

ably, do much toward stimulating the growth of the national idea in the South. A study of the enormous aggregation of products, arts, and inventions in the Government Building classified by States cannot fail to produce an enlarged conception of the greatness of the republic, and a feeling of pride in its magnificent resources. Opposition to the national emblem is only a sentiment in the South, and is fast fading into a tradition. There is not the slightest desire for separation. The Southerner does not want to hurrah for the old flag, simply because he thinks that to do so would be to show unfaithfulness to the memory of the cause for which he or his kindred fought—a memory which to him is sacred.

A REMEDY FOR HARD TIMES.

THE Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia was held when the business of the country was deep down in the rut of depression into which it had been settling after the panic of 1873. The exhibition seemed to be the turning-point. It set people in motion and broke the spell of lethargy. Hard times are a mental disease. At the outset a necessary reaction from the fever of speculation, they become a chronic condition prolonged far beyond the time needed for restoring wholesome conditions to trade. People grasp their money tightly, become overcautious, draw back from the most inviting enterprises, and retrench ex-

penses beyond reasonable economy. The malady affects even those whose incomes have not in the least suffered. The rich grow penurious without themselves knowing why. Thus the consumption of products of all kinds diminishes and manufactures and trade languish. A great exhibition encourages people to travel, interests their minds by its display of inventions, processes, and products, and thus lifts them out of the old grooves of inactivity and causes them to loosen their energies and their purse-strings. Perhaps the New Orleans fair is destined to do the same good work in breaking up hard times as was done by the Centennial. It is a pity that its magnitude and attractions did not become earlier known to the country at large. It took about two months to educate the country up to an appreciation of the Philadelphia Exhibition, but afterwards came the pleasant fall weather, most inviting to travel and sight-seeing. Unfortunately, the summer will begin in New Orleans about as soon as a knowledge of the merits of the "World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition" is widely diffused. If it were practicable to hold the great show together and reopen it in the coming autumn, its benefits would be much increased, and the wise plan of its projectors of bringing together within its gates for better acquaintance and mutual profit the peoples of all the North American republics and colonies might be more fully realized.

Eugene V. Smalley.

A FLORENTINE MOSAIC.

(THIRD PAPER.)

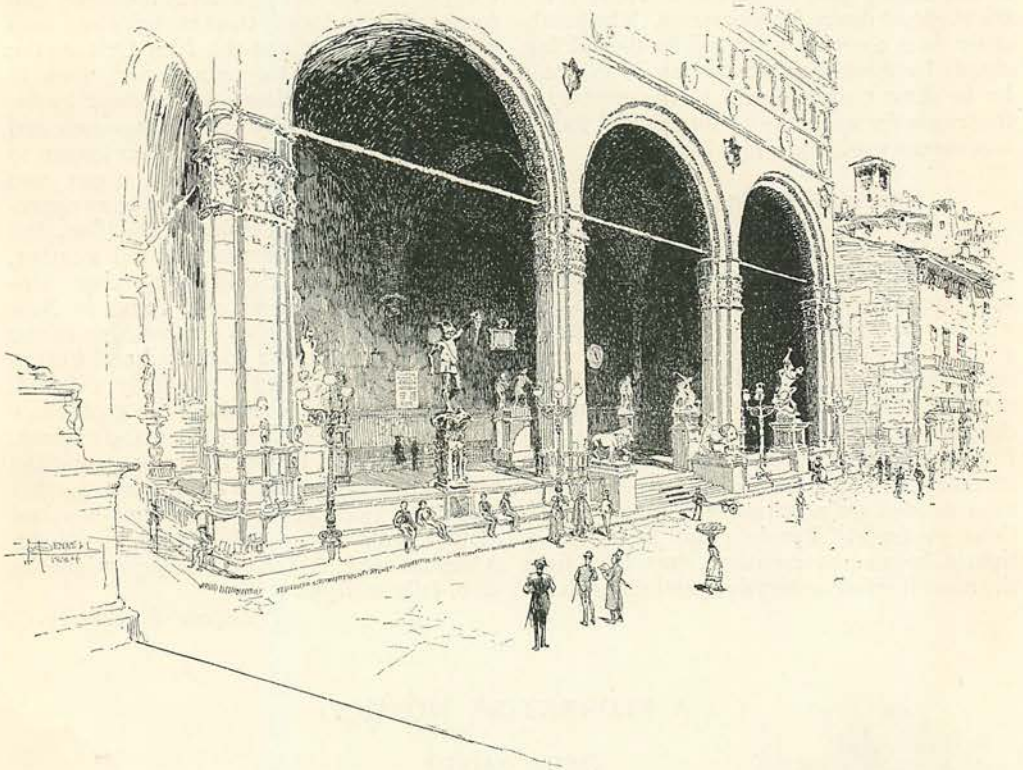


HOSE words of Michael Angelo's answer to Strozzi's civil verses on his Day and Night are nobly simple, and of a colloquial and natural pitch to which their author seldom condescended in sculpture. Even the Day is too muscularly awaking and the Night too anatomically sleeping for the spectator's perfect loss of himself in the sculptor's thought; but the figures are so famous that it is hard to reconcile one's self to the fact that they do not celebrate the memory of the greatest Medici. That Giuliano whom we see in the chapel there is little known to history; of that Lorenzo, history chiefly remembers that he was the father of Alessandro, whom we have seen slain, and of Catharine de' Medici.

