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CHAPTER THE FIRST

A FLOATING REPUBLIC

FROM the dim days before the Trojan War, when Pelops, coming from Pisa in Elis, founded the Italian Pisae on the marshy headland between the Arnus and the Ausar, the city's destiny was sealed beyond recall. Of the sea was she born, from the sea she drew her life-blood, and when the sea was lost to her she perished from inanition. This is the keynote of her history so long as she has a history at all that is worth recording; and he who would understand her weakness and her strength, her splendour and her ruin, must never altogether get the sound of the sea out of his ears nor the smell of the sea out of his nostrils.

Originally, no doubt, Pisa stood quite close to the shore; but, owing to the alluvial deposits of her two rivers, the land gradually gained upon the sea, until, in Strabo's time, the city was already two and a half miles from the coast. In the tenth century it was four, and to-day it is six miles inland¹. Yet the ever-widening strip of plain between Pisa and the sea did nothing to affect her status as a maritime city, since the Arno long continued to be navigable for all except the very largest vessels. Thus, in 525, we find Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, ordering the removal of certain *sepes* which the fisher-folk had set *in fluminibus navigeris diversis territoriis meantibus*, and among them in the Arnus, to the end that the free passage of ships (*navium cursus*) might not be impeded². Nearly six centuries later, the great fleet which sailed to the conquest of the Balearic Isles was built in the dockyards of Pisa, and, even in the 13th

¹ Dennis, *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* ("Everyman's Library" edition), vol. II, p. 79, n. 1.

² Cassiodorus, *Var. v. Ep. 17 and 20*, in *M. G. H.* XII. See also Repetti, *Diz. geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, IV, 307, and Manfroni, *Storia della Marina Italiana dalle Invasioni barbariche al trattato di Ninfeo* (Livorno, 1899), p. 10.

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2

A FLOATING REPUBLIC

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century, long after the new *Porto Pisano* had been constructed¹, we have satisfactory evidence that the Pisans still caulked and repaired their ships "ab ecclesia sancti Viti versus degatiam tantum ex utraque parte Arni²."

In Roman times, there had been a regular harbour on the sea-coast (*portus etruscus*, *portus pisanus*, *portus Pisanorum*), one of the most frequented in the Tyrrhenian Sea, a starting place for expeditions to Marseilles, Sardinia or Spain³; but after the fall of the Empire it was abandoned and gradually silted up, until to-day its very site is doubtful⁴. That it was still of considerable importance in the fourth century of our era is proved by the fact that, in 398, the Imperial fleet, under the command of Mascezel, assembled there before sailing for North Africa against the rebel Gildo⁵. Eighteen years later, Rutilius wrote his celebrated description of the harbour, with its fringe of seaweed and the great Villa Triturrita jutting into it⁶. Thence he

¹ On the authority of P. Vigo, *Storia del porto pisano* (Roma, 1898), p. 7, Professor C. Calisse gives 1163 as the date of the first work done on the new *porto pisano*. Compare, however, *Arch. Stor. It.* T. VI. P. II. pp. 18, 28 and 32, and Repetti, *Diz.* cited, article "Porto pisano."

² Bonaini, *Statuti inediti della Città di Pisa* (Firenze, 1854-1857), vol. I, p. 306.

³ F. C. Hodgson, *The Early History of Venice* (London, 1901), p. 235.

⁴ Some have identified it with Leghorn. Others place it at the mouth of the Arno. See Dennis, *ubi cit.*, p. 77, and authorities there cited.

