MIDWINTER NUMBER.

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXIX. FEBRUARY, 1885. NO. 4.

ESCUTCHEONS IN THE CLOISTER OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA.

A FLORENTINE MOSAIC.

(FIRST PAPER.)

I.

ALL the way down from Turin to Bologna there was snow; not, of course, the sort of snow we had left on the other side of the Alps, or the snow we remembered in America, but a snow picturesque, spectacular, and no colder or bleaker to the eye from the car-window than the cotton-woolly counterfeit which clothes a landscape of the theater. It covered the whole Lombard plain to the depth of several inches, and formed a very pretty decoration for the naked vines and the trees they festooned. A sky which remained thick and dun throughout the day contributed to the effect of winter, for which, indeed, the Genoese merchant in our carriage said it was now the season.

But the snow grew thinner as the train drew southward, and about Bologna the ground showed through it in patches. Then the night came on, and when we reached Florence at nine o'clock we emerged into an atmosphere which, in comparison with the severity of the transalpine air, could only be called mildly reproachful. For a few days we rejoiced in its concessive softness with some such sense of escape as must come to one who has left moral obligation behind; and then our penalty began. If we walked half a mile away from our hotel, we despaired of getting back, and commonly had ourselves brought home by one of the kindly cab-drivers who had observed our exhaustion. It came finally to our not going away from our hotel to such distances at all. We observed with a mild passivity the vigor of the other guests, who went and came from morning till night, and brought to the *table-d'hôte* minds full of the spoil of their day's sight-seeing. We confessed that we had not, perhaps, been out that day, and we accounted for ourselves by saying that we had seen Florence before, a good many years ago, and that we were in no haste, for we were going to stay all winter. We tried to pass it off as well as we could, and a fortnight had gone by before we had darkened the doors of a church or a gallery.

I suppose that all this lassitude was the effect of our sudden transition from the tonic air of the Swiss mountains; and I should be surprised if our experience of the rigors of a Florentine December were not considered libelous by many whose experience was different. Nevertheless, I report it; for the reader may like to trace to it the languid lack of absolute opinion concerning Florence and her phenomena, and the total absence of final wisdom on any point, which I hope he will be able to detect throughout these pages.

II.

IT was quite three weeks before I began to keep any record of impressions, and I cannot therefore fix the date at which I pushed my search for them beyond the limits of

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the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, where we were lodged. It is better to own up at once to any sin which one is likely to be found out in, for then one gains at least the credit of candor and courage; and I will confess here that I had come to Florence with the intention of writing about it. But I rather wonder now why I should have thought of writing of the whole city when one piazza in it was interesting enough to make a book about. It was in itself not one of the most interesting piazzas of Florence in the ordinary way. I do not know that anything very historical ever happened there; but that is by no means saying that there did not. There used, under the early Medici and the late grand dukes, to be chariot races in it, the goals of which are the two obelisks by John of Bologna, set upon the backs of the bronze turtles which the sympathetic observer will fancy gasping under their weight at either end of the irregular space; and its wide floor is still unpaved, so that it is a sop of mud in rainy weather, and a whirl of dust in dry. At the end opposite the church is the terminus of the steam tramway running to Prato, and the small engine that drew the trains of two or three horse-cars linked together was perpetually fretting and snuffling about the base of the obelisk there, as if that were a stump and the engine were a boy's dog with intolerable conviction of a woodchuck under it. From time to time the conductor blew a small horn of a feeble, reedy note, like that of the horns which children find in their stockings on Christmas morning; and then the poor little engine hitched itself to the train, and with an air of hopeless affliction snuffled away toward Prato, and left the woodchuck under the obelisk to escape. The impression of a woodchuck was confirmed by the digging round the obelisk which a gang of workmen kept up all winter; they laid down water-pipes, and then dug them up again. But when the engine was gone we could give our minds to other sights in the piazza.

III.

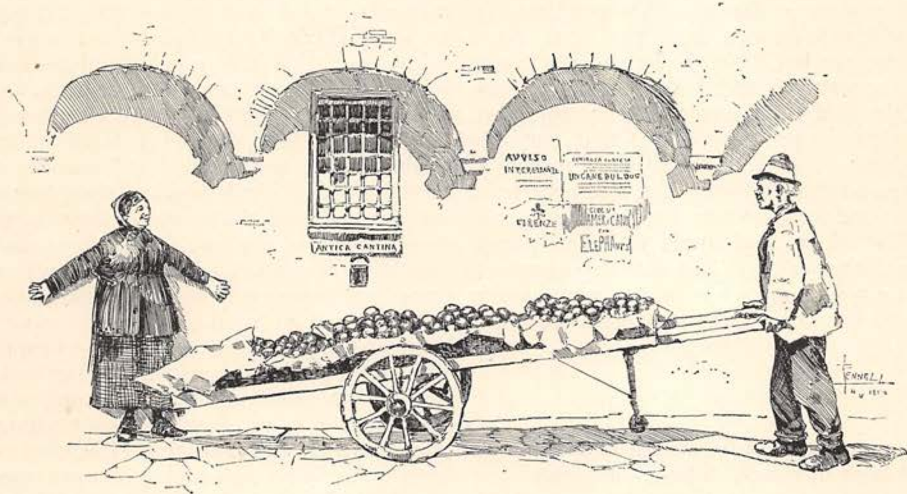
ONE of these was the passage of troops, infantry or cavalry, who were always going to or from the great railway station behind the church, and who entered it with a gay blare of bugles, extinguished midway of the square, letting the measured tramp of feet or the irregular clack of hoofs make itself heard. This was always thrilling, and we could not get enough of the brave spectacle. We rejoiced in the parade of Italian military force with even more than native ardor, for we were not taxed to pay for it, and personally the men were beautiful: not large or strong, but regular and refined of face, rank and file alike, in that democracy of good looks which one sees in no other land. They marched with a lounging, swinging step, under a heavy burden of equipment, and with the sort of quiet patience to which the whole nation has been schooled in its advance out of slavish subjection to the van of civilization.

They were not less charming when they came through off duty, the officers in their statuesque cloaks with the gleam of their swords beneath the folds, striding across the piazza in twos or threes, the common soldiers straggling loosely over its space with the air of peasants let loose amid the wonders of a city, and smoking their long, straw-stemmed Italian cigars, with their eyes all abroad. I do not think they kept up so active a courtship with the nursemaids as the soldiers in the London squares and parks, but there was a friendliness in their relations with the population everywhere that spoke them still citizens of a common country, and not alien to its life in any way. They had leisure just before Epiphany to take a great interest in the preparations the boys were making for the celebration of that feast, with a noise of long, slender trumpets of glass; and I remember the fine behavior of a corporal in a fatigue-cap, who happened along one day when an orange-vender and a group of urchins were trying a trumpet, and extorting from it only a few stertorous crumbs of sound. The corporal put it lightly to his lips, and blew a blast upon it that almost shivered our window-panes, and then walked off with the effect of one who would escape gratitude; the boys looked after him till he was quite out of sight with mute wonder, such as pursues the doer of a noble action.

One evening an officer's funeral passed through the piazza, with a pomp of military mourning; but that was no more effective than the merely civil funeral which we once saw just at twilight. The bearers were in white cowls and robes, and one went at the head of the bier with a large cross. The others carried torches, which sometimes they inverted, swinging forward with a slow processional movement, and chanting monotonously, with the clear dark of the evening light, keen and beautiful, around them.

At other times we heard the jangle of a small bell, and looking out we saw a priest of Santa Maria, with the Host in his hand and his taper-bearing retinue around him, going to administer the extreme unction to some passing soul in our neighborhood. Some of the spectators uncovered, but for the most part they seemed not to notice it, and the

solemnity had an effect of business which I should be at some loss to make the reader feel. But that is the effect which church ceremonial in Italy has always had to me. I do not say that the Italians are more indifferent to their religion than other people, but that, having kept up its shows, always much the same in the celebration of different faiths,— Etruscan, Hellenic, Hebraic,— so long, they were more tired of them, and were willing to let it transact itself without their personal connivance when they could.



AN ORANGE-VENDER.

IV.

ALL the life of the piazza was alike novel to the young eyes which now saw it for the first time from our windows, and lovely in ours, to which youth seemed to come back in its revision. I should not know how to give a just sense of the value of a man who used to traverse the square with a wide wicker tray on his head, piled up with Chianti wine flasks that looked like a heap of great bubbles. I must trust him to the reader's sympathy, together with the pensive donkeys abounding there, who acquired no sort of spiritual pride from the sense of splendid array, though their fringed and tasseled harness blazed with burnished brass. They appeared to be stationed in our piazza while their peasant-owners went about the city on their errands, and it may have been in an access of homesickness too acute for repression that, with a preliminary quivering of the tail and final rise of that member, they lifted their woe-begone countenances and broke into a long disconsolate bray, expressive of a despair which has not yet found its way into poetry and is only vaguely suggested by some music of the minor key.

These donkeys, which usually stood under our hotel, were balanced in the picture by the line of cabs at the base of the tall buildings on the other side, whence their drivers watched our windows with hopes not unnaturally excited by our interest in them, which they might well have mistaken for a remote intention of choosing a cab. From time to time one of them left the rank, and took a turn in the square from pure effervescence of expectation, flashing his equipage upon our eyes, and snapping his whip in explosions that we heard even through the closed windows. They were of all degrees of splendor and squalor, both cabs and drivers, from the young fellow with false, floating blue eyes and fur-trimmed coat, who drove a shining cab fresh from the builder's hands, to the little man whose high hat was worn down almost to its structural pasteboard, and whose vehicle limped over the stones with querulous complaints from its rheumatic joints. When we began to drive out, we resolved to have always the worldlier turnout; but we got it only two or three times, falling finally and permanently—as no doubt we deserved, in punishment of our heartless vanity — to the wreck at the other extreme of the scale. There is no describing the zeal and vigilance by which this driver obtained and secured us to himself. For a while we

practiced devices for avoiding him, and did not scruple to wound his feelings; but we might as well have been kind, for it came to the same thing in the end. Once we had almost escaped. Our little man's horse had been feeding, and he had not fastened his bridle on when the *portiere* called a carriage for us. He made a snatch at his horse's bridle; it came off in his hand and hung dangling; another driver saw the situation and began to whip his horse across the square; our little man seized his horse by the forelock, and dragging him along at the top of his speed, arrived at the hotel door a little the first. What could we do but laugh? Everybody in the piazza applauded, and I think it must have been this fact which confirmed our subjection. After that we pretended once that our little man had cheated us; but with respectful courage he contested the fact, and convinced us that we were wrong; he restored a gold pencil which he had found in his cab; and, though he never got it, he voluntarily promised to get a new coat, to do us the more honor when he drove us out to pay visits.

V.

HE was, like all of his calling with whom we had to do in Florence, amiable and faithful, and he showed that personal interest in us from the beginning which is instant with most of them, and which found pretty expression when I was sending home a child to the hotel from a distance at nightfall. I was persistent in getting the driver's number, and he divined the cause of my anxiety.

"Oh! rest easy!" he said, leaning down toward me from his perch. "I, too, am a father!"

Possibly a Boston hackman might have gone so far as to tell me that he had young ones of his own, but he would have snubbed in reassuring me; and it is this union of grace with sympathy which, I think, forms the true expression of Italian civilization. It is not yet valued aright in the world; but the time must come when it will not be shouldered aside by physical and intellectual brutality. I hope it may come so soon that the Italians will not have learned bad manners from the rest of us. As yet, they seem uncontaminated, and the orange-vender who crushes a plump grandmother up against the wall in some narrow street is as gayly polite in his apologies, and she as graciously forgiving, as they could have been under any older régime.

But probably the Italians could not change if they would. They may fancy changes in themselves and in one another, but the barbarian who returns to them after a long absence cannot see that they are personally different, for all their political transformations. Life, which has become to us like a book which we silently peruse in the closet, or at most read aloud with a few friends, is still a drama with them, to be more or less openly played. This is what strikes you at first, and strikes you at last · it is the most recognizable thing in Italy, and I was constantly pausing in my languid strolls, confronted by some dramatic episode so bewilderingly familiar that it seemed to me I must have already attempted to write about it. One day, on the narrow sidewalk beside the escutcheoned cloister-wall of the church, two young and handsome people stopped me while they put upon that public stage the pretty melodrama of their feelings. The bare-headed girl wore a dress of the red and black plaid of the Florentine laundresses, and the young fellow standing beside her had a cloak falling from his left shoulder. She was looking down and away from him, impatiently pulling with one hand at the fingers of another, and he was vividly gesticulating, while he explained or expostulated, with his eyes not upon her, but looking straight forward; and they both stood as if, in a moment of opera, they were confronting an audience over the footlights. But they were both quite unconscious, and were merely obeying the histrionic instinct of their race. So was the school-boy in clerical robes, when, goaded by some taunt, pointless to the foreign bystander, he flung himself into an attitude of deadly scorn, and defied the tormenting *gamins*; so were the vender of chestnut-paste and his customer, as they debated over the smoking viand the exact quantity and quality which a *soldo* ought to purchase, in view of the state of the chestnut market and the price demanded elsewhere; so was the little woman who deplored, in impassioned accents, the non-arrival of the fresh radishes we liked with our coffee, when I went a little too early for them to her stall; so was the fruiterer who called me back with an effect of heroic magnanimity to give me the change I had forgotten, after beating him down from a franc to seventy centimes on a dozen of mandarin oranges. The sweetness of his air, tempering the severity of his self-righteousness in doing this, lingers with me yet, and makes me ashamed of having got the oranges at a just price. I wish he had cheated me.

We, too, can be honest if we try, but the effort seems to sour most of us. We hurl our integrity in the teeth of the person whom we deal fairly with; but when the Italian makes up his mind to be just, it is in no ungracious spirit. It was their lovely ways, far more than

their monuments of history and art, that made return to the Florentines delightful. I would rather have had a perpetuity of the *cameriere's* smile when he came up with our coffee in the morning than Donatello's San Giorgio, if either were purchasable; and the face of the old chambermaid, Maria, full of motherly affection, was better than the façade of Santa Maria Novella.

A SCHOOL-BOY.

VI.

It is true that the church bore its age somewhat better; for though Maria must have been beautiful, too, in her youth, her complexion had not that luminous flush in which three hundred years have been painting the marble front of the church. It is this light, or this color,— I hardly know which to call it,— that remains in my mind as the most characteristic quality of Santa Maria Novella; and I would like to have it go as far as possible with the reader, for I know that the edifice would not otherwise present itself in my pages, however flatteringly entreated or severely censured. I remember the bold mixture of the styles in its architecture, the lovely sculptures of its grand portals, the curious sun-dials high in its front; I remember the brand-new restoration of the screen of monuments on the right, with the arms of the noble patrons of the church carved below them, and the grass of the space inclosed showing green through the cloister-arches all winter long; I remember also the unemployed laborers crouching along its sunny base for the heat publicly dispensed in Italy on bright days — when it is not needed; and they all gave me the same pleasure, equal in degree, if not in kind. While the languor of these first days was still heavy upon me, I crept into the church for a look at the Ghirlandajo frescoes behind the high altar, the Virgin of Cimabue, and the other objects which one is advised to see there, and had such modest satisfaction in them as may come to one who long ago, once for all, owned to himself that emotions to which others testified in the presence of such things were beyond him. The old masters and their humble acquaintance met shyly, after so many years; these were the only terms on which I, at least, could preserve my self-respect; and it was not till we had given ourselves time to overcome our mutual diffidence that the spirit in which their work was imagined stole into my heart and made me thoroughly glad of it again. Perhaps the most that ever came to me was a sense of tender reverence, of gracious quaintness in them; but this was enough. In the meanwhile I did my duty in Santa Maria Novella. I looked conscientiously at all the pictures, in spite of a great deal of trouble I had in putting on my glasses to read my "Walks in Florence" and taking them off to see the paintings; and I was careful to identify the portraits of Poliziano and the other Florentine gentlemen and ladies in the frescoes. I cannot say that I was immediately sensible of advantage in this achievement; but I experienced a present delight in the Spanish chapel at finding not only Petrarch and Laura, but Boccaccio and Fiammetta, in the groups enjoying the triumphs of the church militant. It will always remain a confusion in our thick Northern heads, this attribution of merit through mere belief to people whose lives cast so little luster on their creeds; but the confusion is an agreeable one, and I enjoyed it as much as when it first overcame me in Italy.