Some people may think this enough; but we ought to read the lives of the other Medici before deciding. Another thing to guard against in that chapel is the cold; and, in fact, one ought to go well wrapped up in visiting any of the indoor monuments of Florence. Santa Croce, for example, is a temple whose rigors I should not like to encounter again in January, especially if the day be fine without. Then the sun streams in with a deceitful warmth through the mellow blazon of the windows, and the crone, with her scaldino at the door, has the air almost of sitting by a register. But it is all an illusion. By the time you have gone the round of the strutting and mincing allegories, and the pompous effigies with which art here, as everywhere, renders death ridiculous, you have scarcely the courage to penetrate to those remote chapels where the Giotto frescoes are. Or if you do,

you shiver round among them with no more pleasure in them than if they were so many boreal lights. Vague they are, indeed, and spectral enough, those faded histories of John the Baptist, and John the Evangelist, and St. Francis of Assisi, and as far from us, morally, as anything at the pole; so that the honest sufferer, who feels himself taking cold in his bare head, would blush for his absurd-

full. The wonder of their temperance comes back with perpetual surprise to the gluttonous northern nature. Their shyness of your fire, their gentle deprecation of your out-of-hours hospitality, amuse as freshly as at first; and the reader who has not known the fact must imagine the well-dressed throng in the Florentine street more meagerly breakfasted and lunched than anything but destitution with



LOGGIA DEI LANZI.

ity in pretending to get any comfort or joy from them, if all the available blood in his body were not then concentrated in the tip of his nose. For my part, I marveled at myself for being led, even temporarily, into temptation of that sort; and it soon came to my putting my book under my arm and my hands in my pockets, and, with a priest's silken skull-cap on my head, sauntering among those works of art with no more sense of obligation to them than if I were their contemporary. It is well, if possible, to have some one with you to look at the book, and see what the works are and the authors. But nothing of it is comparable to getting out into the open piazza again, where the sun is so warm—though not so warm as it looks.

It suffices for the Italians, however, who are greedy in nothing and do not require to be warmed through, any more than to be fed

us, and protected against the cold indoors by nothing but the clothes which are much more efficient without.

II.

WHAT strikes one first in the Florentine crowd is that it *is* so well dressed. I do not mean that the average of fashion is so great as with us, but that the average of raggedness is less. Venice, when I saw it again, seemed in tatters, but, so far as I can remember, Florence was not even patched; and this, in spite of the talk one constantly hears of the poverty which has befallen the city since the removal of the capital to Rome. All classes are said to feel this adversity more or less, but none of them show it on the street; beggary itself is silenced to the invisible speech which one sees moving the lips of the old women who steal an open palm towards you

at the church doors. Florence is not only better dressed on the average than Boston, but, with little over half the population, there are, I should think, nearly twice as many private carriages in the former city. I am not going beyond the most non-committal *si dice* in any study of the Florentine civilization, and I know no more than that it is said (as it has been said ever since the first northern tourist discovered them) that they will starve themselves at home to make a show abroad. But if they do not invite the observer to share their domestic self-denial,—and it is said that they do not, even when he has long ceased to be a passing stranger,—I do not see why he should complain. For my part their abstemiousness cost me no sacrifice, and I found a great deal of pleasure in looking at the turn-outs in the Cascine, and at the furlined coats in the streets and piazzas. They are always great wearers of fur in the south, but I think it is less fashionable than it used to be in Italy. The younger swells did not wear it in Florence, but now and then I met an elderly gentleman, slim, tall, with an iron-gray mustache, who, in folding his long furlined overcoat loosely about him as he walked, had a gratifying effect of being an ancestral portrait of himself; and with all persons and classes content to come short of recent fashion, fur is the most popular wear for winter. Each has it in such measure as he may; and one day in the Piazza della Signoria, when there was for some reason an assemblage of market-folk there, every man had hanging operatically from his shoulder an overcoat with cheap fur collar and cuffs. They were all babbling and gesticulating with an impassioned amiability, and their voices filled the place with a leafy rustling which it must have known so often in the old times, when the Florentines came together there to govern Florence. One ought not, I suppose, to imagine them always too grimly bent on public business in those times. They must have got a great deal of fun out of it, in the long run, as well as trouble, and must have enjoyed sharpening their wits upon one another vastly.

The presence now of all those busy-tongued people — bargaining or gossiping, whichever they were — gave its own touch to the peculiarly noble effect of the piazza, as it rose before me from the gentle slope of the Via Borgo dei Greci. I was coming back from that visit to Santa Croce, of which I have tried to give the sentiment, and I was resentfully tingling still with the cold, and the displeasure of a backward glance at the brand-new ugliness of the façade, and of the big clumsy Dante on his pedestal before it,

when all my burden suddenly lifted from me, as if nothing could resist the spring of that buoyant air. It was too much for even the dull, vague rage I felt at having voluntarily gone through that dreary old farce of old-master doing again, in which the man only averagely instructed in the history of art is at his last extreme of insincerity, weariness, and degradation — the ridiculous and miserable slave of the guide-book asterisks marking this or that thing as worth seeing. All seemed to rise and float away with the thin clouds, chasing one another across the generous space of afternoon sky which the piazza opened to the vision; and my spirit rose as light as the lion of the Republic, which capers so nimbly up the staff on top of the palace tower.

