

# **COUNSELS AND REFLECTIONS**

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Counsels and Reflections by Francesco Guicciardini & Ninian Hill Thomson

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**FRANCESCO GUICCIARDINI & NINIAN HILL THOMSON**

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN  
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## PREFACE.

THE *Ricordi Politici e Civili* of Francesco Guicciardini, from which this translation is made, appeared for the first time in an authentic form in the year 1857, being included in the first of the ten volumes of Guicciardini's miscellaneous writings published by the Counts Piero and Luigi Guicciardini under the editorship of Signor Giuseppe Canestrini.<sup>1</sup>

Signor Canestrini's collection contains 403 *Ricordi*, taken, as he informs us, in their original integrity from two separate manuscripts, both in the author's handwriting, which had been preserved with the archives

<sup>1</sup> *Opere inedite di Francesco Guicciardini illustrate da Giuseppe Canestrini, e pubblicate per cura dei Conti Piero e Luigi Guicciardini.* Firenze, 1857-67.



of the Guicciardini family in Florence. As regards the first of these manuscripts, which supplies the *Ricordi* Nos. 1-221, we have no clue beyond what is afforded in the *Ricordi* themselves for ascertaining the date at which it was written. But the reference in *Ricordo* No. 1 to the Florentines having then for seven months withstood the attack of the joint armies of Pope and Emperor, and in No. 131 to their continued successful resistance; together with the mention in No. 171 of Carducci, Gualterotti, Altoviti, and Giugni as then representing Florence in France, Venice, Siena, and Ferrara respectively, make it certain that, as far as the last-named number, the whole of the *Ricordi* contained in this manuscript were written between May and August 1530, during the siege of Florence, and before the fall of the Republican Government.<sup>1</sup> The remaining fifty *Ricordi* may reasonably be assumed to have been written about the same time as those which

<sup>1</sup> At this time Guicciardini was in Rome: see note at page 173 to Reflection No. I.

precede them; at any rate, they cannot be assigned to an earlier date.

The other manuscript, from which Canestrini derived the *Ricordi* Nos. 222-403 of his edition, has on the first page a note in Guicciardini's handwriting to the effect that its contents had been transcribed by him in the beginning of the year 1528, "at a time when he had much leisure," from other notebooks written before 1525.<sup>1</sup> Farther on there is a second autograph entry, inserted between the *Ricordi* numbered 393 and 394 in Canestrini's edition, intimating that the Reflections which follow were begun to be added in April 1528.<sup>2</sup>

It will be seen, from what has been said, that the first of the two manuscripts is of later date than the second by two years, and

<sup>1</sup> "Scritti innanzi al 1525 in altri quaderni che in questo; ma ridotti qui nel principio dell'anno 1528, nel grandissimo ozio che avevo; insieme con la più parte di quelli che sono drieto in questo quaderno." It is to be remembered that at this time the Florentine year began on the 25th March.

<sup>2</sup> "Aggiunta cominciata d'Aprile 1528."

it being further obvious, on a comparison of the two series of *Ricordi*, that most of those in the second are repeated, some of them nearly *verbatim* in the first, it must be taken that the first series is a revised and amended edition of the second, and that the two series cannot properly be regarded as forming one continuous work. It is therefore not a little surprising to find Signor Canestrini so treating them, and referring in his preface to the whole of the 403 *Ricordi* printed by him as "written consecutively and numbered continuously by Guicciardini himself."<sup>1</sup>

To remove any doubt which Signor Canestrini's words might occasion, it may be mentioned that on an application made on my behalf by my esteemed friend Professor Pasquale Villari to Count Francesco, the present head of the Guicciardini family, that gentleman, with the most obliging courtesy, caused the two manuscripts to be inspected by his archivist, Signor Gherardi, who reports

<sup>1</sup> "Scritti da Guicciardini tutti di seguito . . . e numerati progressivamente."—*Op. Ined.*, vol. i. p. xxvii.