

it was with this handwriting that he enticed ... princes. But the deal failed here, and the precious copy vanished somewhere without a trace ... It is remarkable that, in this period of his life, Poggio, generally being very prolific, does not write anything signed by his own hand ... But then he learns very much, systematically, in concentrated fashion, possibly training himself for some responsible work related to the Roman history of the emperors' period. Niccolo de' Niccoli hardly has time to send him now Ammianus Marcellinus, then Plutarch or Ptolemy's *Geography*, etc." ([247], p. 394 et seq.).

P. Hochart reckons that Poggio started his fabrications alone, but was then forced to involve also Niccolo de' Niccoli (*ibid.*). They probably first launched into circulation the "second" Medicean ms., and kept the "first" Medicean ms. with the purpose of "flaying the same ox twice"; however, "the market was soon spoiled" by the appearance of a considerable number of discovered falsifications. Poggio did not expose himself to risk for a second time. The "first" Medicean ms. was, probably, issued by his son after he had squandered the whole of his father's fortune (*ibid.*). Besides the above works, "Poggio-Niccoli, Inc.", circulated the classics such as the complete Quintilian, certain ones of Cicero's philosophical writings and his seven speeches, Lucretius, Petronius, Plautus, Tertullian, certain texts of Marcellinus, Calpurnius Siculus, etc. After "finding" Tacitus, the market got agitated:

"In 1455, ... Enoch d'Ascoli found in some Danish monastery (again a monastery, and again in the North—A. F.) Tacitus' *Dialogue on Orators, Life of Agricola and Germany*, whose language and character are generally known to be considerably different from the *Histories* and *Annals* ... The *Facetiae* ascribed to Tacitus also appeared on the market, and the forgery was not immediately discovered" ([247], pp. 350-351).

P. Hochart pointed out the extreme similarity between Poggio's own works and Tacitus' ([247], p. 407).

P. Hochart's and J. Ross' works were encountered by the historians with animosity, and caused a scandal. By the way, P. Hochart first became suspicious of Tacitus' text only after he had discovered that the well-known fragment XV, 44, of the *Annals* (about the Christians) was either a forgery or an insertion (*ibid.*). P. Hochart's conclusions found the support of certain specialists. For example, A. Drews, while not sharing this assertion about the forgery of the whole work, fully supported P. Hochart in the problem of fragment XV, 44. No concrete objections were given by traditional historians to P. Hochart and J. Ross (as far as it is known to the author). New arguments in favour of P. Hochart's and J. Ross' opinion were supplied by W. Smith ([252], pp. 27, item b, 258).

We give the example of Poggio's Tacitus not at all in order to make the reader believe that the ancient documents are all forgeries. Moreover, in the following, we give another and rather unexpected explanation of the whole of the Poggio story, which will assume only a redating of the described events, and not forgery. Certainly, P. Hochart and J. Ross, loyal to the traditional point of view, and relying on traditional chronology, could not conjure up another explanation for the inconsistencies discovered by them like the Tacitus forgery.

We believe that to charge one or another document with forgery should not at all be regarded as a means for investigation. Otherwise, an "inconvenient" document