VII.

The cicerone who helped me about these figures was a white-robed young monk, one of twelve who are still left at Santa Maria Novella to share the old cloisters now mainly occupied by the pupils of a military college and a children's school. It was noon, and the corridors and the court were full of boys at their noisy games, on whom the young father smiled patiently, lifting his gentle voice above their clamor to speak of the suppression of the convents. This was my first personal knowledge of the effect of that measure, and I now perceived the hardship which it must have involved, as I did not when I read of it, with my Protestant satisfaction, in the newspapers. The uncomfortable thing about any institution which has survived its usefulness is that it still embodies so much harmless life that must suffer in its destruction. The monks and nuns had been a heavy burden no doubt,

A CHESTNUT-VENDER.

A LABORER.

for many ages, and at the best they cumbered the ground; but when it came to a question of sweeping them away, it meant sorrow and exile and dismay to thousands of gentle and blameless spirits like the brother here, who recounted one of many such histories so meekly, so unresentfully. He and his few fellows were kept there by the piety of certain faithful who, throughout Italy, still maintain a dwindling number of monks and nuns in their old cloisters wherever the convent happened to be the private property of the order. I cannot say that they thus quite console the sentimentalist who would not have the convents reëstablished, even while suffering a poignant regret for their suppression; but I know from myself that this sort of sentimentalist is very difficult, and perhaps he ought not to be too seriously regarded.

VIII.

THE sentimentalist is very abundant in Italy, and most commonly he is of our race and religion, though he is rather English than American. The Englishman, so chary of his sensibilities at home, abandons himself to them abroad. At Rome he already regrets the good old days of the temporal power, when the streets were unsafe after nightfall and unclean the whole twenty-four hours, and there was no new quarter. At Venice he is bowed down under the restorations of the Ducal Palace and the church of St. Mark; and he has no language in which to speak of the little steamers on the Grand Canal, which the Venetians find so convenient. In Florence, from time to time, he has a panic prescience that they are going to tear down the Ponte Vecchio. I do not know how he gets this, but he has it, and all the rest of us sentimentalists eagerly share it with him when he comes in to the *table-d'hôte* luncheon, puts his Baedeker down by his plate, and before he has had a bite of anything calls out: "Well, they are going to tear down the Ponte Vecchio!"

The first time that this happened in our hotel, I was still under the influence of the climate; but I resolved to visit the Ponte Vecchio with no more delay, lest they should be going to tear it down that afternoon. It was not that I cared a great deal for the bridge itself, but my accumulating impressions of Florentine history had centered about it as the point at which that history really began to be historic. I had formed the idea of a little dramatic opening for my sketches there, with Buondelmonte riding in from his villa to meet his bride, and all that spectral train of Ghibelline and Guelphic tragedies behind them on the bridge; and it appeared to me that this could not be managed if the bridge were going to be torn down. I trembled for my cavalcade, ignominiously halted on the other side of the Arno, or obliged to go round and come in on some other bridge without regard to the fact; and at some personal inconvenience I hurried off to the Ponte Vecchio. I could not see that the preparations for its destruction had begun, and I believe they are still threatened only in the imagination of sentimental Anglo-Saxons. The omnibuses were following each other over the bridge in the peaceful succession of so many horse-cars to Cambridge, and the ugly little jewelers' booths glittered in their wonted security on either hand all the way across. The carriages, the carts, the foot-passengers were swarming up and down from the thick turmoil of Por San Maria; and the bridge did not respond with the slightest tremor to the heel clandestinely stamped upon it for a final test of its stability.

IN THE SUN.

But the alarm I had suffered was no doubt useful, for it was after this that I really began to be serious with my material, as I found it everywhere in the streets and the books, and located it from one to the other. Even if one has no literary designs upon the facts, that is incomparably the best way of dealing with the past. At home, in the closet, one may read history, but one can realize it, as if it were something personally experienced, only on the spot where it was lived. This seems to me the prime use of travel; and to create the reader a partner in the enterprise and a sharer in its realization seems the sole excuse for books of travel, now when modern facilities have abolished hardship and danger and adventure, and nothing is more likely to happen to one in Florence than in Fitchburg.

In this pursuit of the past, the inquirer will

FLORENCE, ON THE ARNO—PONTE VECCHIO.

often surprise himself in the possession of a genuine emotion; at moments the illustrious or pathetic figures of other days will seem to walk before him unmocked by the grotesque and burlesquing shadows we all cast while in the flesh. I will not swear it, but it would take little to persuade me that I had vanishing glimpses of many of these figures in Florence. One of the advantages of this method is that you have your historical personages in a sort of picturesque contemporaneity with one another and with yourself, and you imbue them all with the sensibilities of our own time. Perhaps this is not an advantage, but it shows what may be done by the imaginative faculty; and if we do not judge men by ourselves, how are we to judge them at all?

IX.

I TOOK some pains with my Florentines, first and last, I will confess it. I went quite back with them to the lilies that tilted all over the plain where they founded their city in the dawn of history, and that gave her that flowery name of hers. I came down with them from Fiesole to the first marts they held by the Arno for the convenience of the merchants who did not want to climb that long hill to the Etruscan citadel; and I built my wooden hut with the rest hard by the Ponte Vecchio, which was an old bridge a thousand years before Gaddi's structure. I was with them all through that dim turmoil of wars, martyrdoms, pestilences, heroisms, and treasons for a thousand years, feeling their increasing purpose of municipal freedom and hatred of the one-man power *(il governo d'un solo)* alike under Romans, Huns, Longobards, Franks, and Germans, till in the eleventh century they marched up against their mother city, and destroyed Fiesole, leaving nothing standing but the fortress, the cathedral, and the Caffè Aurora, where the visitor lunches at this day, and has an incomparable view of Florence in the distance. When, in due time, the proud citizens began to go out from their gates and tumble their castles about the ears of the Germanic counts and barons in the surrounding country, they had my sympathy almost to the point of active coöperation; though I doubt now if we did well to let those hornets come into the town and build other nests within the walls, where they continued nearly as pestilent as ever. Still, so long as no one of them came to the top permanently, there was no danger of the one-man power we dreaded, and we could adjust our arts, our industries, our finances to the state of street warfare, even if it lasted, as at one time, for forty years. I was as much opposed as Dante himself to the extension of the national limits, though I am not sure now that our troubles came from acquiring territory three miles away, beyond the Ema, and I could not trace the bitterness of partisan feeling even to the annexation of Prato, whither it took me a whole hour to go by the steam-tram. But when the factions were divided under the names of Guelph and Ghibelline, and subdivided again into Bianchi and Neri, I was always of the Guelph and the Bianchi party, for it seemed to me that these wished the best to the commonwealth, and preserved most actively the traditional fear and hate of the one-man power. I believed heartily in the wars against Pisa and Siena, though afterward, when I visited those cities, I took their part against the Florentines, perhaps because they were finally reduced by the Medici — a family I opposed from the very first, uniting with any faction or house that contested its rise. They never deceived me when they seemed to take the popular side, nor again when they voluptuously favored the letters and arts, inviting the city full of Greeks to teach them. I mourned all through the reign of Lorenzo the Magnificent over the subjection of the people, never before brought under the one-man power, and flattered to their undoing by the splendors of the city and the state he created for him. When our dissolute youth went singing his obscene songs through the moonlit streets, I shuddered with a good Piagnone's abhorrence; and I heard one morning with a stern and solemn joy that the great Frate had refused absolution to the dying despot who had refused freedom to Florence. Those were great days for one of my thinking, when Savonarola realized the old Florentine ideal of a free commonwealth, with the Medici banished, the Pope defied, and Christ king; days incredibly dark and terrible, when the Frate paid for his good-will to us with his life, and suffered by the Republic which he had restored. Then the famous siege came, the siege of fifteen months, when Papist and Lutheran united under one banner against us, and treason did what all the forces of the Empire had failed to effect. Yet Florence, the genius of the great democracy, never showed more glorious than in that supreme hour, just before she vanished forever, and the Medici bastard entered the city out of which Florence had died, to be its liege lord where no master had ever been openly confessed before. I could follow the Florentines intelligently through all till that; but then, what suddenly became of that burning desire of equality, that deadly jealousy of a

tyrant's domination, that love of country surpassing the love of life? It is hard to reconcile ourselves to the belief that the right can be beaten; that the spirit of a generous and valiant people can be broken; but this is what seems again and again to happen in history, though never so signally, so spectacularly, as in Florence when the Medici were restored. After that there were conspiracies and attempts of individuals to throw off the yoke; but in the great people, the prostrate body of the old democracy, not a throe of revolt. Had they outlived the passion of their youth for liberty, or were they sunk in despair before the odds arrayed against them? I did not know what to do with the Florentines from this point; they mystified me, silently suffering under the Medici for two hundred years, and then sleeping under the Lorrainese for another century, to awake in our own time the most polite, the most agreeable of the Italians perhaps, but the most languid. They say of themselves, "We lack initiative"; and the foreigner most disposed to confess his ignorance cannot help having heard it said of them by other Italians that while the Turinese, Genoese, and Milanese, and even the Venetians, excel them in industrial enterprise, they are less even than the Neapolitans in intellectual activity; and that when the capital was removed to Rome they accepted adversity almost with indifference, and resigned themselves to a second place in everything. I do not know whether this is true; there are some things against it, as that the Florentine schools are confessedly the best in Italy, and that it would be hard anywhere in that country or another to match the group of scholars and writers who form the University of Florence. These are not all Florentines, but they live in Florence, where almost any one would choose to live if he did not live in London, or Boston, or New York, or Helena, Montana T. There is no more comfortable city in the world, I fancy. American canned goods, including Boston baked beans, are to be had at the principal grocers', and there is almost every shade of Protestant preaching, with Catholic sermons in English every Sunday. But you cannot paint comfort so as to interest the reader of a magazine paper. Even the lack of initiative in a people who conceal their adversity under very good clothes, and have abolished beggary, cannot be made the subject of a graphic sketch; one must go to their past for that.

THE VIRGINIA CIGAR.

X.

YET if the reader had time, I would like to linger a little on our way down to the Via Borgo Santi Apostoli, where it branches off into the Middle Ages out of Via Tornabuoni, not far from Vieusseux's Circulating Library. For Via Tornabuoni *is* charming, and merits to be observed for the ensemble it offers of the contemporary Florentine expression, with its alluring shops, its confectioners and cafés, its florists and milliners, its dandies and tourists, and, ruggedly massing up out of their midst, the mighty bulk of its old Strozzi palace, mediæval, somber, superb, tremendously impressive of the days when really a man's house was his castle. Everywhere in Florence, the same sort of contrast presents itself in some degree; but nowhere quite so dramatically as here, where it seems expressly contrived for the sensation of the traveler when he arrives at the American banker's with his letter of credit the first morning, or comes to the British pharmacy for his box of quinine pills. It is eminently the street of the tourists, who are always haunting it on some errand. The best shops are here, and the most English is spoken; you hear our tongue spoken almost as commonly as Italian and much more loudly, both from the chest and through the nose, whether the one is advanced with British firmness to divide the groups of civil and military loiterers on the narrow pavement before the confectioner Giacosa's, or the other is flattened with American curiosity against the panes of the jewelers' windows. There is not here the glitter of mosaics which fatigues the eye on the Lungarno or in Via Borgognissanti, nor the white glare of new statuary — or statuettary, rather — which renders other streets impassable; but there is a sobered richness in the display, and a local character in the prices which will sober the purchaser.

Florence is not well provided with spaces for the outdoor lounging which Italian leisure loves, and you

A FLORENTINE FLOWER-GIRL.

must go to the Cascine for much Florentine fashion if you want it; but something of it is always rolling down through Via Tornabuoni in its carriage at the proper hour of the day, and something more is always standing before Giacosa's, English-tailored, Italian-mannered, to bow, and smile, and comment. I was glad that the sort of swell whom I used to love in the Piazza at Venice abounded in the narrower limits of Via Tornabuoni. I was afraid he was dead; but he graced the curbstone there with the same lily-like disoccupation and the same sweetness of aspect which made the Procuratie Nuove like a parterre. He was not without his small dog or his cane held to his mouth; he was very, very patient and kind with the aged crone who plays the part of Florentine flower-girl in Via Tornabuoni, and whom I after saw aiming with uncertain eye a boutonnière of violets at his coat-lapel; there was the same sort of calm, heavy-eyed beauty looking out at him from her ice or coffee through the vast pane of the confectioner's window, that stared sphinx-like in her mystery from a cushioned corner of Florian's; and the officers went by with tinkling spurs and sabers, and clicking boot-heels, differing in nothing but their Italian uniforms and complexions from the blonde Austrian military of those far-off days. I often wondered who or what those beautiful swells might be, and now I rather wonder that I did not ask some one who could tell me. But perhaps it was not important; perhaps it might even have impaired their value in the picture of a conscientious artist who can now leave them, without a qualm, to be imagined as rich and noble as the reader likes. Not all the frequenters of Doney's famous café were both, if one could trust hearsay. Besides those who could afford to drink the first sprightly runnings of his coffee-pot, it was said that there was a genteel class who, for the sake of being seen to read their newspapers there, paid for the second decantation from its grounds, which comprised what was left in the cups from the former. This might be true of a race which loves a goodly outside perhaps a little better than we do; but Doney's is not the Doney's of old days, nor its coffee so very good at first hand. Yet if that sort of self-sacrifice goes on in there, I do not object; it continues the old Latin tradition of splendor and hunger which runs through so many pleasant books, and is as good in its way as a beggar at the gate of a palace. It is a contrast; it flatters the reader who would be incapable of it; and let us have it. It is one of the many contrasts in Florence of which I spoke, and not all of which there is time to point out. But if you would have the full effect of the grimness and rudeness of the Strozzi Palace (drolly parodied, by the way, in a structure of the same street which is like a Strozzi Palace on the stage), look at that bank of flowers at one corner of its base,—roses, carnations, jonquils, great Florentine anemones,— laying their delicate cheeks against the savage blocks of stone, rent and burst from their quarry, and set here with their native rudeness untamed by hammer or chisel.

XI.

