the city. A deputation to Lando was met with firmness and the ring-leaders were hanged. The city continued with its new constitution, and Lando proved an astute and capable citizen.

## XVth CENTURY.

Florence had now arrived at an interesting stage in its economic development and all the parties which previously held sway were successively broken up by internal dissension or the triumph of

their opponents. The real power was passing inevitably into the hands of a few extremely wealthy bankers and merchants. At the head of these banking families were the Medici one of whom, Cosimo, known as Cosimo il Vecchio, had perceived for some time that ultimately the family which disposed the greatest wealth must come to rule the city.

Cosimo maintained wise and careful relations with all the neighbouring states. To many of these rulers he advanced money. He also conducted business and even delicate diplomatic negotiations. In the city, Cosimo was at first content to see his near rivals spend their strength in rivalry for temporary dominion. He, himself, was prepared to wait until such time as his family inevitably came to the top. Events, however, were precipitated in 1453 by Rinaldo Albizzi, one of the more determined opponents of the Medicis, who found himself with a gonfaloniere disposed to carry out his vengeful designs.

Cosimo was summoned to appear before the *Signoria* upon vague charges of using his wealth to the detriment of the city. After a few days in which he ate nothing for fear of poison, Cosimo, perhaps with the aid of some well-placed bribes, escaped with a sentence of 10 years' banishment to Padua.