



Lorenzo De' Medici

CHARLES L. MEE JR.

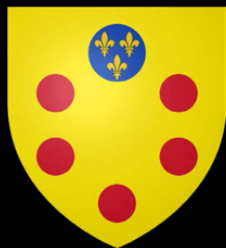
HORIZON • NEW WORD CITY

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Introduction



LORENZO DE MEDICI

Lorenzo de' Medici was never an old man. He died in 1492, the year Christopher Columbus first set foot on American soil, at the age of forty-three. He came to power in fifteenth-century Florence as a very young man of twenty. In the twenty-odd years of his rule, this banker, this politician, this international diplomat, this free-wheeling poet and writer of songs, this establishment member and energetic revolutionary helped to give shape and tone and tempo to that truly dazzling time of Western history, the Renaissance.

This book is about the whirlwind life of Lorenzo de' Medici and of the times in which he lived.

What has his life and times to do with us? Just this: The Renaissance was a time in which old values and traditions were under attack. It was a time of dismay and anxiety, of restlessness, riot, and despair. That such a time can turn out so well may reassure us - especially if we learn from the people who helped to make the Renaissance an age not only of endings but also of hope and great achievement.

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The Rise of the Medici



The murderers being ready, each in his appointed station, which they could retain without any suspicion, on account of the vast numbers assembled in the church, the preconcerted moment arrived, and Bernardo Bandini, with a short dagger . . . struck Giuliano in the breast, who, after a few steps, fell to the earth. Francesco de' Pazzi threw himself upon the body and covered him with wounds; whilst, as if blinded by rage, he inflicted a deep incision upon his own leg. Antonio and Stefano the priest attacked Lorenzo, and after dealing many blows, effected only a slight incision in the throat; for either their want of resolution, the activity of Lorenzo, who, finding himself attacked, used his arms in his own defense, or the assistance of those by whom he was surrounded, rendered all attempts futile. They fled. . .

Thus, the wily Italian diplomat and historian Niccolo Machiavelli described the fateful day of the Pazzi conspiracy - Sunday morning, April 26, 1478. A typical little tale of the Renaissance? Well, not quite. It was, to be sure, a time of violence and bloodshed, a time for soaring ambition and bitter rivalry, for intense hatreds and transcendent loves. It was, in short, a time for great passions. And murder, even murder in a cathedral, even a murder for which the cue was the ringing of the bells at the most sacred moment of the Mass, must not seem too exceptional.

What was exceptional, however, was the intended victim of the conspiracy. One need only identify the Lorenzo spoken of in order to lend historic importance to the event. He was Lorenzo de' Medici, the most remarkable of all the remarkable Medici family. To so distinguish him is no faint praise, for the Medici were the leading family in Florence, and Florence was the leading city in Italy during the Renaissance. In that brilliant family, in that astonishing town, in that age of surpassing magnificence, Lorenzo was called The Magnificent.

He was a robust man, with a strong athletic body, and a zest for all of life so vigorous and infectious that he drew his age about him and dominated it by the sheer force of his character. Indeed, his talents and enthusiasms were so all-encompassing that he stands as an archetype of the Renaissance Man.