THE human passions were wrought almost as primitive into the civic structure of Florence, down in the thirteenth century, which you will find with me at the bottom of the Borgo Santi Apostoli, if you like to come. There and thereabouts dwelt the Buondelmonti, the Amidei, the Uberti, the Lamberti, and other noble families, in fastnesses of stone and iron as formidable as the castles from which their ancestors were dislodged when the citizens went out into the country around Florence, and destroyed their strongholds and obliged them to come into the city; and thence from their casements and towers they carried on their private wars as conveniently as ever, descending into the streets, and battling about among the peaceful industries of the vicinity for generations. It must have been inconvenient for the industries, but so far as one can understand, they suffered it just as a Kentucky community now suffers the fighting out of a family feud in its streets, and philosophically gets under shelter when the shooting begins. It does not seem to have been objected to some of these palaces that they had vaulted

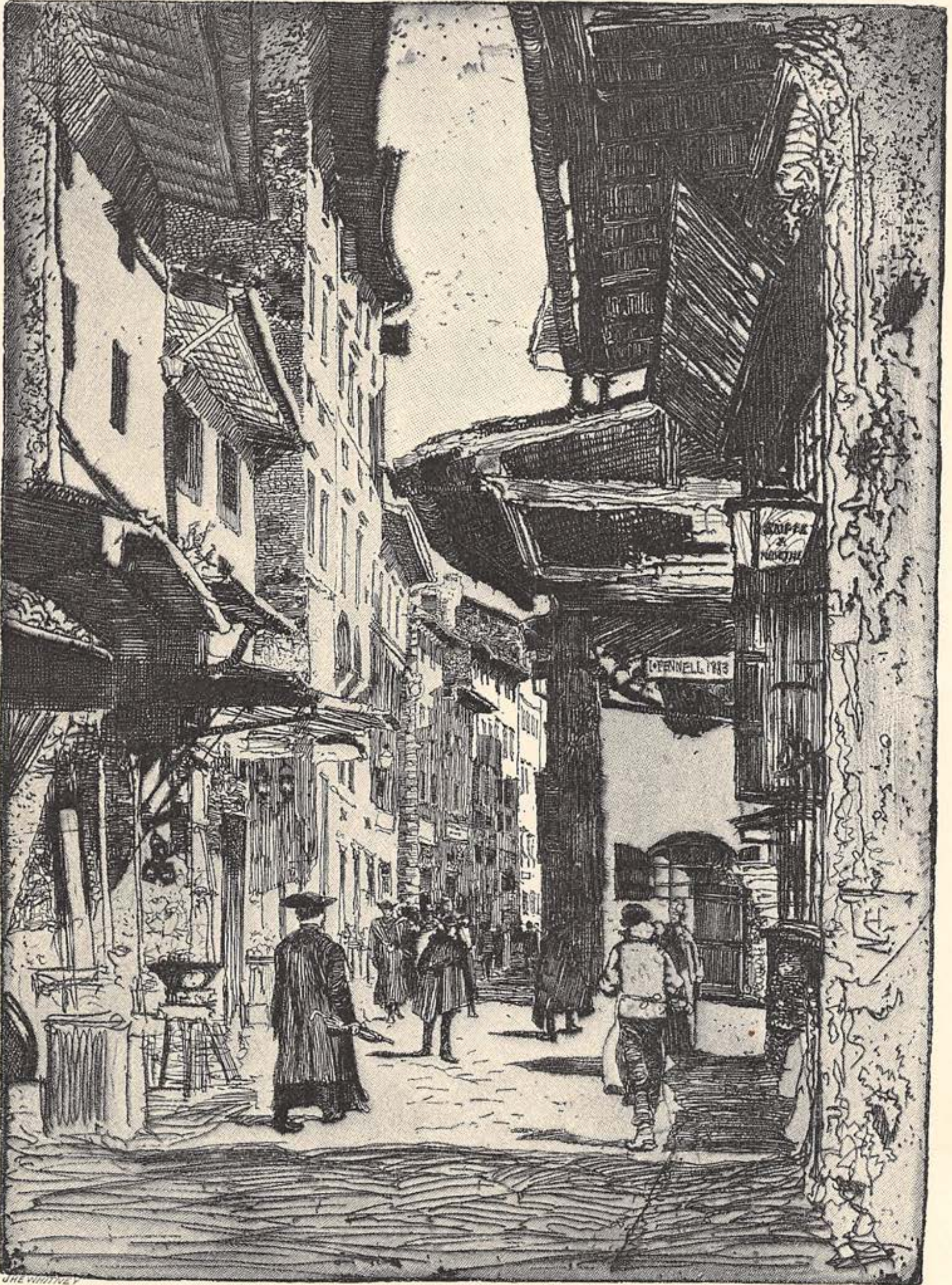
AT DONEY'S.

passageways under their first stories, provided with trap-doors to let the besieged pour hot water down on the passers below; these avenues were probably strictly private, and the citizens did not use them at times when family feeling ran high. In fact, there could have been but little coming and going about these houses for any who did not belong in them. A whole quarter, covering the space of several American city blocks, would be given up to the palaces of one family and its adherents, in a manner which one can hardly understand without seeing it. The Peruzzi, for example, inclosed a Roman amphitheater with their palaces, which still follow in structure the circle of the ancient edifice; and the Peruzzi were rather peaceable people, with less occasion for fighting-room than many other Florentine families—far less than the Buondelmonti, Uberti, Amidei, Lamberti, Gherardini, and others, whose domestic fortifications seem to have occupied all that region lying near the end of the Ponte Vecchio. They used to fight from their towers on three corners of Por San Maria above the heads of the people passing to and from the bridge, and must have occasioned a great deal of annoyance to the tourists of that day. Nevertheless, they seem to have dwelt in very tolerable enmity together till one day when a Florentine gentleman invited all the noble youth of the city to a banquet at his villa, where, for their greater entertainment, there was a buffoon playing his antics. This poor soul seems not to have been a person of better taste than some other humorists, and he thought it droll to snatch away the plate of Uberto degl' Infangati, who had come with Buondelmonte, at which Buondelmonte became furious, and resented the insult to his friend, probably in terms that disabled the politeness of those who laughed, for it is recorded that Oddo di Arrigo dei Fifanti, "a proud and resolute man," became so incensed as to throw a plate and its contents into Uberto's face. The tables were overturned, and Buondelmonte stabbed Oddo with a knife; at which point the party seems to have broken up, and Oddo returned to Florence from Campi, where the banquet was given, and called a family council to plot vengeance. But a temperate spirit prevailed in this senate, and it was decided that Buondelmonte, instead of dying, should marry Oddo's niece, Reparata degli Amidei, differently described by history as a plain girl, and as one of the most beautiful and accomplished damsels of the city, of a very noble and consular family. Buondelmonte, a handsome and gallant cavalier, but a weak will, as appears from all that happened, agreed to this, and everything was happily arranged, till one day when he was riding by the house of Forese Donati. Monna Gualdrada Donati was looking out of the window, and possibly expecting the young man. She called to him, and when he had alighted and come into the house she began to mock him.

"Cheer up, young lover! Your wedding-day is coming, and you will soon be happy with your bride."

"You know very well," said Buondelmonte, "that this marriage was a thing I could not get out of."

"Oh, indeed!" cried Monna Gualdrada. "As if you did not care for a pretty wife!" And then it was, we may suppose, that she hinted those things she is said to have insinuated against Reparata's looks and her fitness otherwise for a gentleman like Buondelmonte. "If I had known you were in such haste to marry — but God's will be done! We cannot have things as we like in this world!" And Machiavelli says that the thing Monna Gualdrada had set her heart on was Buondelmonte's marriage with her daughter, "but either through carelessness, or because she thought it would do any time, she had not mentioned it to any one." She added, probably with an affected carelessness, that the Donati were of rather better lineage than the Amidei, though she did not know whether he would have thought her Beatrice as pretty as Reparata. And then suddenly she brought him face to face with the girl, radiantly beautiful, the most beautiful in Florence. "This is the wife I was keeping for you," said Monna Gualdrada; and she must have known her ground well, for she let the poor young man understand that her daughter had long been secretly in love with him. Malespini tells us that Buondelmonte was tempted by a diabolical spirit to break faith at this sight; the devil accounted for a great many things then to which we should not now, perhaps, assign so black an origin. "And I would very willingly marry her," he faltered, "if I were not bound by that solemn promise to the Amidei"; and Monna Gualdrada now plied the weak soul with such arguments and reasons, in such wise as women can use them, that he yielded, and giving his hand to Beatrice, he did not rest till they were married. Then the Amidei, the Uberti, the Lamberti, and the Fifanti, and others who were outraged in their cousinship or friendship by this treachery and insult to Reparata, assembled in the church of Santa Maria sopra Porta to take counsel again for vengeance. Some were of opinion that Buondelmonte should be cudgeled, and thus publicly put to shame; others that he should be wounded and disfigured in the face; but Mosca Lamberti



A STREET IN FLORENCE.

rose and said: "There is no need of all these words. If you strike him or disfigure him, get your graves ready to hide in. *Cosa fatta capo ha!*" With which saying he advised them to make an end of Buondelmonte altogether. His words had the acceptance that they would now have in a Kentucky family council, and they agreed to kill Buondelmonte when he should come to fetch home his bride. On Easter morning, in the year 1215, they were waiting for him in the house of the Amidei, at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio; and when they saw him come riding, richly dressed in white, on a white palfrey, over the bridge, and "fancying," says Machiavelli, "that such a wrong as breaking an engagement could be so easily forgotten," they sallied out to the statue of Mars which used to be there. As Buondelmonte reached the group,—it must have been, for all his courage, with a face as white as his mantle,—Schiatta degli Uberti struck him on the head with a stick, so that he dropped stunned from his palfrey. Then Oddo di Arrigo, whom he had stabbed, and Mosca Lamberti, who had pronounced his sentence, and Lambertaccio Amidei, "and one of the Gangolandi," ran and cut his throat.

There arose a terrible tumult in the city, and the girl whose fatal beauty had wrought this horror, governing herself against her woman's weakness with supernatural strength, mounted the funeral car beside her lover's body, and taking his head into her lap, with his blood soaking her bridal robes, was drawn through the city everywhere, crying for vengeance.

From that hour, they tell us, the factions that had long tormented Florence took new names, and those who had sided with the Buondelmonti and the Donati for the Pope against the Emperor became Guelphs, while the partisans of the Amidei and the Empire became Ghibellines, and began that succession of reciprocal banishments which kept a good fourth of the citizens in exile for three hundred years.

XII.

WHAT impresses one in this and the other old Florentine stories is the circumstantial minuteness with which they are told, and their report has an air of simple truth very different from the literary factitiousness to which one is tempted in following them. After six centuries the passions are as living, the characters as distinct, as if the thing happened yesterday. Each of the persons stands out a very man or woman, in that clear, strong light of the early day through which they move. From the first the Florentines were able to hit each other off with an accuracy which comes of the southern habit of living much together in public, and one cannot question these lineaments. Buondelmonte, Mosca Lamberti, Monna Gualdrada, and even that "one of the Gangolandi," how they possess the imagination! Their palaces still rise there in the grim, narrow streets, and seem no older in that fine Florentine air than houses of fifty years ago elsewhere. They were long since set apart, of course, to other uses. The chief palace of the Buondelmonti is occupied by an insurance company; there is a little shop for the sale of fruit and vegetables niched into the grand Gothic portal of the tower, and one is pushed in among the pears and endives by the carts which take up the whole street from wall to wall in passing. The Lamberti palace was confiscated by the Guelph party, and was long used by the Art of Silk for its guild meetings. Now it is a fire-engine house, where a polite young lieutenant left his architectural drawings to show us some frescoes of Giotto lately uncovered there over an old doorway. Over a portal outside the arms of the guild were beautifully carved by Donatello, as you may still see; and in a lofty angle of the palace the exquisite loggia of the family shows its columns and balustrade against the blue sky.

I say blue sky for the sake of the color, and because that is expected of one in mentioning the Florentine sky; but, as a matter of fact, I do not believe it was blue half a dozen days during the winter of '82–'83. The prevailing weather was gray, and down in the passages about the bases of these mediæval structures the sun never struck, and the point of the mediæval nose must always have been very cold from the end of November till the beginning of April.

The tradition of an older life continues into the present everywhere; only in Italy it is a little more evident, and one realizes in the discomfort of the poor, who have succeeded to these dark and humid streets, the discomfort of the rich who once inhabited them, and whose cast-off manners have been left there. Monna Gualdrada would not now call out to Buondelmonte riding under her window, and make him come in and see her beautiful daughter; but a woman of the class which now peoples the old Donati houses might do it.

I walked through the Borgo Santi Apostoli for the last time late in March, and wandered round in the winter, still lingering in that wonderful old nest of palaces, before I came out into the cheerful bustle of Por San Maria, the street which projects the glitter of its jewelers' shops quite across the Ponte Vecchio. One of these, on the left corner, just before you

reach the bridge, is said to occupy the site of the loggia of the Amidei; and if you are young and strong, you may still see them waiting there for Buondelmonte. But my eyes are not very good any more, and I saw only the amiable modern Florentine crowd, swollen by a vast number of English and American tourists, who at this season begin to come up from Rome. There are a good many antiquarian and bric-à-brac shops in Por San Maria; but the towers from which the vanished families used to fight have been torn down, so that there is comparatively little danger from a chance bolt there.

XIII.

ONE of the furious Ghibelline houses of this quarter were the Gherardini, who are said to have become the Fitzgeralds of Ireland, whither they went in their exile, and where they enjoyed their fighting privileges long after those of their friends and acquaintances remaining in Florence had been cut off. The city annals would no doubt tell us what end the Amidei and the Lamberti made; from the Uberti came the great Farinata, who, in exile with the other Ghibellines, refused with magnificent disdain to join them in the destruction of Florence. But the history of the Buondelmonti has become part of the history of the world. One branch of the family migrated from Tuscany to Corsica, where they changed their name to Buonaparte, and from them came the great Napoleon. As to that "one of the Gangolandi," he teases me into vain conjecture, lurking in the covert of his family name, an elusive personality which I wish some poet would divine for us. The Donati afterward made a marriage which brought them into as lasting remembrance as the Buondelmonti; and one visits their palaces for the sake of Dante rather than Napoleon. They inclose, with the Alighieri house in which the poet was born, the little Piazza Donati, which you reach by going up the Corso to the Borgo degli Albizzi, and over against them on that street the house of the Portinari stood, where Beatrice lived, and where it must have been that she first appeared to the rapt boy who was to be the world's Dante, "clothed in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson, garlanded and adorned in such wise as befitted her very youthful age." The palace of the Salviati—in which Cosmo I. was born, and in which his father, Giovanni delle Bande, taught the child courage by flinging him from an upper window into the arms of a servitor below—has long occupied the site of the older edifice; and the Piazza Donati, whatever dignity it may once have had, is now nothing better than a shabby court. The back windows of the tall houses surrounding it look into it when not looking into one another, and see there a butcher's shop, a smithy, a wagon-maker's, and an inn for peasants with stabling. On a day when I was there, a wash stretched fluttering across the rear of Dante's house, and the banner of a green vine trailed from a loftier balcony. From one of the Donati casements an old woman in a purple knit jacket was watching a man repainting an omnibus in front of the wagon shop; a great number of canaries sang in cages all round the piazza; a wrinkled peasant with a faded green cotton umbrella under his arm gave the place an effect of rustic sojourn; and a diligence that two playful stable-boys were long in hitching up drove jingling out, with its horses in brass-studded head-stalls, past where I stood under the fine old arches of the gateway. I had nothing to object to all this, nor do I suppose that this last state of his old neighborhood much vexes the poet now. It was eminently picturesque, with a sort of simple cheerfulness of aspect, the walls of the houses in the little piazza being of different shades of buff, with window-shutters in light green opening back upon them from those casements where the shrieking canaries hung. The place had that tone which characterizes so many city perspectives in Italy, and especially Florence—which makes the long stretch of Via Borgognissanti so smiling, and bathes the sweep of Lungarno in a sunny glow wholly independent of the state of the weather. As you stroll along one of these light-yellow avenues you say to yourself, "Ah, *this* is Florence!" And then suddenly you plunge into the gray-brown gloom of such a street as the Borgo degli Albizzi, with lofty palaces climbing in vain toward the sun, and frowning upon the street below with fronts of stone, rude or sculptured, but always stern and cold; and then that, too, seems the only Florence. They are in fact equally Florentine; but I suppose one expresses the stormy yet poetic life of the old commonwealth, and the other the serene, sunny commonplace of the Lorrainese régime.