⁵ Claudianus, *De bello Gildomco*, in *M. G. H. (Auct. Antiq.)*, vol. X, p. 71, vv. 479 *et seq.*:

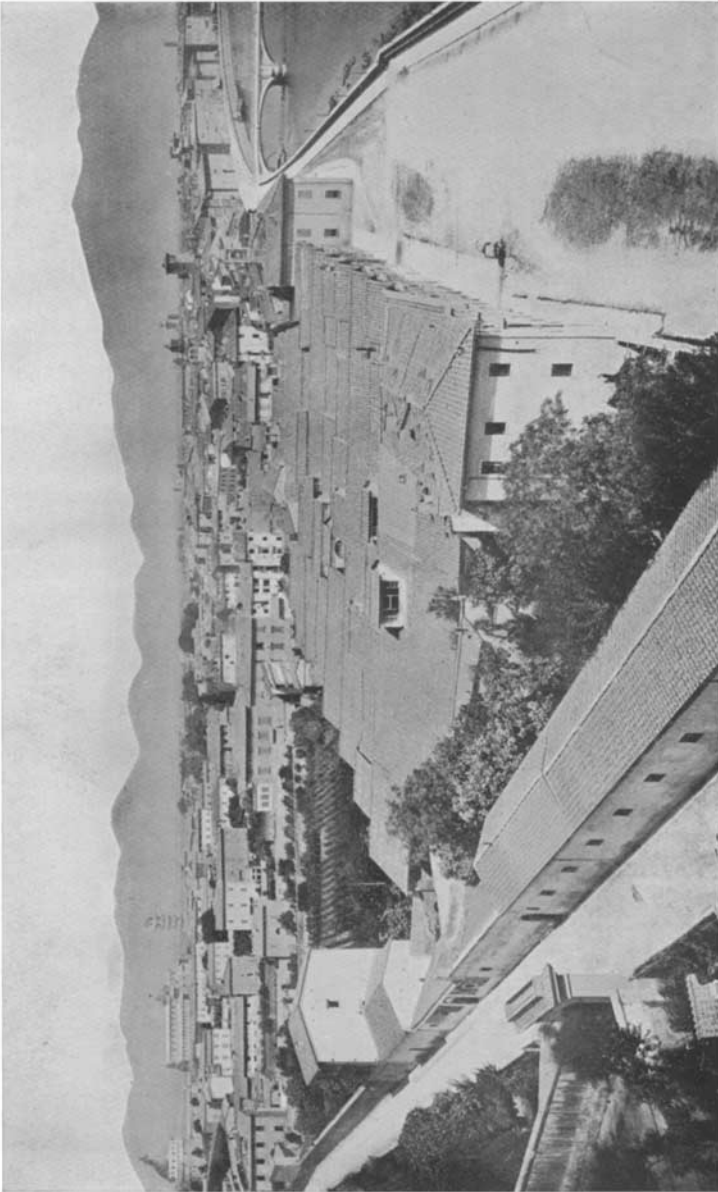
Ut fluctus tetigere maris, tunc acrior arsit
 Impetus; arripiunt naves, ipsique rudentes
 Expediunt, et vela legunt et cornua summis
 Adsociant malis; quatitur Tyrrhena tumultu
 Ora, nec Alpheae capiunt navalia Pisae:
 Sic Agamemnoniam vindex cum Graecia classem
 Solveret, innumeris fervebat vocibus Aulis.
 Non illos strepitus impendentisque procellae
 Signa, nec adventus dubii deterruit Austri.
 'Solvite iam, socii,' clamant, 'aut rumpite funem.
 Per vada Gildonem quamvis adversa petamus.'

⁶ Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, *De Reditu suo*. Edited by C. H. Keene (London, Bell and Sons, 1907), Lib. I, vv. 527-540:

Inde Triturritam petimus: sic villa vocatur,
 Quae latere expulsis insula paene fretis.
 Namque manu iunctis procedit in aequora saxis,
 Quique domum posuit, condidit ante solum.

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PLATE I



PANORAMA OF PISA

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i]

A FLOATING REPUBLIC

3

made his way to Pisa, situated, as in the days of Pelops, between the Arnus and the Ausar¹; and his visit affords us a last glimpse of the Roman colony before the dark night of Barbarian invasion settles down like a pall, hiding it from our eyes for more than six generations.

