

cation and drawn partly from traditional sources and partly from his own observation of contemporary manners and customs. His father, Pace, son of Messer Jacopo of Certaldo, doctor of laws, was one of the Priori in 1315-16 and again in 1318-19; in 1319 he went as ambassador to Siena, was again one of the Priori in 1322-23, and after holding other posts of honour, was eventually Gonfaloniere in 1337. Our Paolo, whether he was actually a merchant or not, certainly possessed the foresight, the prudence, and sometimes even the craftiness of one! We know that one of his descendants was an apothecary, by name Cristofano di Fuccio, and that he greatly cherished the "Examples" of his great-great-grandfather, as is proved by a declaration which he appended to the manuscript in a handwriting of the fifteenth century. I have had neither time nor desire to make further researches into the history of Paolo and his family; my only object is to call forth from the pages, yellow with age, of the Riccardiana manuscript a sufficiently vivid presentment of the old Florentine to make us realise once more the truth of the saying that all the world is kin.

Thus it begins:

In the name of God. In this book will we write down many good examples and good customs, and good proverbs and good instructions; wherefore, my son or my brother, or my dear friend, neighbour or companion, or whoever thou art who readest this book, hearken well and understand that which thou shalt find written in this book and put it into action; and much good and honour shalt thou derive therefrom, both for body and soul.

As is seen from the introduction, the book has a moral intention, not differing in this respect from many others which have been written since; but for us the chief and most interesting thing is to discover, amongst all the precepts drawn from or suggested by ecclesiastical tradition, those which were directly inspired by personal experience and which reveal some hidden inclination in those ancient souls, some rebellious instinct, some curious aspect of a life differing so widely from our own, which is nevertheless descended from it. Paolo di Ser