I was not sorry to find this the tone of Piazza Donati, into which I had eddied from the austerity of Borgo degli Albizzi. It really belongs to a much remoter period than the older-looking street—to the Florence that lingers architecturally yet in certain narrow avenues to the Mercato Vecchio, where the vista is broken by innumerable pent-roofs, balconies, and cornices; and a throng of operatic figures in slouch hats and short cloaks

are so very improbably bent on any realistic business, that they seem to be masquerading there in the mysterious fumes of the cook-shops. Yet I should be loath, for no very tangible reason, to have Piazza Donati like one of these avenues or in any wise different from what it is; certainly I should not like to have the back of Dante's house smartened up like the front, which looks into the Piazza San Martino. I do not complain that the restoration is bad; it is even very good, for all that I know; but the unrestored back is better, and I have a general feeling that the past ought to be allowed to tumble down in peace, though I have no doubt that whenever this happened I should be one of the first to cry out against the barbarous indifference that suffered it. I dare say that in a few hundred years, when the fact of the restoration is forgotten, the nineteenth century mediævalism of Dante's house will be acceptable to the most fastidious tourist. I tried to get into the house, which is open to the public at certain hours on certain days, but I always came at ten on Saturday, when I ought to have come at two on Monday, or the like; and so at last I had to content myself with the interior of the little church of San Martino, where Dante was married, half a stone's cast from where he was born. The church was closed, and I asked a cobbler, who had brought his work to the threshold of his shop hard by, for the sake of the light, where the sacristan lived. He answered me unintelligibly, without leaving off for a moment his furious hammering at the shoe in his lap. He must have been asked that question a great many times, and I do not know that I should have taken any more trouble in his place; but a woman in a fruit-stall next door had pity on me, knowing doubtless that I was interested in San Martino on account of the wedding, and sent me to No. 1. But No. 1 was a house so improbably genteel that I had not the courage to ring; and I asked the grocer alongside for a better direction. He did not know how to give it, but he sent me to the local apothecary, who in turn sent me to another number. Here another shoemaker, friendlier or idler than the first, left off gossiping with some friends of his, and showed me the right door at last in the rear of the church. My pull at the bell shot the sacristan's head out of the fourth-story window in the old way that always delighted me, and I perceived even at that distance that he was a man perpetually fired with zeal for his church by the curiosity of strangers. I could certainly see the church, yes; he would come down instantly and open it from the inside if I would do him the grace to close his own door from the outside. I complied willingly, and in another moment I stood within the little temple, where, upon the whole, for the sake of the emotion that divine genius, majestic sorrow, and immortal fame can accumulate within one's average commonplaceness, it is as well to stand as any other spot on earth. It is a very little place, with one-third of the space divided from the rest by an iron-tipped wooden screen. Behind this is the simple altar, and here Dante Alighieri and Gemma Donati were married. In whatever state the walls were then, they are now plainly whitewashed, though in one of the lunettes forming a sort of frieze half round the top was a fresco said to represent the espousals of the poet. The church was continually visited, the sacristan told me, by all sorts of foreigners, English, French, Germans, Spaniards, even Americans, but especially Russians, the most impassioned of all for it. One of this nation, one Russian eminent even among his impassioned race, spent several hours in looking at that picture, taking his stand at the foot of the stairs by which the sacristan descended from his lodging into the church. He showed me the very spot; I do not know why, unless he took me for another Russian, and thought my pride in a compatriot so impassioned might have some effect upon the fee I was to give him. He was a credulous sacristan, and I cannot find any evidence in Miss Horner's faithful and trusty "Walks in Florence" that there is a fresco in that church representing the espousals of Dante. The paintings in the lunettes are by a pupil of Masoccio's, and deal with the good works of the twelve Good Men of San Martino, who, ever since 1441, have had charge of a fund for the relief of such shamefaced poor as were unwilling to ask alms. Prince Strozzi and other patricians of Florence are at present among these Good Men, so the sacristan said; and there is an iron contribution-box at the church door, with an inscription promising any giver indulgence, successively guaranteed by four popes, of twenty-four hundred years; which seemed really to make it worth one's while.

XIV.

In visiting these scenes, one cannot but wonder at the small compass in which the chief facts of Dante's young life, suitably to the home-keeping character of the time and race, occurred. There he was born, there he was bred, and there he was married to Gemma Donati after Beatrice Portinari died. Beatrice's father lived just across the way from the Donati houses, and the Donati houses adjoined the house where Dante grew up with his widowed mother. He saw Beatrice

in her father's house, and he must often have been in the house of Manetto de' Donati as a child. As a youth he no doubt made love to Gemma at her casement; and here they must have dwelt after they were married, and she began to lead him a restless and unhappy life, being a fretful and foolish woman, by the accounts. One realizes all this there with a distinctness which the clearness of the Italian atmosphere permits. In that air events do not seem to age any more than edifices; a life, like a structure, of six hundred years ago seems of yesterday, and one feels toward the Donati as if that troublesome family were one's own contemporaries. The evil they brought on Dante was not domestic only, but they and their party were the cause of his exile and his barbarous sentence in the process of the evil times which brought the Bianchi and Neri to Florence. There is in history hardly anything so fantastically malicious, so tortuous, so perverse, as the series of chances that ended in his banishment. Nothing could apparently have been more remote from him, to all human perception, than that quarrel of a Pistoja family, in which the children of Messer Cancelliere's first wife, Bianca, called themselves Bianchi, and the children of the second called themselves Neri, simply for contrary-mindedness' sake. But let us follow it, and see how it reaches the poet and finally delivers him over to a life of exile and misery. One of these Cancellieri of Pistoja falls into a quarrel with another and wounds him with his sword. They are both boys, or hardly more, and the father of the one who struck the blow bids him go to his kinsmen and beg their forgiveness. But when he comes to them the father of the wounded youth takes him out to the stable, and striking off the offending hand on a block there, flings it into his face. "Go back to your father and tell him that hurts are healed with iron, not with words." The news of this cruel deed throws all Pistoja into an incomprehensible mediæval frenzy. The citizens arm and divide themselves into Bianchi and Neri; the streets become battle-fields. Finally some cooler heads ask Florence to interfere. Florence is always glad to get a finger into the affairs of her neighbors, and to quiet Pistoja she calls the worst of the Bianchi and Neri to her. Her own factions take promptly to the new names; the Guelphs have long ruled the city; the Ghibellines have been a whole generation in exile. But the Neri take up the old Ghibelline rôle of invoking foreign intervention, with Corso Donati at their head — a brave man, but hot, proud, and lawless. Dante is of the Bianchi party, which is that of the liberals and patriots, and in this quality he goes to Rome to plead with the Pope to use his good offices for the peace and freedom of Florence. In his absence he is banished for two years and heavily fined; then he is banished for life, and will be burned if he comes back. His party comes into power, but the sentence is never repealed, and in the despair of an exile Dante, too, invokes the stranger's help. He becomes Nero; he dies Ghibelline.

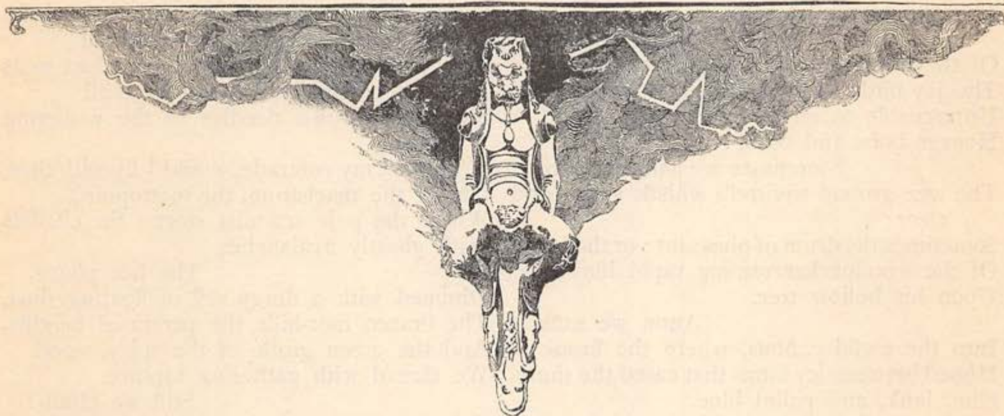
I walked up from the other Donati houses through the Via Borgo degli Albizzi to the Piazza San Pier Maggiore to look at the truncated tower of Corso Donati, in which he made his last stand against the people when summoned by their Podestà to answer for all his treasons and seditions. He fortified the adjoining houses, and embattled the whole neighborhood, galling his besiegers in the streets below with showers of stones and arrows. They set fire to his fortress, and then he escaped through the city wall into the open country, but was hunted down and taken by his enemies. On the way back to Florence he flung himself from his horse, that they might not have the pleasure of triumphing with him through the streets, and the soldier in charge of him was surprised into running him through with his lance, as Corso intended. This is the story that some tell; but others say that his horse ran away, dragging him over the road by his foot, which caught in his stirrup, and the guard killed him, seeing him already hurt to death. Dante favors the latter version of his end, and sees him in hell, torn along at the heels of a beast, whose flight is toward "the valley where never mercy is." The poet had once been the friend as well as brother-in-law of Corso, but had turned against him when Corso's lust of power threatened the liberties of Florence. You must see this little space of the city to understand how intensely narrow and local the great poet was in his hates and loves, and how considerably he has populated hell and purgatory with his old neighbors and acquaintance. Among those whom he puts in Paradise was that sister of Corso's, the poor Piccarda, whose story is one of the most pathetic and pious legends of that terrible old Florence. The vain and worldly life which she saw around her had turned her thoughts toward heaven, and she took the veil in the convent of Santa Chiara. Her brother was then at Bologna, but he repaired straightway to Florence with certain of his followers, forced the convent, and dragging his sister forth amid the cries and prayers of the nuns, gave her to wife to Rosellino della Tosa, a gentleman to whom he had promised her. She, in the bridal garments with which he had replaced her nun's robes, fell on her knees, and implored the succor of her Heavenly

Spouse and suddenly her beautiful body was covered with a loathsome leprosy, and in a few days she died inviolate. Some will have it that she merely fell into a slow infirmity, and so pined away. Corso Donati was the brother of Dante's wife, and without ascribing to Gemma more of his quality than Piccarda's, one may readily perceive that the poet had not married into a comfortable family.

In the stump of the old tower which I had come to see, I found a poulterer's shop, bloody and evil-smelling, and two frowsy girls picking chickens. In the wall there is a tablet signed by the Messer Capitani of the Guelph Party, forbidding any huckster to sell his wares in that square under pain of a certain fine. The place now naturally abounds in them. The Messer Capitani are all dead, with their party, and the hucksters are no longer afraid.

W. D. Howells.

JOHN OF BOLOGNA'S DEVIL.



IN THE SIERRAS.

Out of the heat and toil and dust of trades,
Far from the sound of cities and of seas,
I journeyed lonely, and alone I sought
The valley of the ages and the place
Of the wind-braided waters.
I was one,
A pilgrim, whose blind steps led thitherward
Into the shadow and forgetfulness
That bless secluded streams and sheltering vales:
Fleeing the blare of traffic, in the track
Of autumn solitudes I followed where
The leaves were falling to the littered ground,
And every leaf was ripened to the fall.

Once earlier had I sought the same retreat,
Haunted of listless steps and careless eyes;
Green was the mantle of the leafy hill,
Swollen the stream along the spongy bank;
The meadow was a lake where swelling knolls
Lifted their grassy islands to the sun.
But autumn is the lovelier, the best;
And here at last I cast me at my length
In the mid-valley, where the stream expands
Lake-wise, and lilies lift their broad green palms
Against the sunshine, and the skaters slide
Upon the water, and the beetles dive
Into their shady gardens; while ashore
The glossy water-thrush trips close upon
And courtesies at the margin as she wets
All of her slender body in the pool.
And here a myriad creatures built and toiled
At their incessant masonry.
I heard
The meadows drinking in the wet; the sod
Supping the generous sunshine; now forgot
The sea-tides burdened with careering fleets,
The land-tides pouring o'er the thundering pave,
And the tumultuous clangor of the bells
In smoke-wreathed steeple and tower.
Sweeter I found
In solitude the deep and tranquil stream
Of autumn, broken on her golden fields
By zephyr hissing through the hedge, the sigh
Of airy waterfalls, as in the wood
The plaintive robin's tender tremolo.

PONTE VECCHIO, FLORENCE.

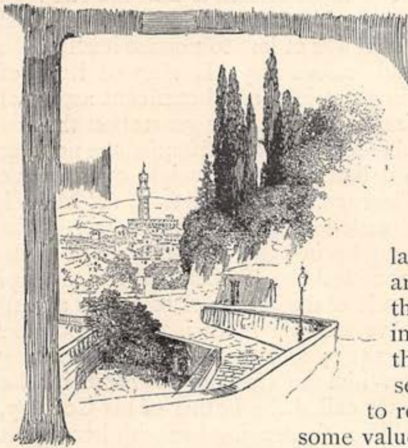
[ENGRAVED BY R. C. COLLINS, AFTER THE ETCHING BY JOSEPH PENNELL.]

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXIX. APRIL, 1885. No. 6.

A FLORENTINE MOSAIC.

(SECOND PAPER.)