Subject to the Ostrogoths, Pisa gave herself voluntarily to Narses², and then, in the seventh century, fronts the Middle Ages, still a maritime city and practically self-governing³. Probably, indeed, all those fears which, previous to 603, Gregory the Great had manifested for the safety of the islands of the Tyrrhenian Sea, were inspired by the activities of the Pisans; and, in that year at any rate, we find them preparing a naval expedition in flat defiance of papal entreaties: "Ad Pisanos autem hominem nostrum dudum, qualem debuimus et quo modo debuimus, transmissimus, sed obtinere nil potuit. Unde et dromones eorum iam parati ad egrediendum nuntiati sunt⁴." That this expedition was directed against the Greeks is scarcely doubtful, but whether the Pisans who took part in it were mere pirates or tacitly leagued with the Longobards we do not know⁵. In either case those *dromones parati ad egrediendum* suffice to

Contiguum stupui portum, quem fama frequentat
 Pisanum emporio divitiisque maris.
 Mira loci facies. Pelago pulsantur aperto
 Inque omnes ventos litora nuda patent:
 Non ullus tegitur per brachia tuta recessus,
 Aeolias possit qui prohibere minas:
 Sed procera suo praetexitur alga profundo,
 Molliter offensae non nocitura rati;
 Et tamen insanas cedendo interligat undas,
 Nec sinit ex alto grande volumen agi.

¹ *Ibid.* vv. 565-570:

Alphaeae veterem contemplor originis urbem,
 Quam cingunt geminis Arnus et Ausar aquis;
 Conum pyramidis coeuntia flumina ducunt:
 Intratur modico frons patefacta solo:
 Sed proprium retinet communi in gurgite nomen,
 Et pontum solus scilicet Arnus adit.

² Muratori, *Annali d' Italia*, ad ann. 553.

³ Repetti, *Dizionario* cited, iv, 308: "...sul principio del secolo VII le città di Pisa e di Sovana in Maremma governavansi quasi a repubblica."

⁴ *Epistolae ex Registro Domni Gregorii* in *M. G. H. (Epistolarum* vol. II), XIII, 36. *Smeraldo Patricio et Exarcho*.

⁵ See Hegel, *Storia della Costituzione dei Municipi Italiani* (Milano, Guigoni, 1861), pp. 247-248; Volpe, *Pisa e i Longobardi* in *Studi Storici*

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prove that they were still a race of seamen; and the absence of all records probably conceals a long series of maritime enterprises, some of them possibly of considerable importance. May we not presume that there were Pisans among the *dromonari* of Theodoric¹ and in the *ἀκατοι* of Totila?²

When and how the Longobards entered Pisa is a question which remains extremely doubtful. Apparently, however, the process was a gradual one, continuing through all the first half of the seventh century; while a further period seems to have elapsed before they established a regular government there. For more than two centuries we have no notice of public officials residing in Pisa³. The probability is that the Longobards occupied the city little by little without any violent conquest, joining in the maritime enterprises of the Latin population, half mercantile, half piratical. Yet, if their invasion was peaceable, it was none the less thorough, and ere long the Germanic element seems to have become the predominant one⁴. The assertion made by so many writers that the Longobards hated the sea is a generalization from insufficient data; and, although the annexation of Sardinia by Liutprand is nothing better than a myth⁵, they probably conquered Corsica and certainly maintained constant relations with it⁶. That these relations were not entered into from Genoa is obvious. Under the Romans, Genoa had been an important seaport since the Second Punic war, and up to the time of Rotharis it was free; after Rotharis it was scarcely more than an unwallled village with a scanty population of fisher-folk⁷. Pisa was the only Longobard port in the Tyrrhenian Sea.

(Pisa), x, 370 *et seq.*; Manfroni, *op. cit.* p. 23; Besta, *La Sardegna Medioevale* (Palermo, A. Reber, 1908-9), I, 25; Villari, *Le invasioni barbariche in Italia* (Milano, Hoepli, 1901), p. 296.