There is something fine in the old piazza being still true to the popular and even plebeian use. In narrow and crowded Florence, one might have supposed that fashion would have tried to possess itself of the place, after the public palace became the residence of the Medici; but it seems not to have changed its ancient character. It is now the starting-point of a line of omnibuses; a rank of cabs surrounds the base of Cosimo's equestrian statue; the lottery is drawn on the platform in front of the palace; second-rate shops of all sorts face it from two sides, and the restaurants and cafés of the neighborhood are inferior. But this unambitious environment leaves the observer all the freer to his impressions of the local art, the groups of the Loggia dei Lanzi, the symmetrical stretch of the Portico degli Uffizzi, and, best of all, the great, bold, irregular mass of the old palace itself, beautiful as some rugged natural object is beautiful, and with the kindness of nature in it. Plenty of men have been hung from its windows, plenty dashed from its turrets, slain at its base, torn in pieces, cruelly martyred before it; the wild passions of the human heart have beaten against it like billows; it has faced every violent crime and outbreak. And yet it is sacred, and the scene is sacred, to all who hope for their kind; for there, in some sort, century after century, the purpose of popular sovereignty — the rule of all by the most — struggled to fulfill itself, purlblindly, bloodily, ruthlessly, but never ignobly, and inspired by an instinct only less strong than the love of life. There is nothing superfine, nothing of the *salon* about the place, nothing of the beauty of Piazza San Marco at Venice, which expresses the elegance of an oligarchy and suggests the dapper perfection of an aristocracy in decay; it is loud with wheels and hoofs, and busy with commerce, and it has a certain ineffaceable rudeness and unfinished like the structure of a democratic state.

III.

WHEN Cosimo I., who succeeded Alessandro, moved his residence from the family seat of the Medici to the Palazzo Vecchio, it was as if he were planting his foot on the very neck of Florentine liberty. He ground his iron heel in deeply; the prostrate city hardly stirred afterwards. One sees what a potent and valiant man he was from the terrible face of the bronze bust by Benvenuto Cellini, now in the Bargello Museum; but the world, going about its business these many generations, remembers him chiefly by a horrid crime — the murder of his son in the presence of the boy's mother. Yet he was not only a great warrior and wild beast; he befriended letters, endowed universities, founded academies, encouraged printing; he adorned his capital with statues and public edifices; he enlarged and enriched the Palazzo Vecchio; he bought Luca Pitti's palace, and built the Uffizzi, thus securing the eternal gratitude of the tourists who visit these galleries, and have something to talk about at the *table d'hôte*. It was he who patronized Benvenuto Cellini, and got him to make his Perseus in the Loggia de' Lanzi; he built the fishermen's arcade in the Mercato Vecchio, and the fine Loggia of the Mercato Nuovo; he established the General Archives, and reformed the laws and the public employments; he created Leghorn, and throughout Tuscany, which his arms had united under his rule, he promoted the material welfare of his people, after the manner of tyrants when they do not happen to be also fools.

His care of them in other respects may be judged from the fact that he established two official spies in each of the fifty wards of the city, whose business it was to keep him informed of the smallest events, and all that went on in the houses and streets, together with their conjectures and suspicions. He did not neglect his people in any way; and he not only built all those fine public edifices in Florence,—having merely to put his hand in his people's pocket and do it, and then take the credit of them,—but he seems to have loved to adorn it with that terrible face of his on many busts and statues. Its ferocity, as Benvenuto Cellini has frankly recorded it, and as it betrays itself in all the effigies, is something to appall us still; and whether the story is true or not, you see in it a man capable of striking his son dead in his mother's arms. To be sure, Garzia was not Cosimo's favorite, and, like a Medici, he had killed his brother; but he was a boy, and when his father came to Pisa to find him, where he had taken refuge with his mother,

he threw himself at Cosimo's feet and implored forgiveness. "I want no Cains in my family!" said the father, and struck him with the dagger which he had kept hidden in his breast. "Mother! Mother!" gasped the boy, and fell dead in the arms of the hapless woman, who had urged him to trust in his father's mercy. She threw herself on the bed where they laid her dead son, and never looked on the light again. Some say she died of grief, some that she starved herself; in a week she died, and was carried with her two children to Florence, where it was presently made known that all three had fallen victims to the bad air of the Maremma. She was the daughter of a Spanish king, and eight years after her death her husband married the vulgar and ignoble woman who had long been his mistress. This woman was young, handsome, full of life, and she queened it absolutely over the last days of the bloody tyrant. His excesses had broken Cosimo with premature decrepitude; he was helpless in the hands of this creature, from whom his son tried to separate him in vain; and he was two years in dying, after the palsy had deprived him of speech and motion, but left him able to think and to remember!