FOR my part, I find it hard to be serious about the tragedy of a people who seem, as one looks back at them in their history, to have lived in such perpetual broil as the Florentines. They cease to be even pathetic; they become absurd, and tempt the observer to a certain mood of triviality, by their indefatigable antics in cutting and thrusting, chopping off heads, mutilating, burning, and banishing. But I have often thought that we must get a false impression of the past by the laws governing perspective, in which the remoter objects are inevitably pressed together in their succession, and the spaces between are ignored. In looking at a painting, these spaces are imagined; but in history, the objects, the events are what alone make their appeal, and there seems nothing else. It must always remain for the reader to revise his impressions, and rearrange them, so as to give some value to conditions as well as to occurrences. It looks very much, at first glance, as if the Florentines had no peace from the domination of the Romans to the domination of the Medici. But in all that time they had been growing in wealth, power, the arts and letters, and were constantly striving to realize in their state the ideal which is still our only political aim—"a government of the people by the people for the people." Whoever opposed himself, his interests or his pride, to that ideal, was destroyed sooner or later; and it appears that if there had been no foreign interference, the one-man power would never have been fastened on Florence. We must account, therefore, not only for seasons of repose not obvious in history, but for a measure of success in the realization of her political ideal. The feudal nobles, forced into the city from their petty sovereignties beyond its gates; the rich merchants and bankers, creators and creatures of its prosperity; the industrious and powerful guilds of artisans; the populace of unskilled laborers,—authority visited each in turn; but no class could long keep it from the others, and no man from all the rest. The fluctuations were violent enough, but they only seem incessant through the necessities of perspective; and somehow, in the most turbulent period, there was peace enough for the industries to fruit and the arts to flower. Now and then a whole generation passed in which there was no upheaval, though it must be owned that these generations seem few. A life of the ordinary compass witnessed so many atrocious scenes, that Dante, who peopled his Inferno with his neighbors and fellow-citizens, had but to study their manners and customs to give life to his picture. Forty years after his exile, when the Florentines rose to drive out Walter of Brienne, the Duke of Athens, whom they

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had made their ruler and who had tried to make himself their master by a series of cruel oppressions, they stormed the Palazzo Vecchio, where he had taken refuge, and demanded certain of his bloody minions; and when his soldiers thrust one of these out among them, they cut him into small pieces, and some tore the quivering fragments with their teeth.

II.

THE savage lurks so near the surface in every man that a constant watch must be kept upon the passions and impulses, or he leaps out in his war-paint, and the poor integument of civilization that held him is flung aside like a useless garment. The Florentines were a race of impulse and passion, and the mob was merely the frenzy of that popular assemblage by which the popular will made itself known, the suffrage being a thing as yet imperfectly understood and only secondarily exercised. Yet the peacefulest and apparently the wholesomest time known to the historians was that which followed the expulsion of the Duke of Athens, when the popular mob, having defeated the aristocratic leaders of the revolt, came into power, with such unquestionable authority that the nobles were debarred from office, and punished not only in their own persons, but in kith and kin, for offenses against the life of a plebeian. Five hundred noble families were exiled, and of those left, the greater part sued to be admitted among the people. This grace was granted them, but upon the condition that they must not aspire to office for five years, and that if any of them killed or grievously wounded a plebeian, he should be immediately and hopelessly reënnobled; which sounds like some fantastic invention of Mr. Frank R. Stockton's, and only too vividly recalls *Lord Tolloller's* appeal in "Iolanthe":

"Spurn not the nobly born
With love affected,
Nor treat with virtuous scorn
The well-connected.
High rank involves no shame —
We boast an equal claim
With him of humble name
To be respected."

The world has been ruled so long by the most idle and worthless people in it, that it always seems droll to see those who earn the money spending it, and those from whom the power comes using it. But we who are now trying to offer this ridiculous spectacle to the world ought not to laugh at it in the Florentine government of 1343–6. It seems to have lasted no long time, for at the end of three or four years the divine wrath smote Florence with the pest. This was to chastise her for her sins, as the chroniclers tell us; but as a means of reform it failed apparently. A hundred thousand of the people died, and the rest, demoralized by the terror and enforced idleness in which they had lived, abandoned themselves to all manner of dissolute pleasures, and were much worse than if they had never had any pest. This pest, of which the reader will find a lively account in Boccaccio's introduction to the "Decamerone,"— he was able to write of it because, like De Foe, who described the plague of London, he had not seen it,— seems rather to have been a blow at popular government, if we may judge from the disorders into which it threw the democratic city, and the long train of wars and miseries that presently followed. But few of us are ever sufficiently in the divine confidence to be able to say just why this or that thing happens, and we are constantly growing more modest about assuming to know. What is certain is that the one-man power, foreboded and resisted from the first in Florence, was at last to possess itself of the fierce and jealous city. It showed itself, of course, in a patriotic and beneficent aspect at the beginning, but within a generation the first memorable Medici had befriended the popular cause and had made the weight of his name felt in Florence. From Salvestro de' Medici, who succeeded in breaking the power of the Guelph nobles in 1382, and, however unwillingly, promoted the Tumult of the Ciompi and the rule of the lowest classes, it is a long step to Averardo de' Medici, another popular leader in 1421; and it is again another long step from him to Cosimo de' Medici, who got himself called the Father of his Country, and died in 1469, leaving her with her throat fast in the clutch of his nephew, Lorenzo the Magnificent. But it was the stride of destiny, and nothing apparently could stay it.

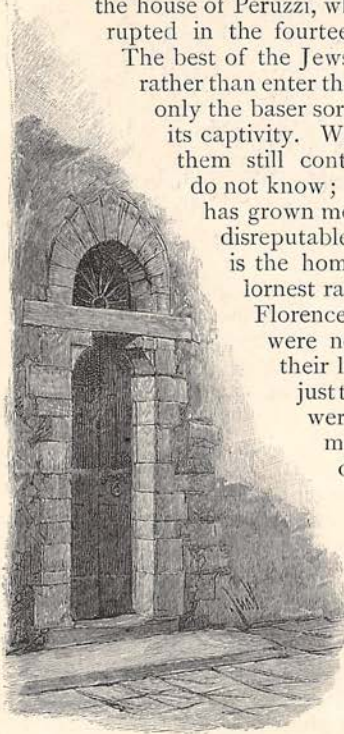
III.

THE name of Lorenzo de' Medici is the next name of unrivaled greatness to which one comes in Florence after Dante's. The Medici, however one may be principled against them, do possess the imagination there, and I could not have helped going for their sake to the Piazza of the Mercato Vecchio, even if I had not wished to see again and again one of the most picturesque and characteristic places in the city. As I think of it, the pale, delicate sky of a fair winter's day in Florence spreads over me, and I seem to stand in the midst of the old square, with its moldering col-

IN THE OLD MARKET.

onnade on one side, and on the other its low, irregular roofs, their brown tiles thinly tinted with a growth of spindling grass and weeds, green the whole year round. In front of me a vast, white old palace springs seven stories into the sunshine, disreputably shabby from basement to attic, but beautiful, with the rags of a plebeian wash-day caught across it from balcony to balcony, as if it had fancied trying to hide its forlornness in them. Around me are peasants and donkey-carts and Florentines of all sizes and ages; my ears are filled with the sharp din of an Italian crowd, and my nose with the smell of immemorial, innumerable market-days, and the rank, cutting savor of frying fish and cakes from a score of neighboring cook-shops; but I am happy — happier than I should probably be if I were actually there. Through an archway in the street behind me, not far from an admirably tumble-down shop full of bric-à-brac of low degree, all huddled — old bureaus and bed-

steads, crockery, classic lamps, assorted saints, shovels, flat-irons, and big-eyed madonnas — under a sagging pent-roof, I enter a large court, like Piazza Donati. Here the Medici, among other great citizens, had their first houses; and in the narrow street opening out of this court stands the little church which was then the family chapel of the Medici, after the fashion of that time, where all their marriages, christenings, and funerals took place. In time this highly respectable quarter suffered the sort of social decay which so frequently and so capriciously affects highly respectable quarters in all cities; and it had at last fallen so low, in the reign of Cosimo I., that when that grim tyrant wished cheaply to please the Florentines by making it a little harder for the Jews than for the Christians under him, he shut them up in the old court. They had been let into Florence to counteract the extortion of the Christian usurers, and upon the condition that they would not ask more than twenty per cent. interest. How much more had been taken by the Christians one can hardly imagine; but if this was a low rate to Florentines, one easily understands how the bankers of the city grew rich by lending to the necessitous world outside. Now and then they did not get back their principal, and Edward III. of England has still an outstanding debt to the house of Peruzzi, which he bankrupted in the fourteenth century. The best of the Jews left the city rather than enter the Ghetto, and only the baser sort remained to its captivity. Whether any of them still continue there, I do not know; but the place has grown more and more disreputable, till now it is the home of the forlornest rabble I saw in Florence, and if they were not the worst, their looks are unjust to them. They were mainly women and children, as the worst classes seem to be everywhere, —I do not know why, —and the air was full of the clatter of their feet and tongues, intolerably reverberated from the high, many-windowed walls of scorbutic brick and stucco. These walls were, of course, garlanded with garments hung to dry from their casements. It is perpetually washing-day in Italy, and the observer, seeing so much linen washed and so little clean, is everywhere invited to the solution of one of the strangest problems of the Latin civilization.



DOOR OF DANTE'S HOUSE.

The ancient home of the Medici has none of the feudal dignity, the baronial pride, of the quarter of the Lamberti and the Buondelmonti; and, disliking them as I did, I was glad to see it in the possession of that squalor, so different from the cheerful and industrious thrift of Piazza Donati and the neighborhood of Dante's house. No touch of sympathetic poetry relieves the history of that race of demagogues and tyrants, who, in their rise, had no thought but to aggrandize themselves, and whose only greatness was an apotheosis of egotism. It is hard to understand through what law of development, from lower to higher, the Providence which rules the affairs of men permitted them supremacy; and it is easy to understand how the better men whom they supplanted and dominated should abhor them. They were especially a bitter dose to the proud-stomached aristocracy of citizens which had succeeded the extinct Ghibelline nobility in Florence; but, indeed, the three pills which they adopted from the arms of their guild of physicians, together with the only appellation by which history knows their lineage, were agreeable to none who wished their country well. From the first Medici to the last, they were nearly all hypocrites or ruffians, bigots or imbeciles; and Lorenzo, who was a scholar and a poet, and the friend of scholars and poets, had the genius and science of tyranny in supreme degree, though he wore no princely title and assumed to be only the chosen head of the commonwealth.

"Under his rule," says Villari, in his "Life of Savonarola," that almost incomparable biography, "all wore a prosperous and contented aspect; the parties that had so long disquieted the city were at peace; imprisoned, or banished, or dead, those who would not submit to the Medicean domination; tranquillity and calm were everywhere. Feasting, dancing, public shows and games amused the Florentine people, who, once so jealous of their rights, seemed to have forgotten even the name of liberty. Lorenzo, who took part in all these pleasures, invented new ones every day. But among all his inventions, the most famous was that of the carnival songs *(canti carnascialeschi)*, of which he composed the first, and which were meant to be sung in the masquerades of carnival, when the youthful nobility, disguised to

represent the Triumph of Death, or a crew of demons, or some other caprice of fancy, wandered through the city, filling it with their riot. The reading of these songs will paint the corruption of the town far better than any

CHURCH WHERE DANTE WAS MARRIED—SAN MARTINO.

other description. To-day, not only the youthful nobility, but the basest of the populace, would hold them in loathing, and to go singing them through the city would be an offense to public decency which could not fail to be punished. These things were the favorite recreation of a prince lauded by all the world and held up as a model to every sovereign, a prodigy of wisdom, a political and literary genius. And such as they called him then, many would judge him still," says our author, who explicitly warns his readers against Roscoe's "Life of Lorenzo de' Medici," as the least trustworthy of all in its characterization. "They would forgive him the blood spilt to maintain a dominion unjustly acquired by him and his; the disorder wrought in the commonwealth; the theft of the public treasure to supply his profligate waste; the shameless vices to which in spite of his feeble health he abandoned himself; and even that rapid and infernal corruption of the people, which he perpetually studied with all the force and capacity of his soul. And all because he was the protector of letters and the fine arts!

"In the social condition of Florence at that time there was indeed a strange contrast. Culture was universally diffused; everybody knew Latin and Greek, everybody admired the classics; many ladies were noted for the elegance of their Greek and Latin verses. The arts, which had languished since the time of Giotto, revived, and on all sides rose exquisite palaces and churches. But artists, scholars, politicians, nobles, and plebeians were rotten at heart, lacking in every public and private virtue, every moral sentiment. Religion was the tool of the government or vile hypocrisy; they had neither civil, nor religious, nor moral, nor philosophic faith; even doubt feebly asserted itself in their souls. A cold indifference to every principle prevailed, and those visages full of guile and subtlety wore a smile of chilly superiority and compassion at any sign of enthusiasm for noble and generous ideas. They did not oppose them or question them, as a philosophical skeptic would have done; they simply pitied them. . . . But Lorenzo had an exquisite taste for poetry and the arts. . . . Having set himself up to protect artists and scholars, his house became the resort of the most illustrious wits of his time, . . . and whether in the meetings under his own roof, or in those of the famous Platonic Academy, his own genius shone brilliantly in that elect circle. . . . A strange life indeed was Lorenzo's. After giving his whole mind and soul to the destruction, by some new law, of some last remnant of liberty, after pronouncing some fresh sentence of ruin or death, he entered the Platonic Academy, and ardently discussed virtue and the immortality of the soul; then sallying forth to mingle with the dissolute youth of the city, he sang his carnival songs, and abandoned himself to debauchery; returning home with Pulci and Politian, he recited verses and talked of poetry; and to each of these occupations he gave himself up as wholly as if it were the sole occupation of his life. But the strangest thing of all is that in all that variety of life they cannot cite a solitary act of real generosity toward his people, his friends, or his kinsmen; for surely if there had been such an act, his indefatigable flatterers would not have forgotten it. . . . He had inherited from Cosimo all that subtlety by which, without being a great statesman, he was prompt in cunning subterfuges, full of prudence and acuteness, skillful in dealing with ambassadors, most skillful in extinguishing his enemies, bold and cruel when he believed the occasion permitted. . . . His face revealed his character; there was something sinister and hateful in it; the complexion was greenish, the mouth very large, the nose flat, and the voice nasal; but his eye was quick and keen, his forehead was high, and his manner had all of gentleness that can be imagined of an age so refined and elegant as

that; his conversation was full of vivacity, of wit and learning; those who were admitted to his familiarity were always fascinated by him. He seconded his age in all its tendencies; corrupt as it was, he left it corrupter still in every way; he gave himself up to pleasure, and he taught his people to give themselves up to it, to its intoxication and its delirium."

IV.

