

## Dr. Richards' Report

This summer when I was in Rome, I went to the Vatican, at Mr. Ayres' suggestion, to see what I could discover as to the history of the Barberini-Sciarra di Colonna family whose account books have just been presented to The Business Historical Society. I met all sorts of obstacles. There were serious doubts as to the very existence of such a family or such a branch of either family. There was also a question as to the genuineness of the account books themselves. Thanks to the exceeding great kindness of the members of the staff of the Vatican Library, I was enabled to examine their own collection of business documents belonging to this period and to the Barberini family as well as to the Sciarra di Colonna. A careful comparison of bindings, hand-writing, names and other items, all combined to disprove the suggestion that the present collection were forgeries, but the final and unalterable evidence lay in the similarity of the water marks on the paper. Since my return, some diligent searching in the Widener Library has revealed also the existence of a Barberini-Sciarra di Colonna family as late as 1879. Then there were three unmarried princesses of the line living at Rome. Who represents the family now I do not know nor can I say what the connection is—if indeed there is any at all—between them and the present Barberini princes.

The Barberini family came from Tuscany to Rome about the time that Maffeo was elected Pope, Urban VIII, in 1623, an event which marks the beginning of the rise of the family to power. Then, in 1783 when Cardinal Francesco Barberini, last of the male line, died, he left his titles and estates to the son of his sister, Cornelia, wife of Giulio Cesare Colonna di Sciarra. This son, Urbano, took the name of Barberini-Colonna di Sciarra and it is to this family, father, son, uncle and immediate descendants, that the account books belong.

The 87 MS. volumes include account books for the two great banking houses, the Monte della Pietà and the Bank of Santo Spirito which were administered by members of both of these families, as well as their own personal, estate and household account books, letter books, records of religious orders, etc., etc.

The banking records cover the years 1630 to 1794, with very few breaks in the sequence. Both of these institutions still exist carrying on much the same business that they did in the 17th and 18th centuries and in exactly the same buildings. The Monte della Pietà has always been a combination of bank and pawn shop. It was established in the 16th century primarily for the benefit of the poor. Those who pawned articles had 18 months in which to redeem them; at the end of the time they might renew their tickets free of charge. Failure to do this meant the articles were forfeited and sold, the proceeds being used by the Monte for loans, which were made without interest on sums less than 500 francs, at 2% for sums over that

amount. In addition to the loan department there was, and is, a public bank where, before the Unification of Italy, apostolic funds were deposited. The Bank of Santo Spirito was, prior to 1870, the mint of Rome. Consequently these records of the activities of these two important institutions are of almost incalculable importance in the history of banking.

Glancing over the pages, with their beautiful copper plate chirography, one is impressed with the wide variety of the transactions there recorded, involving not only individuals of every rank or of no rank at all, but other Italian cities and France and Spain as well. Letters and orders of exchange, credits for deposit, orders for payment, advances on crops, deposits to the credit of foreigners; all of these occur again and again in more or less satisfactory detail. Here is an item taken at random but apparently a very typical entry: "Pay to the order of the Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Don Ludovico Sforza and Donna Artemesia Colonna 2000 scudi on account of 12000 scudi owed by us for the dowry of the Most Excellent Duchessa Artemesia, and 2 scudi for the use of the 2000 scudi up to the present date and of 2000 scudi of chattles due their excellencies, left on deposit in the Holy Monte della Pietà with our knowledge and consent according to the terms of the dotal instrument of the surrogate of February 27, 1647, deposited in the Campidoglio."

The estate books refer to the holdings of both the Barberini and the Colonna di Sciarra families near Rome. The most important of these is the huge volume — a veritable librone — relating to the management of Monte Libretto in the Sabine Hills about 39 kilometers from Rome. Monte Libretto is a settlement of 2500 or more inhabitants held successively by the Orsini, the Barberini, the Colonna di Sciarra families and now belonging to the Petracca Luigi. It includes some 200 lesser holdings, as well as a huge baronial castle built by the Barberini. The register is a perfect mine of information for the relation between proprietor and tenant in those days when feudalism was declining. Here one finds records of dues paid for the use of the baronial ovens, of the master's winnowing machine, of land held on the Mezzadria, farming on shares, still one of the greatest problems facing agricultural Italy. There are records of prices of commodities, of labour and of holdings, and for the most part these are satisfyingly definite. The personal and household expense books are likewise valuable for information on wages, on food, on candles, silver-ware, clothing, jewels, stables, etc. We read that it cost seven and a half giuli to send a letter to Milan, 1 scudo to send it to Genoa and 2 scudi to send it to France. One entire volume deals with amounts paid to the customs, month by month. Here is one item: "To the Custom Official of the Dogana of Ripa Grande, for freedom from examination and tax of four boxes sent me from Naples, 29 lire."

One of the most important volumes is that dealing with the rebuilding of the Palazzo de Sciarra in Rome, now the office of the *Giornale d'Italia*. It is interesting to note that not even the Italian guide books mention

the fact that this palace was rebuilt after a fire in 1788; all date it as from the early 16th century. This volume contains all the details of the building, the contract with the master-builder, covering several folio pages; the agreement as to amount and cost of materials; the agreement to keep a certain sum deposited in the Monte della Pieta for the use of the contractor and his promise to forfeit the amount if the building is not finished on time. Artists, bricklayers, masons, cabinet makers, etc., all have their individual contracts.

In addition to the Barberini-Sciarra-Colonna documents, there are three small volumes belonging to Andrea di Luca Pitti, of the famous Florentine family who began the Pitti Palace and who were ruined by the Medici. These books, written in a crabbed, almost illegible hand, are full of interesting and valuable entries of money paid to city officials, to weavers, spinners, and for a variety of things of more or less importance. The entries are usually definite enough to be of positive value for the years they cover, 1568-1585.

In one place we read:

"On this day I bought a pig at the Porta alla Croce net weight 149 lbs. for 121 lire.

Tax at the gate . . . . .	2. 13. 14
Killing and salting. . . . .	1
Quart of salt . . . . .	2
Quatrino of meal . . . . .	2. 4
Loss by bleeding . . . . .	73

Left to be salted and eaten about 70 pounds."

There are also records of daily expenses, for the table, money paid for exemption from offices, taxes, etc. Transcribed or even translated with proper annotations, these volumes would throw light on many aspects of Italian commercial history under the Grand Dukes. No one interested in the social and commercial history of Italy, of commerce and of banking, can fail to see how valuable this collection of documents is, how fortunate The Business Historical Society is to have so unusual a collection, and how equally fortunate the Graduate School of Business Administration is to have the collection in its custody, freely accessible to those who are able to use the information it contains.

## China and the Foreign Devils

THE name "Russell and Company," heading a package of business papers and correspondence, which lay for years a prey to white ants before they found their way to the Society, recalls perhaps the most romantic and one of the most remunerative of the trades carried on