The son was that Francesco I. who is chiefly known to fame as the lover and then the husband of Bianca Capello,—to so little may a sovereign prince come in the crowded and busy mind of aftertime. This grand duke had his courts and his camps, his tribunals and audiences, his shows of authority and government; but what we see of him at this distance is the luxurious and lawless youth, sated with every indulgence, riding listlessly by under the window of the Venetian girl who eloped with the Florentine banker's clerk from her father's palace in the lagoons, and is now the household drudge of her husband's family in Florence. She is looking out of the window that looks on Savonarola's convent, in the tallest of the stupid, commonplace houses that confront it across the square; and we see the prince and her as their eyes meet, and the work is done in the gunpowdery way of southern passion. We see her again at the house of those Spaniards in the Via de' Banchi, which leads out of our Piazza Santa Maria Novella, from whence the Palazzo Mandragone is actually in sight; and the marchioness is showing Bianca her jewels and— Wait a moment! There is something else the marchioness wishes to show her; she will go get it; and when the door reopens Francesco enters, protesting his love, to Bianca's confusion, and no doubt to her surprise; for how could she suppose he would be there? We see her then at the head of the grand-ducal

court, the poor, plain Austrian wife thrust aside to die in neglect; and then when Bianca's husband, whom his honors and good fortune have rendered intolerably insolent, is slain by some of the duke's gentlemen,—in the narrow street at Santo Spirito, hard by the handsome house in Via Maggio which the duke has given her,—we see them married, and receiving in state the congratulations of Bianca's father and brother, who have come on a special embassy from Venice to proclaim the distinguished lady Daughter of the Republic,—and, of course, to withdraw the price hitherto set upon her head. We see them then in the sort of life which must always follow from such love,—the grand duke had spent three hundred thousand ducats in the celebration of his nuptials,—overeating, overdrinking, and seeking their gross pleasures amid the ruin of the state. We see them trying to palm off a supposititious child upon the Cardinal Ferdinand, who was the true heir to his brother, and would have none of his spurious nephew; and we see these three sitting down in the villa at Poggio a Caiano to the famous tart which Bianca, remembering the skill of her first married days, has made with her own hands, and of which she courteously presses the Cardinal to be the first to partake. He politely refuses, being provided with a ring of admirable convenience at that time in Italy, set with a stone that turned pale in the presence of poison. "Some one has to begin," cries Francesco, impatiently; and in spite of his wife's signs—she was probably treading on his foot under the table, and frowning at him—he ate of the mortal viand; and then in despair Bianca ate too, and they both died. Is this tart perhaps too much for the reader's digestion? There is another story, then, to the effect that the grand duke died of the same malarial fever that carried off his brothers Garzia and Giovanni, and Bianca perished of terror and apprehension; and there is still another story that the Cardinal poisoned them both. Let the reader take his choice of them; in any case, it is an end of Francesco, of whom, as I said, the world remembers so little else.

It almost forgets that he was privy to the murder of his sister Isabella by her husband Paolo Orsini, and of his sister-in-law Eleonora by her husband Pietro de' Medici. The grand duke, who was then in the midst of his intrigue with Bianca, was naturally jealous of the purity of his family; and as it has never been denied that both of those unhappy ladies had wronged their husbands, I suppose he can be justified by the moralists who contend that what is a venial lapse in a man is worthy death, or something like it, in a woman. About the taking-off of Eleonora, however,

there was something gross, Medicean, butcherly, which all must deprecate. She knew she was to be killed, poor woman, as soon as her intrigue was discovered to the grand duke; and one is not exactly able to sympathize with either the curiosity or the trepidation of that "celebrated Roman singer" who first tampered with the letter from her lover, intrusted to him, and then, terrified at its nature, gave it to Francesco. When her husband sent for her to come to him at his villa, she took leave of her child as for the last time, and Pietro met her in the dark of their chamber and plunged his dagger into her breast.

The affair of Isabella Orsini was managed with much greater taste, with a sort of homicidal grace, a sentiment, if one may so speak, worthy a Roman prince and a lady so accomplished. She was Cosimo's favorite, and she was beautiful, gifted, and learned, knowing music, knowing languages, and all the gentler arts; but one of her lovers had just killed her page, of whom he was jealous, and the scandal was very great, so that her brother, the grand duke, felt that he ought, for decency's sake, to send to Rome for her husband, and arrange her death with him. She, too, like Eleonora, had her forebodings, when Paolo Orsini asked her to their villa (it seems to have been the custom to devote the peaceful seclusion of the country to these domestic rites); but he did what he could to allay her fears by his affectionate gayety at supper, and his gift of either of those stag-hounds which he had brought in for her to choose from against the hunt planned for the morrow, as well as by the tender politeness with which he invited her to follow him to their room. At the door we may still see her pause, after so many years, and turn wistfully to her lady in waiting:

"Madonna Lucrezia, shall I go or shall I not go to my husband? What do you say?"

And Madonna Lucrezia Frescobaldi answers, with the irresponsible shrug which we can imagine: "Do what you like. Still, he is your husband!"

She enters, and Paolo Orsini, a prince and a gentleman, knows how to be as sweet as before, and without once passing from caresses to violence, has that silken cord about her neck—

Terrible stories, which I must try to excuse myself for telling the thousandth time. At least, I did not invent them. They are all part of the intimate life of the same family, and the reader must group them in his mind to get an idea of what Florence must have been under the first and second grand dukes. Cosimo is believed to have killed his son Garzia, who had stabbed his brother Giovanni. His son Pietro kills his wife, and his daughter Isabella is strangled by her husband,

both murders being done with the knowledge and approval of the reigning prince. Francesco and Bianca his wife die of poison intended for Ferdinand, or of poison given them by him. On these facts throw the light of St. Bartholomew's day in Paris, whither Catharine de' Medici, the cousin of these homicides, had carried the methods and morals of her family, and you begin to realize the Medici.