¹ Cassiodorus, *Variarum* II, 31; IV, 15, in *M. G. H.* XII.

² Manfroni, *op. cit.* pp. 15-16, citing Procopius, *De bello Gothico*.

³ Volpe, *Pisa e i Longobardi, ubi cit.* pp. 374-375, 387. ⁴ *Ibid.* p. 384.

⁵ Besta, *La Sardegna Medioevale, op. cit.* I, 31-33.

⁶ See the very interesting details given by Volpe, *ubi cit.* p. 383.

⁷ Lumbroso, *Sulla Storia dei Genovesi avanti il MC.* (Torino, 1872), p. 32; R. W. Carden, *The City of Genoa* (London, Methuen, 1908), p. 2. The date A.D. 670, given by the latter writer, is obviously a misprint. In 670, Rotharis had been dead for nearly twenty years.

Afterwards, in the early years of the Frankish domination, we find the Pisans joining in the great struggle which Charlemagne and his immediate successors carried on against the Saracens; we possess some slight evidence that, about the year 808, an imperial fleet, manned in part by Pisans and Genoese, inflicted a defeat upon a Greco-Venetian fleet near Comacchio¹, while, if we may credit the chroniclers, the *parva classis* which, in 828, raided the coast of Africa between Utica and Carthage, under the command of Bonifazio, Count of Lucca and Prefect of Corsica, was almost wholly manned by Pisan mariners². The statement that there were Pisan galleys at the battle of Ostia, in 849, is, no doubt, romance and not history³; but the two thousand Tuscans who fortified the walls of Salerno, in 871, were almost certainly Pisans, since, as Sismondi justly remarks, Pisa was the only Tuscan city whose inhabitants had, as yet, devoted themselves to commerce or possessed ships⁴.

In 906 the Saracens, already masters of Sicily and of a great part of Southern Italy⁵, captured Frassineto, which seems to have been situated on the long peninsula that shuts in the bay

¹ Manfroni, *op. cit.* pp. 37-38. Compare Hodgson, *op. cit.* p. 71 *et seq.* All the details of this war are highly conjectural.

² Roncioni, *Delle istorie pisane*, in "Arch. Stor. It." T. VI. P. I. p. 41 *et seq.*; Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (Firenze, Le Monnier, 1854), vol. I, pp. 276-278; Manfroni, *op. cit.* pp. 42-43; Muratori, *Annali d'Italia, ad annum.*

³ Tronci, *Annali Pisani, rifiuti arricchiti di molti fatti e seguitati fino all'anno 1839* (Pisa, 1868), I, 140.

⁴ Anonymi Salernitani *Paralipomena*, apud Muratori, *Rev. Ital. Script.* T. II. P. II. col. 256: "Aliam [turrim] namque Salernitani construxerunt, quae dicitur Mediana et secus illam turrim aditum civitatis fecerunt et ferris et ferris (*sic*) illam munierunt. Illam vero quae est ab ortu solis Tuscianenses operarunt, etenim illi illo in tempore ferè duo millia fuerunt." Compare Sismondi, *Storia delle Rep. Ital. dei Secoli di Mezzo* (Milano, Pagnoni), vol. I, cap. v, p. 120 n.

⁵ In this connection a few dates may prove useful. The conquest of Sicily began in 827. Palermo was taken in 831, Messina in 843 and Castrogiovanni in 859. Meanwhile, the Venetians were defeated off Taranto, Ancona was burnt and the Adriatic swept by Mussulman fleets. Another company took Bari and carried their ravages into Apulia. In 846, they menaced the very gates of Rome and burned a suburb. Retiring towards Fondi, they laid waste the country and besieged Gaeta, driving back, in headlong rout, even to Montecassino, the army which the Emperor had sent against them. For a time, after 866, Lewis II checked their advance; but his death, in 875, put an end to any organized resistance, and, in 878, Syracuse, the last Greek city of Sicily was taken by the infidels.