THIS was the sort of being whom human nature in self-defense ought always to recognize as a devil, and whom no glamour of circumstance or quality should be suffered to disguise. It is success like his which, as Victor Hugo says of Louis Napoleon's similar success, "confounds the human conscience," and kindles the lurid light in which assassination seems a holy duty. Lorenzo's tyranny in Florence was not only the extinction of public liberty, but the control of private life in all its relations. He made this marriage and he forbade that among the principal families, as it suited his pleasure; he decided employments and careers; he regulated the most intimate affairs of households in the interest of his power, with a final impunity which is inconceivable of that proud and fiery Florence. The smoldering resentment of his tyranny, which flamed out in the conspiracy of the Pazzi, adds the consecration of a desperate love of liberty to the cathedral, hallowed by religion and history, in which the tragedy was enacted. It was always dramatizing itself there when I entered the Duomo, whether in the hush and twilight of some vacant hour, or in the flare of tapers and voices while some high ceremonial filled the vast nave with its glittering procession. But I think the ghosts preferred the latter setting. To tell the truth, the Duomo at Florence is a temple to damp the spirit, dead or alive, by the immense impression of stony bareness, of drab vacuity, which one receives from its interior, unless it is filled with people. Outside, it is magnificently imposing, in spite of the insufficiency and irregularity of its piazza. In spite of having no such approach as St. Mark's at Venice, or St. Peter's at Rome, or even the cathedral at Milan, in spite of being almost crowded upon by the surrounding shops and cafés, it is noble, and more and more astonishing; and there is the baptistery, with its heavenly gates, and the tower of Giotto, with its immortal beauty, as novel for each new-comer as if freshly set out there overnight for his advantage. Nor do I object at all to the cab-stands there, and the little shops all round, and the people throng-

SAN MARTINO — EXTERIOR.

ing through the piazza, in and out of the half-score of crooked streets opening upon it. You do not get all the grandeur of the cathedral outside, but you get enough, while you come away from the interior in a sort of destitution. One needs some such function as I saw there one evening at dusk in order to realize all the spectacular capabilities of the place. This function consisted mainly of a visible array of the Church's forces "against blasphemy," as the printed notices informed me; but with the high altar blazing, a constellation of candles in the distant gloom, and the long train of priests, choristers, acolytes, and white-cowled penitents, each with his taper, and the archbishop, bearing the pyx, at their head, under a silken canopy, it formed a setting of incomparable vividness for the scene on the last Sunday before Ascension, 1478.

There is, to my thinking, no such mirror of the spirit of that time as the story of this conspiracy. A pope was at the head of it, and an archbishop was there in Florence to share actively in it. Having failed to find Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici together at Lorenzo's villa, the conspirators transfer the scene to the cathedral; the moment chosen for striking the blow is that supremely sacred moment in which the very body of Christ is elevated for the adoration of the kneeling worshipers. What a contempt they all have for the place and the office! In this you read one effect of that study of antiquity which was among the means Lorenzo used to cor-

rupt the souls of men; the Florentines are half repaganized. Yet at the bottom of the heart of one conspirator lingers a mediæval compunction, and though not unwilling to kill a man, this soldier does not know about killing one in a church. Very well, then, give up your dagger, you simple soldier; give it to this priest; *he* knows what a church is, and how little sacred!

The cathedral is packed with people, and Lorenzo is there, but Giuliano is not come yet. Are we to be fooled a second time? Malediction! Send some one to fetch that Medicean beast, who is so slow coming to the slaughter! I am of the conspiracy, for I hate the Medici; but these muttered blasphemies, hissed and ground through the teeth, this frenzy for murder,— it is getting to be little better than that,— make me sick. Two of us go for Giuliano to his house, and being acquaintances of his, we laugh and joke familiarly with him; we put our arms caressingly about him, and feel if he has a shirt of mail on, as we walk him between us through the crowd at the corner of the café there, invisibly, past all the cabmen ranked near the cathedral and the baptistery, not one of whom shall snatch his horse's oat-bag from his nose to invite us phantoms to a turn in the city. We have our friend safe in the cathedral at last,— hapless, kindly youth, whom we have nothing against except that he is of that cursed race of the Medici,— and now at last the priest elevates the host and it is time to strike; the little bell tinkles, the multitude holds its breath and falls upon its knees; Lorenzo and Giuliano kneel with the rest. A moment, and Bernardo Bandini plunges his short dagger through the boy, who drops dead upon his face, and Francesco Pazzi flings himself upon the body, and blindly striking to make sure of his death, gives himself a wound in the leg that disables him for the rest of the work. And now we see the folly of intrusting Lorenzo to the unpracticed hand of a priest, who would have been neat enough, no doubt, at mixing a dose of poison. The bungler has only cut his man a little in the neck! Lorenzo's sword is out and making desperate play for his life; his friends close about him, and while the sacred vessels are tumbled from the altar and trampled under foot in the mellay, and the cathedral rings with yells and shrieks and curses and the clash of weapons, they have hurried him into the sacristy and barred the doors, against which we shall beat ourselves in vain. Fury! Infamy! Malediction! Pick yourself up, Francesco Pazzi, and get home as you may! There is no mounting to horse and crying liberty through the streets for you! All is over! The wretched populace, the servile signory, side with the Medici; in a few hours the Archbishop of Pisa is swinging by the neck from a window of the Palazzo Vecchio; and while he is yet alive you are dragged, bleeding and naked, from your bed through the streets and hung beside him, so close that in his dying agony he sets his teeth in your breast with a convulsive frenzy that leaves you fast in the death-clutch of his jaws till they cut the ropes and you rain hideously down to the pavement below.

V.

One must face these grisly details from time to time if he would feel what Florence

AN ARCHED PASSAGE.

was. All the world was like Florence at that time in its bloody cruelty; the wonder is that Florence, being what she otherwise was, should be like all the world in that. One should take the trouble also to keep constantly in mind the smallness of the theater in which these scenes were enacted. Compared with modern cities, Florence was but a large town, and these Pazzi were neighbors and kinsmen of the Medici, and they and their fathers had seen the time when the Medici were no more in the state than other families which had perhaps scorned to rise by their

arts. It would be insufferable to any of us if some acquaintance whom we knew so well, root and branch, should come to reign over us; but this is what happened through the Medici in Florence.

I walked out one pleasant Sunday afternoon to the Villa Careggi, where Lorenzo made a dramatic end twenty years after the tragedy in the cathedral. It is some two miles from the city; I could not say in just what direction; but it does not matter, since if you do not come to Villa Careggi when you go to look for it, you come to something else equally memorable, by ways as beautiful and through landscapes as picturesque. I remember that there was hanging from a crevice of one of the stone walls which we sauntered between, one of those great purple anemones of Florence, tilting and swaying in the sunny air of February, and that there was a tender presentiment of spring in the atmosphere, and people were out languidly enjoying the warmth about their doors, as if the winter had been some malady of theirs, and they were now slowly convalescent. The mountains were white with snow beyond Fiesole, but that was perhaps to set off to better advantage the nearer hill-sides, studded with villas gleaming white through black plumes of cypress, and blurred with long gray stretches of olive orchard; it is impossible to escape some such crazy impression of intention in the spectacular prospect of Italy, though that is probably less the fault of the prospect than of the people who have painted and printed so much about it. There were vineyards, of course, as well as olive orchards on all those broken and irregular slopes, over which wandered a tangle of the high walls which everywhere shut you out from intimate approach to the fields about Florence; you may look up at them, afar off, or you may look down at them, but you cannot look into them on the same level.

We entered the Villa Careggi, when we got to it, through a high, grated gateway, and then we found ourselves in a delicious garden, the exquisite thrill of whose loveliness lingers yet in my utterly satisfied senses. I remember it as chiefly a plantation of rare trees, with an enchanting glimmer of the inexhaustibly various landscape through every break in their foliage; but near the house was a formal parterre for flowers, silent, serene, aristocratic, touched not with decay, but a sort of pensive regret. On a terrace yet nearer were some *putti*, some frolic boys cut in marble, with a growth of brown moss on their soft backs, and looking as if, in their lapse from the civilization for which they were designed, they had begun to clothe themselves in skins.

As to the interior of the villa, every one may go there and observe its facts; its vast, cold, dim saloons, its floors of polished cement, like ice to the foot, and its walls covered with painted histories and anecdotes and portraits of the Medici. The outside warmth had not got into the house, and I shivered in the sepulchral gloom, and could get no sense of the gay, voluptuous, living past there, not even in the prettily painted loggia where Lorenzo used to sit with his friends overlooking Val d'Arno, and glimpsing the tower of Giotto and the dome of Brunelleschi. But there is one room, next to the last of the long suite fronting on the lovely garden, where the event which makes the place memorable has an incomparable actuality. It is the room where Lorenzo died, and his dying eyes could look from its windows out over the lovely garden, and across the vast stretches of villa and village, olive and cypress, to the tops of Florence swimming against the horizon. He was a long time dying, of the gout of his ancestors and his own debauchery, and he drew near his end cheerfully enough, and very much as he had always lived, now reasoning high of philosophy and poetry with Pico della Mirandola and Politian, and now laughing at the pranks of the jesters and buffoons whom they brought in to amuse him, till the very last, when he sickened of all those delights, fine or gross, and turned his thoughts to the mercy despised so long. But, as he kept saying, none had ever dared give him a resolute No, save one; and dreading in his final hours the mockery of flattering priests, he sent for this one fearless soul; and Savonarola, who had never yielded to his threats or caresses, came at the prayer of the dying man, and took his place beside the bed we still see there—high, broad, richly carved in dark wood, with a picture of Perugino's on the wall at the left beside it. Piero, Lorenzo's son, from whom he has just parted, must be in the next room yet, and the gentle Pico della Mirandola, whom Lorenzo was so glad to see that he smiled and jested with him in the old way, has closed the door on the preacher and the sinner. Lorenzo confesses that he has heavy on his soul three crimes: the cruel sack of Volterra, the theft of the public dower of young girls, by which many were driven to a wicked life, and the blood shed after the conspiracy of the Pazzi. "He was greatly agitated, and Savonarola to quiet him kept repeating 'God is good; God is merciful. But,' he added, when Lorenzo had ceased to speak, 'there is need of three things.' 'And what are they,

father?' 'First, you must have a great and living faith in the mercy of God.' 'This I have — the greatest.' 'Second, you must restore that which you have wrongfully taken, or require your children to restore it for you.' Lorenzo looked surprised and troubled; but he forced himself to compliance, and nodded his head in sign of assent. Then Savonarola rose to his feet, and stood over the dying prince. 'Last, you must give back their liberty to the people of Florence.' Lorenzo, summoning all his remaining strength, disdainfully turned his back; and, without uttering a word, Savonarola departed without giving him absolution."

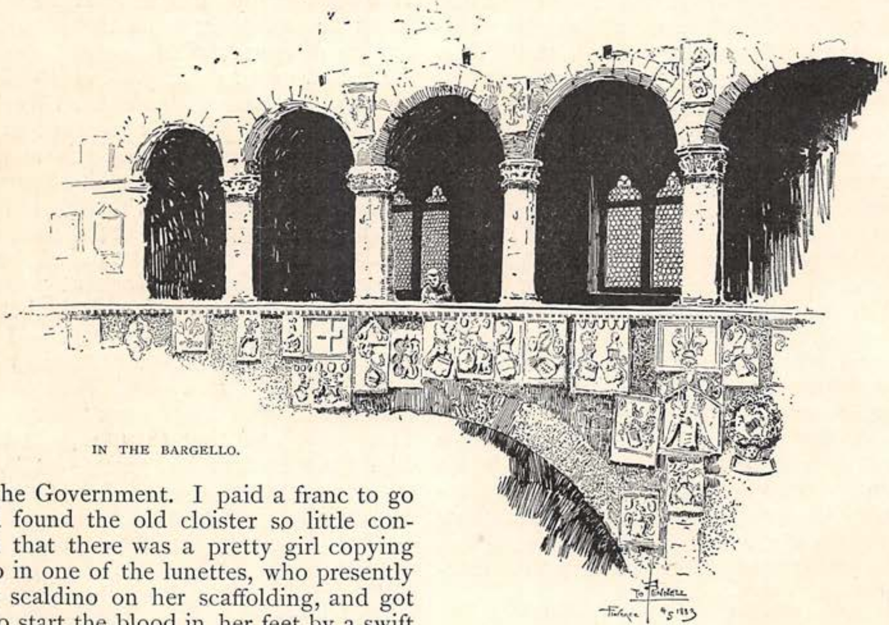
It was as if I saw and heard it all, as I stood there in the room where the scene had been enacted; it still remains to me the vividest event in Florentine history, and Villari has no need, for me at least, to summon all the witnesses he calls to establish the verity of the story. There are some disputed things that establish themselves in our credence through the nature of the men and the times of which they are told, and this is one of them. Lorenzo and Savonarola were equally matched in courage, and the Italian soul of the one was as subtle for good as the Italian soul of the other was subtle for evil. In that encounter, the preacher knew that it was not the sack of a city or the blood of conspirators for which the sinner really desired absolution, however artfully and naturally they were advanced in his appeal; and Lorenzo knew when he sent for him that the monk would touch the sore spot in his guilty heart unerringly. It was a profound drama, searching the depths of character on either side, and on either side it was played with matchless magnanimity.

VI.

After I had been at Careggi, I had to go again and look at San Marco, at the cell to which Savonarola returned from that deathbed, sorrowing. Yet, at this distance of time and place, one must needs wonder a little why one is so pitiless to Lorenzo, so devoted to Savonarola. I have a suspicion, which I own with shame and reluctance, that I should have liked Lorenzo's company much better, and that I, too, should have felt to its last sweetness the charm of his manner. I confess that I think I should have been bored — it is well to be honest with one's self in all things — by the menaces and mystery of Savonarola's prophesying, and that I should have thought his crusade against the pomps and vanities of Florence a vulgar and ridiculous business. He and his monks would have been terribly dull companions for one of my make within their convent; and when they came out and danced in a ring with his male and female devotees in the square before the church, I should have liked them no better than so many soldiers of the Army of Salvation. That is not my idea of the way in which the souls of men are to be purified and elevated, or their thoughts turned to God. Puerility and vulgarity of a sort to set one's teeth on edge marked the excesses which Savonarola permitted in his followers; and if he could have realized his puritanic republic, it would have been one of the heaviest yokes about the neck of poor human nature that have ever burdened it. For the reality would have been totally different from the ideal. So far as we can understand, the popular conception of Savonarola's doctrine was something as gross as Army-of-Salvationism, as wild and sensuous as backwoods Wesleyism, as fantastic, as spiritually arrogant as primitive Quakerism, as bleak and grim as militant Puritanism. We must face these facts, and the fact that Savonarola, though a Puritan, was no Protestant at all, but the most devout of Catholics, even while he defied the Pope. He was a sublime and eloquent preacher, a genius inspired to ecstasy with the beauty of holiness; but perhaps — perhaps! — Lorenzo knew the Florentines better than he when he turned his face away and died unshriven rather than give them back their freedom. Then why, now that they have both been dust for four hundred years,— and in all things the change is such that if not a new heavens there is a new earth since their day, — why do we cling tenderly, devoutly, to the strange, frenzied apostle of the Impossible, and turn, abhorring, from that gay, accomplished, charming, wise, and erudite statesman who knew what men were so much better? There is nothing of Savonarola now but the memory of his purpose, nothing of Lorenzo but the memory of his; and now we see, far more clearly than if the *frate* had founded his free state upon the ruins of the *magnifico's* tyranny, that the one willed only good to others, and the other willed it only to himself. All history, like each little individual experience, enforces nothing but this lesson of altruism; and it is because the memory which consecrates the church of San Marco teaches it in supreme degree that one stands before it with a swelling heart.