By what series of influences and accidents did any race accumulate the enormous sum of evil which is but partly represented in these crimes? By what process was that evil worked out of the blood? Had it wreaked its terrible force in violence, and did it then no longer exist, like some explosive which has been fired? These would be interesting questions for the casuist; and doubtless such questions will yet come to be studied with the same scientific minuteness which is brought to the solution of contemporary social problems. The Medici, a family of princes and criminals, may come to be studied like the Jukes, a family of paupers and criminals. What we know at present is, that the evil in them did seem to die out in process of time; though, to be sure, the Medici died with it. That Ferdinand who succeeded Francesco, which ever poisoned the other, did prove a wise and beneficent ruler, filling Tuscany with good works, moral and material, and, by his marriage with Catharine of Lorraine, bringing that good race to Florence, where it afterwards reigned so long in the affections of the people. His son Cosimo II. was like him, but feebler, as a copy always is, with a dominant desire to get the sepulcher of our Lord away from the Turks to Florence, and long waging futile war to that end. In the time of Ferdinand II., Tuscany, with the rest of Italy, was wasted by the wars of the French, Spaniards, and Germans, who found it convenient to fight them out there, and by famine and pestilence. But the grand duke was a well-meaning man enough; he protected the arts and sciences as he got the opportunity, and he did his best to protect Galileo against the Pope and the inquisitors. Cosimo III., who followed him, was obliged to harass his subjects with taxes to repair the ruin of the wars in his father's reign; he was much given to works of piety, and he had a wife who hated him, and finally forsook him and went back to France, her own country. He reigned fifty years, and after him came his son Gian Gastone, the last of his line. He was a person, by all accounts, who wished men well enough, but, knowing himself destined to leave no heir to the throne, was disposed rather to enjoy what was left of his life than trouble himself about the affairs of state. Ger-

many, France, England, and Holland had already provided him with a successor, by the treaty of London, in 1718; and when Gian Gastone died, in 1737, Francis II. of Lorraine became Grand Duke of Tuscany.

IV.

UNDER the later Medici the Florentines were drawing towards the long quiet which they enjoyed under their Lorraine dukes—the first of whom, as is well known, left being their duke to go and be husband of Maria Theresa and emperor consort. Their son, Pietro Leopoldo, succeeded him in Tuscany, and became the author of reforms in the civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical law, which then astonished all Europe, and which tardy civilization still lags behind in some things. For example, Leopold found that the abolition of the death penalty resulted not in more, but in fewer crimes of violence; yet the law continues to kill murderers, even in Massachusetts.

He lived to see the outbreak of the French revolution, and his son, Ferdinand III., was driven out by the forces of the Republic in 1796, after which Tuscany rapidly underwent the Napoleonic metamorphoses, and was republican under the Directory, regal under Lodovico I., Bonaparte's king of Etruria, and grand-ducal under Napoleon's sister, Elisa Bacciocchi. Then, in 1816, Ferdinand III. came back, and he and his descendants reigned till 1848, when Leopold II. was driven out, to return the next year with the Austrians. Ten years later he again retired, and in 1860 Tuscany united herself by popular vote to the kingdom of Italy, of which Florence became the capital, and so remained till the French evacuated Rome in 1871.

The time from the restoration of Ferdinand III. till the first expulsion of Leopold II. must always be attractive to the student of Italian civilization as the period in which the milder Lorraine traditions permitted the germs of Italian literature to live in Florence, while everywhere else the native and foreign despotisms sought diligently to destroy them, instinctively knowing them to be the germs of Italian liberty and nationality; but I confess that the time of the first Leopold's reign has a greater charm for my fancy. It is like a long stretch of sunshine in that lurid, war-clouded landscape of history, full of repose and genial, beneficent growth. For twenty-five years, apparently, the good prince got up at six o'clock in the morning, and dried the tears of his people. To be more specific, he "formed the generous project," according to Signor Bacciotti, by whose "*Firenze Illustrata*" I would not thanklessly profit, "of restoring

Tuscany to her original happy state" — which, I think, must have been prehistoric. "His first occupation was to reform the laws, simplifying the civil and mitigating the criminal; and the volumes are ten that contain his wise statutes, edicts, and decrees. In his time, ten years passed in which no drop of blood was shed on the scaffold. Prisoners suffered no corporeal penalty but the loss of liberty. The amelioration of the laws improved the public morals; grave crimes, after the abolition of the cruel punishments, became rare, and for three months at one period the prisons of Tuscany remained empty. The hospitals that Leopold founded, and the order and propriety in which he kept them, justly entitled him to the name of Father of the Poor. The education he gave his children aimed to render them compassionate and beneficent to their fellow-beings, and to make them men rather than princes. An illustrious Englishman, then living in Florence, and consequently an eye-witness, wrote of him: 'Leopold loves his people. He has abolished all the imposts which were not necessary; he has dismissed nearly all his soldiers; he has destroyed the fortifications of Pisa, whose maintenance was extremely expensive, overthrowing the stones that devoured men. He observed that his court concealed him from his people; he no longer has a court. He has established manufactures, and opened superb roads at his own cost, and founded hospitals. These might be called, in Tuscany, the palaces of the grand duke. I visited them, and found throughout cleanliness, order, and delicate and attentive treatment; I saw sick old men, who were cared for as if by their own sons; helpless children watched over with a mother's care; and that luxury of pity and humanity brought happy tears to my eyes. The prince often repairs to these abodes of sorrow and pain, and never quits them without leaving joy behind him, and coming away loaded with blessings: you might fancy you heard the expression of a happy people's gratitude, but that hymn rises from a hospital. The palace of Leopold, like the churches, is open to all without distinction; three days of the week are devoted to one class of persons; it is not that of the great, the rich, the artists, the foreigners; it is that of the unfortunate! In many countries, commerce and industry have become the patrimony of the few: in Tuscany, all that know how may do; there is but one exclusive privilege — ability. Leopold has enriched the year with a great number of work-days, which he took from idleness and gave back to agriculture, to the arts, to good morals. . . . The grand duke always rises before the sun, and when that beneficent star rejoices nature with its rays, the good prince

has already dried many tears. . . . Leopold is happy, because his people are happy; he believes in God; and what must be his satisfaction when, before closing his eyes at night, before permitting himself to sleep, he renders an account to the Supreme Being of the happiness of a million of subjects during the course of the day!"