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of Villafranca to the east of Nice¹. There they maintained themselves for over thirty years, pushing their plundering expeditions into Burgundy and Piedmont and ravaging all the neighbouring coasts². The terror-stricken Ligurians fled inland, carrying with them the relics of their saints and the ashes of their fathers—an emigration one of the results of which may be found in the jurisdiction which the *pievi* of the mountain districts then acquired over the maritime parishes, and, I believe, still continue to exercise³. From the Magra to the coasts of Provence the Riviera lay desolate, and, in 935, Genoa itself was sacked with horrible slaughter. Only the women and children were spared to become the slaves of the victors, who carried them away to Africa “together with the spoil of all the churches and houses of Genoa⁴.” Eventually, the incursions of the Saracens probably proved beneficial to Genoa, since the lesser towns of the two Riviere, unable to provide for their own defence, put themselves under her protection, and, in process of time, from the head of a confederation she became a sovereign⁵. For the moment, however, she was hopelessly crippled, and her weakness turned to the advantage of Pisa, which from thenceforward, so far at least as any Italian rivals were concerned, dominated the Ligurian Sea for over a century⁶. So

¹ Hodgson, *op. cit.* p. 162.

² They were finally dislodged by Hugh of Provence, in 942. Muratori, *Annali d' Italia*, ad annum.

³ Cantù, *Storia degli Italiani* (Torino, 1854), tom. III, cap. 71. In this connection it may be observed that a *Pieve* was a church in which there was a baptismal font—a Baptistery. Dependent on it were other parochial churches where the sacrament of baptism was not administered. The custom of baptising in *pievi* only, instead of in all parish churches, still exists in many Italian dioceses. (See Lusini, *I confini storici del vescovado di Siena*, in *Bullettino Senese di Storia Patria*, vol. v (1898), p. 345 n.)

⁴ The best account of the sack of Genoa is to be found in Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani*, *op. cit.* II, 179–181. Cf. Manfroni, *op. cit.* p. 61. The narratives of the elder Genoese historians, up to Serra and Canale, may, of course, be dismissed as fabulous.

⁵ Lanzani, *Storia dei Comuni Italiani dalle Origini al 1313* (Milano, Villardi, 1882), p. 120.

⁶ Machiavelli, *Istorie Fiorentine*, lib. 1: “La città di Genova e tutte le sue riviere furono in questi tempi dai Saracini disfatte, donde ne nacque la grandezza della città di Pisa, nella quale assai popoli cacciati dalla patria sua ricorsero....”

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1]

A FLOATING REPUBLIC

7

greatly did she increase in power and importance that Luitprand, Bishop of Cremona, does not hesitate to speak of her as the Capital of Tuscany—*Tusciae Provinciae caput*¹—a title, be it observed, which, rightly considered, is a direct testimony to her maritime ascendancy. On land, as we shall see more fully hereafter, she was still crowded almost out of existence by the overgrown territory and diocese of Lucca. In the tenth century, her only claim to be called the capital of Tuscany lay in her naval and commercial supremacy; and that supremacy, so far from giving umbrage to the German Emperors and to the Marquises of Tuscany, seems to have met with their unqualified approval. Possessing no naval forces of their own, they were glad to profit by the initiative and enterprise of their seafaring subjects. On the sea Pisa was already practically free, and her fleets may be said to have formed a floating republic². Thereafter, the Commune was established on a solid legal basis by two, or perhaps three, Imperial diplomas, but the earliest of these was not granted until the second quarter of the 12th century, when the Pisans had already been ruled by their own Consuls for more than forty years. We may, therefore, regard them rather as recognitions of accomplished facts than as concessions of new political rights³.

¹ Muratori, *Annali d' Italia*, ad ann. 926.