In itself the church is nowise interesting or imposing, with that ugly and senseless classicism of its façade, which associates itself with Spain rather than Italy, and the stretch of its plain, low convent walls. It looks South American, it looks Mexican, with its plaza-

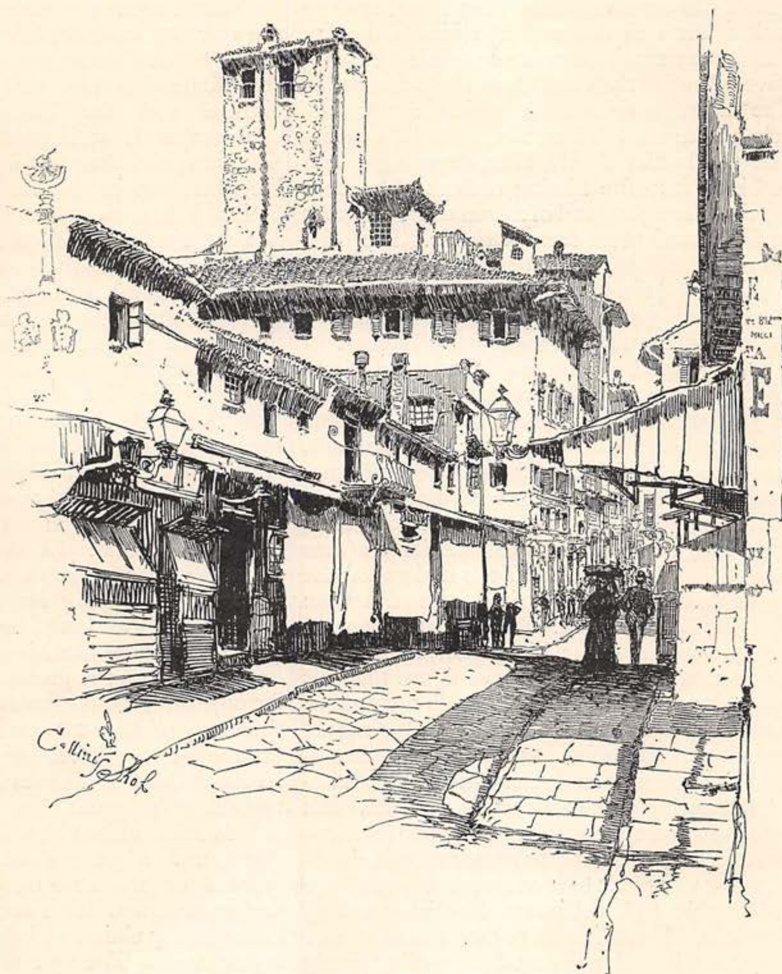
like piazza; and the alien effect is heightened by the stiff tropical plants set round the recent military statue in the center. But when you are within the convent gate, all is Italian, all is Florentine again; for there is nothing more Florentine in Florence than those old convent courts into which your sight-seeing takes you so often. The middle space is inclosed by the sheltering cloisters, and here the grass lies green in the sun the whole winter through, with daisies in it, and other simple little sympathetic weeds or flowers; the still air is warm, and the place has a climate of its own. Of course, the Dominican friars are long gone from San Marco; the place is a museum now, admirably kept up by the Government. I paid a franc to go in, and found the old cloister so little conventual that there was a pretty girl copying a fresco in one of the lunettes, who presently left her scaldino on her scaffolding, and got down to start the blood in her feet by a swift little promenade under the arches where the monks used to walk, and over the dead whose grave-stones pave the way. You cannot help those things; and she was really very pretty — much prettier than a monk. In one of the cells upstairs there was another young lady; she was copying a Fra Angelico, who might have been less shocked at her presence than some would think. He put a great number of women, as beautiful as he could paint them, in the frescoes with which he has illuminated the long line of cells. In one place he has left his own portrait in a saintly company, looking on at an Annunciation: a very handsome youth, with an air expressive of an artistic rather than a spiritual interest in the fact represented, which indeed has the effect merely of a polite interview. One looks at the frescoes glimmering through the dusk of the little rooms in hardly discernible detail, with more or less care, according to one's real or attempted delight in them, and then suddenly comes to the cell of Savonarola; and all the life goes out of those remote histories and allegories, and pulses in an agony of baffled good in this martyrdom. Here is the desk at which he read and wrote; here are laid some leaves of his manuscript, as if they had just trembled from those wasted hands of his; here is the hair shirt he wore, to mortify and torment that suffering flesh the more; here is a bit of charred wood gathered from the fire in which he expiated his love for the Florentines by a hideous death at their hands. It rends the heart to look at them! Still, after four hundred years, the event is as fresh as yesterday — as fresh as Calvary; and never can the race which still gropes blindly here conceive of its divine source better than in the sacrifice of some poor fellow-creature who perishes by those to whom he meant nothing but good.



IN THE BARGELLO.

As one stands in the presence of these pathetic witnesses, the whole lamentable tragedy rehearses itself again, with a power that makes one an actor in it. Here, I am of that Florence which has sprung erect after shaking the foot of the tyrant from its neck, too fiercely free to endure the yoke of the reformer; and I perceive the waning strength of Savonarola's friends, the growing number of his foes. I stand with the rest before the Palazzo Vecchio waiting for the result of that ordeal by fire to which they have chal-

lenged his monks in test of his claims, and I hear with foreboding the murmurs of the crowd when they are balked of their spectacle by that question between the Dominicans and the Franciscans about carrying the host through the flames; I return with him heavy and sorrowful to his convent, prescient of broken power over the souls which his voice has swayed so long; I am there in San Marco when he rises to preach, and the gathering storm of insult and outrage bursts upon him, with hisses and yells, till the battle begins between his Piagnoni and the Arrabbiati, and rages through the consecrated edifice, and that fiery Peter among his friars beats in the skulls of his assailants with the bronze crucifix caught up from the altar; I am in the piazza before the church when the mob attacks the convent, and the monks, shaking off his meek control, reply with musket-shots from their cells; I am with him when the signory sends to lead him a prisoner to the Bargello; I am there when they stretch upon the rack that frail and delicate body, which fastings and vigils and the cloistered life have wrought up to a nervous sensibility as keen as a woman's; I hear his confused and uncertain replies under the torture when they ask him whether he claims now to have prophesied from God; I climb with him, for that month's respite they allow him before they put him to the question again, to the narrow cell high up in the tower of the Old Palace, where, with the roofs and towers of the cruel city he had so loved far below him, and the purple hills misty against the snow-clad mountains all round the horizon, he recovers something of his peace of mind, and keeps his serenity of soul; I follow him down to the chapel beautiful with Ghirlandajo's frescoes, where he spends his last hours, before they lead him between the two monks who are to suffer with him; and once more I stand among the pitiless multitude in the piazza. They make him taste the agony of death twice in the death of his monks; then he submits his neck to the halter and the hangman thrusts him from the scaffold, where the others hang dangling in their chains above the pyre that is to consume their bodies. "Prophet!" cries an echo of the mocking voice on Calvary, "now is the time for a miracle!" The hangman thinks to please the crowd by play-



ON THE PONTE VECCHIO.

ing the buffoon with the quivering form; a yell of abhorrence breaks from them, and he makes haste to descend and kindle the fire that it may reach Savonarola, while he is still alive. A wind rises and blows the flame away. The crowd shrinks back terrified: "A miracle! a miracle!" But the wind falls again, and the bodies slowly burn, dropping a rain of blood into the hissing embers. The heat moving the right hand of Savonarola, he seems to lift it and bless the multitude. The Piagnoni fall sobbing and groaning to their knees; the Arrabbiati set on a crew of ribald boys, who, dancing and yelling round the fire, pelt the dead martyrs with a shower of stones.

Once more I was in San Marco, but it was now in the nineteenth century, on a Sunday of January, 1883. There, in the place of Savonarola, who, though surely no Protestant, was one of the precursors of the Reformation, stood a Northern priest, chief perhaps of those who would lead us back to Rome, appealing to us in the harsh sibilants of our English, where the Dominican had rolled the organ harmonies of his impassioned Italian upon his hearers' souls. I have certainly nothing to say against the Monsignor, and I have never seen a more picturesque figure than his as he stood in his episcopal purple against the curtain of pale green behind him, his square priest's cap on his fine head, and the embroidered sleeves of some ecclesiastical under-vestment showing at every tasteful gesture. His face was strong, and beautiful with its deep-sunk dreamy eyes, and he preached with singular vigor and point to a congregation of all the fashionable and cultivated English-speaking people in Florence, and to larger numbers of Italians whom I suspected of coming partly to improve themselves in our tongue. They could not have done better; his English was exquisite in diction and accent, and his matter was very good. He was warning us against Agnosticism and the limitations of merely scientific wisdom; but I thought that there was little need to persuade us of God in the church where Savonarola had lived and aspired; and that even the dead, who had known him, and heard him, and who now sent up their chill through the pavement from the tombs below, and made my feet so very cold, were more eloquent of immortality in that place.

VII.

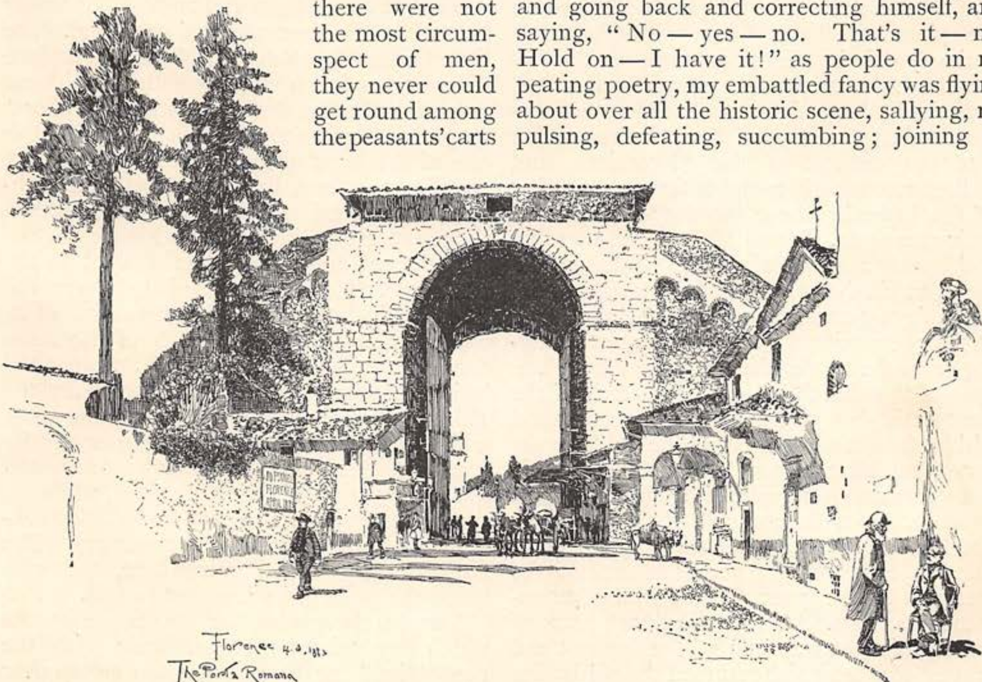
One morning, early in February, I walked out through the picturesqueness of Oltrarno, and up the long ascent of the street to Porta San Giorgio, for the purpose of revering what is left of the fortifications designed by Michael Angelo for the defense of the city in the great siege of 1535. There are many things to distract even the most resolute pilgrim on the way to that gate, and I was but too willing to loiter. There are bric-à-brac shops on the Ponte Vecchio, and in the Via Guicciardini and the Piazza Pitti, with old canvases, and carvings, and bronzes in their windows; and though a little past the time of life when one piously looks up the scenes of fiction, I had to make an excursion up the Via de' Bardi for the sake of Romola, whose history begins in that street. It is a book which you must read again in Florence, for it gives a true and powerful impression of Savonarola's time, even if the author does burden her drama and dialogue with too much history. The Via de' Bardi, moreover, is worthy a visit for its own Gothic-palaced, mediæval sake, and for the sake of that long stretch of the Boboli garden wall backing upon it, with ivy flung over its shoulder, and a murmur of bees in some sort of invisible blossoms beyond. In that neighborhood I had to stop a moment before the house — simple, but keeping its countenance in the presence of a long line of Guicciardini palaces — where Machiavelli lived; a barber has his shop on the ground floor now, and not far off, again, are the houses of the Canigiani, the maternal ancestors of Petrarch. And yet a little way, up a steep, winding street, is the house of Galileo. It bears on its front a tablet recording the great fact that Ferdinand II. de' Medici visited his valued astronomer there, and a portrait of the astronomer is painted on the stucco; there is a fruiterer underneath, and there are a great many children playing about, and their mothers screaming at them. The vast sky is blue without a speck overhead, and I look down on the tops of garden trees, and the brown-tiled roofs of houses sinking in ever richer and softer picturesqueness from level to level below. But to get the prospect in all its wonderful beauty, one must push on up the street a little farther, and pass out between two indolent sentries lounging under the Giottesquely frescoed arch of Porta San Giorgio, into the open road. By this time I fancy the landscape will have got the better of history in the interest of any amateur, and he will give but a casual glance at Michael Angelo's bastions or towers, and will abandon himself altogether to the rapture of that scene.

For my part, I cannot tell whether I am more blest in the varieties of effect which every step of the descent outside the wall reveals in the city and its river and valley, or in the near olive orchards, gray in the sun, and the cypresses, intensely black against the sky. The road next the wall is bordered by a

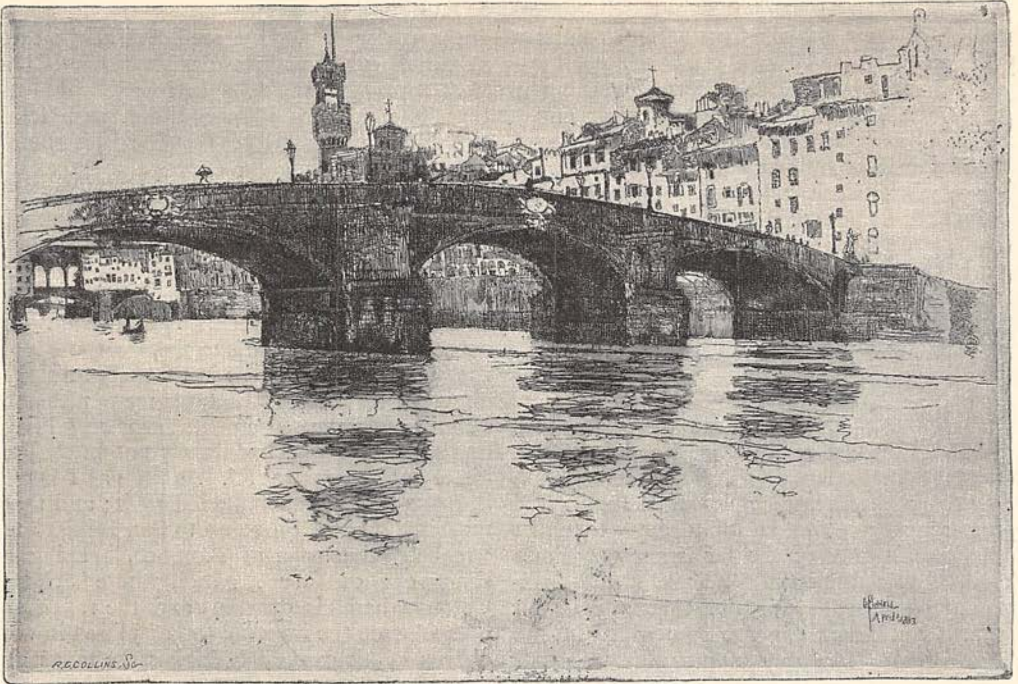
tangle of blackberry vines, which the amiable Florentine winter has not had the harshness to rob of their leaves; they hang green from the canes, on which one might almost hope to find some berries. The lizards, basking in the warm dust, rustle away among them at my approach, and up the path comes a gentleman in the company of two small terrier dogs, whose little bells finely tinkle as they advance. It would be hard to say just how these gave the final touch to my satisfaction with a prospect in which everything glistened and sparkled as far as the snows of Vallombrosa, lustrous along the horizon; but the reader ought to understand.