English which has once been in Italian acquires an emotionality which it does not perhaps wholly lose in returning to itself; and I am not sure that the language of the illustrious stranger, whom I quote at second hand, has not kept some terms which are native to Signor Bacciotti rather than himself. But it must be remembered that he was an eighteenth-century Englishman, and perhaps expressed himself much in this way. The picture he draws, if a little too idyllic, too pastoral, too operatic, for our realization, must still have been founded on fact, and I hope it is at least as true as those which commemorate the atrocities of the Medici. At any rate it is delightful, and one may as probably derive the softness of the modern Florentine morals and manners from the benevolence of Leopold as from the ferocity of Cosimo. Considering what princes mostly were in the days when they could take themselves seriously, and still are now when I should think they would give themselves the wink on seeing their faces in the glass, I am willing to allow that kindly despot of a Leopold all the glory that any history may claim for him. He had the genius of humanity, and that is about the only kind of genius which is entitled to reverence in this world. If he perhaps conceived of men as his children rather than his brothers, still he wished them well and did them all the good he knew how. After a hundred years it must be allowed that we have made a considerable advance beyond him — in theory.

v.

WHAT society in Florence may now be like underneath its superficial effect of gentleness and placidity, the stranger, who reflects how little any one really knows of his native civilization, will carefully guard himself from saying upon his own authority. From the report of others, of people who had lived long in Florence and were qualified in that degree to speak, one might say a great deal — a great deal that would be more and less than true. A brilliant and accomplished writer, a stranger naturalized by many years' sojourn, and of an imaginable intimacy with his subject, sometimes spoke to me of a decay of manners which he had noticed in his time: the peasants no longer saluted persons of civil condition

in meeting them; the young nobles, if asked to a ball, ascertained that there was going to be supper before accepting. I could not find these instances very shocking, upon reflection; and I was not astonished to hear that the sort of rich American girls who form the chase of young Florentine noblemen show themselves indifferent to untitled persons. There was something more of instruction in the fact that these fortune-hunters care absolutely nothing for youth or beauty, wit or character, in their prey, and ask nothing but money. This implies certain other facts—certain compensations and consolations, which the American girl with her heart set upon an historical name would be the last to consider. What interested me more was the witness which this gentleman bore, with others, to the excellent stuff of the peasants, whom he declared good and honest, and full of simple, kindly force and uprightness. The citizen class, on the other hand, was unenlightened and narrow-minded, and very selfish towards those beneath them; he believed that a peasant, for example, who cast his lot in the city, would encounter great unfriendliness in them if he showed the desire and the ability to rise above his original station. Both from this observer, and from other foreigners resident in Florence, I heard that the Italian nobility are quite apart from the national life; they have no political influence, and are scarcely a social power. (There are but three of the old noble families founded by the German emperors remaining—the Ricasoli, the Gherardeschi, and the Stufe; and a title counts absolutely for nothing with the Italians.) At the same time a Corsini was syndic of Florence; all the dead walls invited me to “vote for Peruzzi” in the approaching election for deputy, and at the last election a Ginori had been chosen. It is very hard to know about these things, and I am not saying my informants were wrong; but it is right to oppose to theirs the declaration of the intelligent and sympathetic scholar with whom I took my walks about Florence, and who said that there was great good-will between the people and the historical families, who were in thorough accord with the national aspirations and endeavors. Again, I say, it is difficult to know the truth; but happily the truth in this case is not important.

One of the few acquaintances I made with Italians outside of the English-speaking circles was that of a tradesman who, in the intervals of business, was reading *Shakspere* in English, and—if I may say it—“*Venetian Life*.” I think some Americans had lent him the latter classic. I did not learn from him that many other Flor-

entine tradesmen gave their leisure to the same literature; in fact, I inferred that, generally speaking, there was not much interest in any sort of literature among the Florentines; and I only mention him in the hope of throwing some light upon the problem with which we are playing. He took me one night to the Literary Club, of which he was a member, and of which the Marchese Ricci is president; and I could not see that any presentation could have availed me more than his with that nobleman or the other nobleman who was secretary. The president shook my hand in a friendly despair, perfectly evident, of getting upon any common ground with me; and the secretary, after asking me if I knew Doctor Holmes, had an amiable effect of being cast away upon the sea of American literature. These gentlemen, as I understood, came every week to the club, and assisted at its entertainments, which were sometimes concerts, sometimes lectures and recitations, and sometimes conversation merely, for which I found the empty chairs, on my entrance, arranged in groups of threes and fives about the floor, with an air perhaps of too great social premeditation. Presently there was playing on the piano, and at the end the president shook hands with the performer. If there was anything of the snobbishness which poisons such intercourse with our race, I could not see it. May be snobbishness, like gentlemanliness, is not appreciable from one race to another.