² Amari, *Prime imprese degli Italiani nel Mediterraneo*, in the *Nuova Antologia*, vol. II (1866), p. 46: "I Pisani, fin dalla seconda metà del decimo secolo, compariscono nella storia liberi in mare e sudditi in terra." In this connection the concluding words of the celebrated *Concordia* of Bishop Daibert seem to me suggestive: "Volumus deinde vos scire, quod quisquis, superbia qualibet inflatus, hanc pacem et concordiam servare noluerit, ... propterea sit excommunicatus; et omnes custodite vos ab eo sicuti ab heretico damnato et ab ecclesia Dei separato, neque in ecclesia neque in navi cum eo aliquam communionem habeatis." (Bonaini, *Statuti inediti*, op. cit. vol. 1, pp. 17-18.) Instead of "neque in navi" we should have expected "neque in pisana urbe" or "neque in civitate." The Pisan Commune was still "in navi."

³ Of these diplomas that of Frederick Barbarossa alone remains to us (see Dal Borgo, *Dipl. pis.* p. 32); but we possess documentary evidence of a diploma of Conrad II in a confirmation of Pope Alexander IV (1254-1261); while the existence of a still earlier privilege, granted by Lothar of Saxony about the year 1132, may, perhaps, be inferred from the phraseology of the diplomas of Frederick I and Henry VI: "retro a triginta annis..." "retro a sexaginta annis." Volpe, *Studi sulle istituzioni comunali a Pisa (Città e Contado, Consoli e Podestà)*, sec. XII-XIII, pp. 1-2 notes. See also, in addition to the authorities there cited, Bonaini, *Dipl. pis.* p. 104, doc. xxxiv.

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Of the steps by which Pisa achieved her independence we know nothing in detail, though the general character of the movement is clear enough. As we have already seen¹, the Barbarian invasions had infused a strong strain of wholesome northern blood into the veins of the citizens; it was no weak southern race that built up the might of Pisa. Neither, perhaps, was the northern emigration yet over. If we may believe the chronicles, "the seven barons from whom were descended the seven great houses" only came southward in 972, in the suite of the first Otho². Judging from the long list of names to be found in the documents, not only was the population, from the eleventh century onwards, still largely Teutonic, but, what is even more material, the men in whose hands the Commune was, or, at any rate, the central and more important nucleus of it, were, beyond question of peradventure, men of Longobard, Frank or German origin³. In the aggregate they formed a compact group of families, the richest and strongest in the city, owners of all or nearly all the ships which went to make up the fleets of Pisa. United by common interests and by oaths which bound them to one another and to their chiefs, they early established those sea customs—*consuetudines quas habent de Mari*—which were approved in 1075 by Pope Gregory VII and confirmed, six years later, by the Emperor Henry IV⁴. At first, of course, these customs can have had no validity or coercive power except as between the associates themselves, and, even for them, only when engaged in maritime undertakings. They were, in fact, the laws of the floating republic I have spoken of above. But the associates were not only merchant adventurers: they possessed towers in Pisa and lands in the *contado*; and they

¹ P. 4 *supra*.

² *Cronaca pisana di Raniera Sardo*, in *Arch. Stor. It.* S. 1, T. VI, P. II, p. 75: "Anni Domini novecentosessantadue, fue traslatato lo Imperio alli Alamanni, e venni a Pisa Otto primo, Imperatore Tedesco; e piacendogli lo stallo a lui e alla sua gente, rimansenci sette suoi baroni; delli quali dicesono le sette case; cioè quelli di casa Matti degli Orlandi e di Ripafratta e Gaitani e Duodi e Gusmani e Vesconti e Verchionesi; li quali tutti brevelliggiò e a loro diede molti doni lo ditto Imperadore."

³ Volpe, *Pisa e i Longobardi*, *op. cit.* p. 384.

⁴ Muratori, *Antiquitates*, IV, 19.