VIII.

I WAS instructed by the friend in whose tutelage I was pursuing with so much passion my search for historical localities that I had better not give myself quite away to either the associations or the landscapes at Porta San Giorgio, but wait till I visited San Miniato. Afterward I was glad that I did so, for that is certainly the point from which best to enjoy both. The day of our visit was gray and overcast, but the air was clear, and nothing was lost to the eye among the objects distinct in line and color, almost as far as it could reach. We went out of the famous Porta Romana, by which so much history enters and issues that if the customs officers there were not the most circumspect of men, they never could get round among the peasants' carts to tax their wine and oil without trampling a multitude of august and pathetic presences under foot. One shudders at the rate at which one's *cocchiere* dashes through the Past thronging the lofty archway, and scatters its phantoms right and left with loud explosions of his whip. Outside it is somewhat better, among the curves and slopes of the beautiful suburban avenues, with which Florence was adorned to be the capital of Italy twenty years ago. But here, too, history thickens upon you, even if you know it but a little; it springs from the soil that looks so red and poor, and seems to fill the air. In no other space, it seems to me, do the great events stand so dense as in that city and the circuit of its hills; so that, for mere pleasure in its beauty, the sense of its surpassing loveliness, perhaps one had better not know the history of Florence at all. As little as I knew it, I was terribly incommoded by it; and that morning, when I drove up to San Miniato to "realize" the siege of Florence, keeping a sharp eye out for Montici, where Sciarra Colonna had his quarters, and the range of hills whence the imperial forces joined in the chorus of his cannon battering the tower of the church, I would far rather have been an unpremeditating listener to the poem of Browning which the friend in the carriage with me was repeating. The din of the guns drowned his voice from time to time, and while he was trying to catch a faded phrase, and going back and correcting himself, and saying, "No — yes — no. That's it — no. Hold on — I have it!" as people do in repeating poetry, my embattled fancy was flying about over all the historic scene, sallying, repulsing, defeating, succumbing; joining in



THE PORTA ROMANA.



PONTE SANTA TRINITÀ.

the famous *camisada* when the Florentines put their shirts on over their armor and attacked the enemy's sleeping camp by night, and at the same time playing ball down in the piazza of Santa Croce with the Florentine youth in sheer contempt of the besiegers. It was prodigiously fatiguing, and I fetched a long sigh of exhaustion as I dismounted at the steps of San Miniato, which was the outpost of the Florentines, and walked tremulously round it for a better view of the tower in whose top they had planted their great gun. It was all battered there by the enemy's shot aimed to dislodge the piece, and in the crumbling brickwork nodded tufts of grass and dry weeds in the wind, like so many conceits of a frivolous tourist springing from the tragic history it recorded. The apse of the church below this tower is of the most satisfying golden brown in color, and within, the church is what all the guide-books know, but what I own I have forgotten. It is a very famous temple, and every one goes to see it, for its frescoes and mosaics and its peculiar beauty of architecture; and I dedicated a moment of reverent silence to the memory of the poet Giusti, whose monument was there. After four hundred years of slavery, his pen was one of the keenest and bravest of those which resumed the old Italian fight for freedom, and he might have had a more adequate monument. I believe there is an insufficient statue, or perhaps it is only a bust, or may be a tablet with his face in bas-relief; but the modern Italians are not happy in their commemorations of the dead. The little Campo Santo at San Miniato is a place to make one laugh and cry with the hideous vulgarity of its realistic busts and its photographs set in the tombstones; and yet it is one of the least offensive in Italy. When I could escape from the fascination of its ugliness, I went and leaned with my friend on the parapet that incloses the Piazza Michelangelo, and took my fill of delight in the landscape. The city seemed to cover the whole plain beneath us with the swarm of its edifices, and the steely stretch of the Arno thrust through its whole length and spanned by its half-dozen bridges. The Duomo and the Palazzo Vecchio swelled up from the mass with a vastness which the distance seemed only to accent and reveal. To the northward showed the snowy tops of the Apennines, while on the nearer slopes of the soft brown hills flanking the wonderful valley the towns and villas hung densely drifted everywhere, and whitened the plain to its remotest purple.

I spare the reader the successive events which my unhappy acquaintance with the past obliged me to wait and see sweep over this mighty theater. The winter was still in

the wind that whistled round our lofty perch, and that must make the Piazza Michelangelo so delicious in the summer twilight; the bronze copy of the David in the center of the square looked half frozen. The terrace is part of the system of embellishment and improvement of Florence for her brief supremacy as capital; and it is fitly called after Michael Angelo because it covers the site of so much work of his for her defense in the great siege. We looked about till we could endure the cold no longer, and then returned to our carriage. By this time the siege was over, and after a resistance of fifteen months we were betrayed by our leader Malatesta Baglioni, who could not resist the Pope's bribe. With the disgraceful facility of pleasure-seeking foreigners we instantly changed sides, and returned through the Porta Romana, which his treason opened, and, because it was so convenient, entered the city with a horde of other Spanish and German bigots and mercenaries that the empire had hurled against the stronghold of Italian liberty.

IX.

YET, once within the beloved walls,— I must still call them walls, though they are now razed to the ground and laid out in fine avenues, with a perpetual succession of horse-cars tinkling down their midst,— I was all Florentine again, and furious against the Medici, whom after a whole generation the holy league of the Emperor and the Pope had brought back in the person of the bastard Alessandro. They brought him back, of course, in prompt and explicit violation of their sacred word; and it seemed to me that I could not wait for his cousin Lorenzino to kill him — such is the ferocity of the mildest tourist in the presence of occasions sufficiently remote. But surely if ever a man merited murder it was that brutal despot, whose tyrannies and excesses had something almost deliriously insolent in them, and who, crime for crime, seems to have preferred that which was most revolting. But I had to postpone this exemplary assassination till I could find the moment for visiting the Riccardi Palace, in the name of which the fact of the elder Medicean residence is clouded. It has long been a public building, and now some branch of the municipal government has its meetings and offices there; but what the stranger commonly goes to see is the chapel or oratory frescoed by Benozzo Gozzoli, which is perhaps the most simply and satisfyingly lovely little space that ever four walls inclosed. The sacred histories cover every inch of it with form and color; and if it all remains in my memory a sensation of delight, rather than anything more definite, that is perhaps a witness to the efficacy with which the painter wrought. Serried ranks of seraphs, peacock-plumed, and kneeling in prayer; garlands of roses everywhere; contemporary Florentines on horseback, riding in the train of the Three Magi Kings under the low boughs of trees; and birds fluttering through the dim, mellow atmosphere, the whole set dense and close in an opulent yet delicate fancifulness of design, — that is what I recall, with a conviction of the idleness and absurdity of recalling anything. It was like going out-of-doors to leave the dusky splendor of this chapel, which was intended at first to be seen only by the light of silver lamps, and come into the great hall frescoed by Luca Giordano, where his classicistic fables swim overhead in immeasurable light. They still have the air, those boldly foreshortened and dramatically postured figures, of being newly dashed on — the work of yesterday begun the day before; and they fill one with an incomparable gayety: War, Pestilence, and Famine, no less than Peace, Plenty, and Hygienic Plumbing — if that was one of the antithetical personages. Upon the whole, I think the seventeenth century was more comfortable than the fifteenth, and that when men had fairly got their passions and miseries impersonalized into allegory, they were in a state to enjoy themselves much better than before. One can very well imagine the old Cosimo who built this palace having himself carried through its desolate magnificence, and crying that, now his son was dead, it was too big for his family; but grief must have been a much politer and seemlier thing in Florence when Luca Giordano painted the ceiling of the great hall.

In the Duke Alessandro's time they had only got half-way, and their hearts ached and burned in primitive fashion. The revival of learning had brought them the consolation of much classic example, both virtuous and vicious, but they had not yet fully philosophized slavery into elegant passivity. Even a reprobate like Lorenzino de' Medici — "the morrow of a debauch," as De Musset calls him — had his head full of the high Roman fashion of finishing tyrants, and behaved as much like a Greek as he could.

The Palazzo Riccardi now includes in its mass the site of the house in which Lorenzino lived, as well as the narrow street which formerly ran between his house and the palace of the Medici; so that if you have ever so great a desire to visit the very spot where Alessandro died that only too insufficient death, you must wreak your frenzy upon a small passage opening out of the present

court. You enter this from the modern liveliness of the Via Cavour,—in every Italian city since the unification there is a Via Cavour, a Via Garibaldi, and a Corso Vittorio Emmanuele,—and you ordinarily linger for a moment among the Etruscan and Roman marbles before paying your half franc and going upstairs. There is a little confusion in this, but I think upon the whole it heightens the effect; and the question whether the custodian can change a piece of twenty francs, debating itself all the time in the mind of the amateur of tyrannicide, sharpens his impatience, while he turns aside into the street which no longer exists, and mounts the phantom stairs to the vanished chamber of the demolished house, where the Duke is waiting for the Lady Ginori, as he believes, but really for his death. No one, I think, claims that he was a demon less infernal than Lorenzino makes him out in that strange Apology of his, in which he justifies himself to posterity by appeals to antiquity. "Alessandro," he says, "went far beyond Phalaris in cruelty, because, whereas Phalaris justly punished Perillus for his cruel invention for miserably tormenting and destroying men in his brazen Bull, Alessandro would have rewarded him if he had lived in his time, for he was himself always thinking out new sorts of tortures and deaths, like building men up alive in places so narrow that they could not turn or move, but might be said to be built in as a part of the wall of brick and stone, and in that state feeding them and prolonging their misery as much as possible, the monster not satisfying himself with the mere death of his people; so that the seven years of his reign, for debauchery, for avarice and cruelty, may be compared with seven others of Nero, of Caligula, or of Phalaris, choosing the most abominable of their whole lives, in proportion, of course, of the city to the empire; for in that time so many citizens will be found to have been driven from their country, and persecuted, and murdered in exile, and so many beheaded without trial and without cause, and only for empty suspicion, and for words of no importance, and others poisoned or slain by his own hand, or his satellites, merely that they might not put him to shame before certain persons, for the condition in which he was born and reared; and so many extortions and robberies will be found to have been committed, so many adulteries, so many violences, not only in things profane but in sacred also, that it will be difficult to decide whether the tyrant was more atrocious and impious, or the Florentine people more patient and vile. . . . And if Timoleon was forced to kill his own brother to liberate his country, and was so much praised and celebrated for it, and still is so, what authority have the malevolent to blame me? But in regard to killing one who trusted me (which I do not allow I have done), I say that if I had done it in this case, and if I could not have accomplished it otherwise, I should have done it. . . . That he was not of the house of Medici and my kinsman is manifest, for he was born of a woman of base condition, from Castelvecchi in the Romagna, who lived in the house of the Duke Lorenzo [of Urbino], and was employed in the most menial services, and married to a coachman. . . . He [Alessandro] left her to work on the fields, so that those citizens of ours who had fled from the tyrant's avarice and cruelty in the city determined to conduct her to the Emperor at Naples, to show his Majesty whence came the man he thought fit to rule Florence. Then Alessandro, forgetting his duty in his shame, and the love for his mother, which indeed he never had, and through an inborn cruelty and ferocity, caused his mother to be killed before she came to the Emperor's presence."

On the way up to the chamber to which the dwarfish, sickly little tyrannicide has lured his prey, the most dramatic moment occurs. He stops the bold ruffian whom he has got to do him the pleasure of a certain unspecified homicide, in requital of the good turn by which he once saved his life, and whispers to him, "It is the Duke!" Scoronconcolo, who had merely counted on an every-day murder, falters in dismay. But he recovers himself: "Here we are; go ahead, if it were the devil himself!" And after that he has no more compunction in the affair than if it were the butchery of a simple citizen. The Duke is lying there on the bed in the dark, and Lorenzino bends over him with "Are you asleep, sir?" and drives his sword, shortened to half length, through him; but the Duke springs up, and crying out, "I did not expect this of thee!" makes a fight for his life that tasks the full strength of the assassins, and covers the chamber with blood. When the work is done, Lorenzino draws the curtains round the bed again, and pins a Latin verse to them explaining that he did it for love of country and the thirst for glory.

X.

Is IT perhaps all a good deal too much like a stage-play? Or is it that stage-plays are too much like facts of this sort? If it were at the theater, one could go away, deploring the bloodshed, of course, but comforted by the justice done on an execrable wretch, the murderer of his own mother, and the pollution of every life that he touched.

But if it is history we have been reading, we must turn the next page and see the city filled with troops by the Medici and their friends, and another of the race established in power before the people know that the Duke is dead. Clearly, poetical justice is not the justice of God. If it were, the Florentines would have had the republic again at once. Lorenzino, instead of being assassinated in Venice, on his way to see a lady, by the emissaries of the Medici, would have satisfied public decorum by going through the form of a trial, and would then have accepted some official employment and made a good end. Yet the seven Medicean dukes who followed Alessandro were so variously bad for the most part that it seems impious to regard them as part of the design of Providence. How, then, did they come to be? Is it possible that sometimes evil prevails by its superior force in the universe? We must suppose that it took seven Medicean despots and as many more of the house of Lorraine and Austria to iron the Florentines out to the flat and polished peacefulness of their modern effect. Of course, the commonwealth could not go on in the old way; but was it worse at its worst than the tyranny that destroyed it? I am afraid we must allow that it was more impossible. People are not put into the world merely to love their country; they must have peace. True freedom is only a means to peace; and if such freedom as they have will not give them peace, then they must accept it from slavery. It is always to be remembered that the great body of men are not affected by oppressions that involve the happiness of the magnanimous few; the affair of most men is mainly to be sheltered and victualed and allowed to prosper and bring up their families. Yet when one thinks of the sacrifices made to perpetuate popular rule in Florence, one's heart is wrung in indignant sympathy with the hearts that broke for it. Of course, one must, in order to experience this emotion, put out of his mind certain facts, as that there never was freedom for more than one party at a time under the old commonwealth; that as soon as one party came into power the other was driven out of the city; and that even within the triumphant party every soul seemed corroded by envy and distrust of every other. There is, to be sure, the consoling reflection that the popular party was always the most generous and liberal, and that the oppression of all parties under the despotism was not exactly an improvement on the oppression of one. With this thought kept before you vividly, and with those facts blinked, you may go, for example, into the Medici Chapel of San Lorenzo and make pretty sure of your pang in the presence of those solemn figures of Michael Angelo's, where his Night seems to have his words of grief for the loss of liberty upon her lips:

> "'Tis sweet to sleep, sweeter of stone to be,
> And while endure the infamy and woe,
> For me 'tis happiness not to feel or see.
> Do not awake me therefore. Ah, speak low!"

W. D. Howells.

LOVE'S CHANGE.

I WENT to dig a grave for Love,
But the earth was so stiff and cold,
That though I strove through the bitter night,
I could not break the mold.

And I said; "Must he lie in my house in state?
And stay in his wonted place?
Must I have him with me another day,
With that awful change in his face?"

Anne R. Aldrich.