VI.

MY acquaintance, whom I should grieve to make in any sort a victim by my personalities, did me the pleasure to take me over the little ancestral farm which he holds just beyond one of the gates; and thus I got at one of the homely aspects of life which the stranger is commonly kept aloof from. A narrow lane, in which some boys were pitching stones for quoits in the soft Sunday afternoon sunshine, led up from the street to the farm-house, where one wandering roof covered house, stables, and offices with its mellow expanse of brown tiles. A door opening flush upon the lane admitted us to the picturesque interior, which was divided into the quarters of the farmer and his family, and the apartment which the owner occupied during the summer heats. This contained half a dozen pleasant rooms, chief of which was the library, overflowing with books representing all the rich past of Italian literature in poetry, history, and philosophy—the collections of my host's father and grandfather. On the table he opened a bottle of the wine made on his farm; and then he took me up

to the terrace at the house-top for the beautiful view of the city, and the mountains beyond it, streaked with snow. The floor of the terrace, which, like all the floors of the house, was of brick, was heaped with olives from the orchard on the hillside which bounded the little farm; but I could see from this point how it was otherwise almost wholly devoted to market-gardening. The grass keeps green all winter long at Florence, not growing, but never withering; and there were several sorts of vegetables in view, in the same sort of dreamy arrest. Between the rows of cabbages I noticed the trenches for irrigation; and I lost my heart to the wide, deep well under the shed-roof below, with a wheel, picturesque as a mill-wheel, for pumping water into these trenches. The farm implements and heavier household utensils were kept in order here; and among the latter was a large wash-tub of fine earthenware, which had been in use there for a hundred and fifty years. My friend led the way up the slopes of his olive-orchard, where some olives still lingered among the willow-like leaves, and rewarded my curious palate with the insipidity of the olive which has not been salted. Then we returned to the house, and explored the cow-stables, where the well-kept Italian kine between their stone walls were much warmer than most Italian Christians in Florence. In a large room next the stable and behind the kitchen the farm-people were assembled, men, women, and children, in their Sunday best, who all stood up when we came in — all but two very old men, who sat in the chimney and held out their hands over the fire that sent its smoke up between them. Their eyes were bleared with age, and I doubt if they made out what it was all about; but they croaked back a pleasant answer to my host's salutation, and then let their mouths fall open again and kept their hands stretched over the fire. It would be very hard to say just why these old men were such a pleasure to me.

VII.

ONE January afternoon I idled into the Baptistry, to take my chance of seeing some little one made a Christian, where so many babes, afterwards memorable for good and evil, had been baptized; and, to be sure, there was the conventional Italian infant of civil condition tied up tight in the swathing of its civilization, perfectly quiescent, except for its feebly wiggling arms, and undergoing the rite with national patience. It lay in the arms of a half-grown boy, probably its brother, and there were the father and the nurse; the mother of so young a child could not come, of course.

The officiating priest, with spectacles dropped quite to the point of his nose, mumbled the rite from his book, and the assistant, with one hand in his pocket, held a negligently tilted taper in the other. Then the priest lifted the lid of the font in which many a renowned poet's, artist's, tyrant's, philanthropist's twisted little features were similarly reflected, and poured on the water, rapidly drying the poor little skull with a single wipe of a napkin; then the servant in attendance powdered the baby's head, and the group, grotesquely inattentive throughout to the sacred rite, dispersed, and left me and a German family who had looked in with murmurs of sympathy for the child, to overmaster as we might any interest we had felt in a matter that had apparently not concerned them.

One is always coming upon this sort of thing in the Italian churches, this droll nonchalance in the midst of religious solemnities, which I suppose is promoted somewhat by the invasions of sight-seeing everywhere. In the Church of the Badia at Florence, one day, the indifference of the tourists and the worshippers to one another's presence was carried to such a point that the boy who was showing the strangers about, and was consequently in their interest, drew the curtain of a picture, and then, with his back to a group of kneeling devotees, balanced himself on the chapel-rail and sat swinging his legs there, as if it had been a store-box on a curbstone.

Perhaps we do not sufficiently account for the domestication of the people of Latin countries in their every-day-open church. They are quite at their ease there, whereas we are as unhappy in ours as if we were at an evening party; we wear all our good clothes, and they come into the houses of their Father in any rag they chance to have on, and are at home there. I have never seen a more careless and familiar group than that of which I was glad to form one, in the Church of Ognissanti, one day. I had gone, in my quality of American, to revere the tablet to Amerigo Vespucci which is there, and I found the great nave of the church occupied by workmen who were putting together the foundations of a catafalque, hammering away, and chatting cheerfully, with their mouths full of tacks and pins, and the funereal frippery of gold, black, and silver braid all about them. The church-beggars had left their posts to come and gossip with them, and the grandchildren of these old women were playing back and forth over the structure, unmolested by the workmen, and unawed either by the function going on in a distant chapel or by the theatrical magnificence of the sculptures around them and the fresco overhead, where a painted colonnade lifted another roof high above the real vault.

I liked all this, and I could not pass a church door without the wish to go in, not only for the pictures or statues one might see, but for the delightfully natural human beings one could always be sure of. Italy is above all lands the home of human nature,—simple, unabashed even in the presence of its Maker, who is probably not so much ashamed of his work as some would like to have us think. In the churches, the beggary which the civil government has disheartened almost out of existence in the streets is still fostered, and an aged crone with a scaldino in her lap, a tattered shawl over her head, and an outstretched, skinny palm, guards the portal of every sanctuary. She has her chair, and the church is literally her home; she does all but eat and sleep there. For the rest, these interiors had not so much novelty as the charm of old association for me. Either I had not enlarged my interests in the twenty years since I had known them, or else they had remained unchanged; there was the same old smell of incense, the same chill, the same warmth, the same mixture of glare and shadow. A function in progress at a remote altar, the tapers starring the distant dusk; the straggling tourists; the sacristan, eager, but not too persistent with his tale of some special attraction at one's elbow; the worshippers, all women or old men; a priest hurrying to or from the sacristy; the pictures, famous or unknown, above the side altars; the monuments, serious Gothic or strutting rococo,—all was there again, just as it used to be.

But the thing that was really novel to me, who found the churches of 1883 in Florence so like the churches of 1863 in Venice, was the loveliness of the deserted cloisters belonging to so many of the former. These inclose nearly always a grass-grown space, where daisies and dandelions began to abound with the earliest consent of spring. Most public places and edifices in Italy have been so much photographed that few have any surprise left in them: one is sure that one has seen them before; but the cloisters are not yet the prey of this sort of preacquaintance. Whether the vaults and walls of the colonnades are beautifully frescoed, like those of Sta. Maria Novella or Sta. Annunziata or San Marco, or the place has no attraction but its grass and sculptured stone, it is charming; and these cloisters linger in my mind as something not less Florentine in character than the Ponte Vecchio or the Palazzo Pubblico. I remember particularly an evening effect in the cloister of Santa Annunziata, when the belfry in the corner, lifted aloft on its tower, showed with its pendulous bells like a great, graceful flower against the dome of

the church behind it. The quiet in the place was almost sensible; the pale light, suffused with rose, had a delicate clearness; there was a little agreeable thrill of cold in the air; there could not have been a more refined moment's pleasure offered to a sympathetic tourist loitering slowly homeward to his hotel and its *table d'hôte*; and why we cannot have old cloisters in America, where we are getting everything that money can buy, is a question that must remain to vex us. A suppressed convent at the corner of, say, Clarendon street and Commonwealth Avenue, where the new Brattle street church is, would be a great pleasure on one's way home in the afternoon; but still I should lack the final satisfaction of dropping into the chapel of the Brothers of the Misericordia, a little farther on towards Santa Maria Novella.

The sentimentalist may despair as he pleases, and have his fill of panic about the threatened destruction of the Ponte Vecchio, but I say that while these brothers, "black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream," continue to light the way to dusty death with their flaring torches through the streets of Florence, the mediæval tradition remains unbroken; Italy is still Italy. They knew better how to treat Death in the middle ages than we do now, with our vain profanation of flowers to his service, our loathsome dapperness of "burial caskets," and dress-coat and white tie for the dead. Those simple old Florentines, with their street wars, their pestilences, their manifold destructive violences, felt instinctively that he, the inexorable, was not to be hidden or palliated, not to be softened or prettified, or anyway made the best of, but was to be confessed in all his terrible gloom; and in this they found, not comfort, not alleviation, which time alone can give, but the anæsthesia of a freezing horror. Those masked and trailing sable figures, sweeping through the wide and narrow ways by night to the wild, long rhythm of their chant, in the red light of their streaming torches, and bearing the heavily draped bier in their midst, supremely awe the spectator, whose heart falters within him in the presence of that which alone is certain to be. I cannot say they are so effective by daylight, when they are carrying some sick or wounded person to the hospital; they have not their torches then, and the sun seems to take a cynical satisfaction in showing their robes to be merely of black glazed cotton. An anteroom of their chapel was fitted with locked and numbered drawers, where the brothers kept their robes; half a dozen coffin-shaped biers and litters stood about, and the floor was strewn with laurel-leaves,—I suppose because it was the festa of St. Sebastian.



THE BROTHERS OF MISERICORDIA.

VIII.

I do not know that the festas are noticeably fewer than they used to be in Italy. There are still enough of them to account for the delay in doing almost anything that has been promised to be done. The carnival came on scatteringly and reluctantly. A large sum of money which had been raised for its celebration was properly diverted to the relief of the sufferers by the inundations in Lombardy and Venetia, and the Florentines patiently set about being merry each on his own personal account. Not many were visibly merry, except in the way of business. The gentlemen of the operatic choruses clad themselves in stage-armor, and went about under the hotel-windows, playing and singing, and levying contributions on the inmates; here and there a white clown or a red devil figured through the streets; two or three carriages feebly attempted a *corso*, and there was an exciting rumor that *confetti* had been thrown from one of them: I did not see the *confetti*. There was for a long time doubt whether there was to be any *veglione* or ball on the

last night of the carnival; but finally there were two of them: one of low degree at the Teatro Umberto, and one of more pretension at the Pergola Theater. The latter presented an agreeable image of the carnival ball which has taken place in so many romances: the boxes filled with brilliantly dressed spectators, drinking champagne; the floor covered with maskers, gibbering in falsetto, dancing, capering, coquetting till daylight. This, more than any other aspect of the carnival, seemed to give one the worth of his money in tradition and association. Not but that towards the end the masks increased in the streets, and the shops where they sold costumes were very gay; but the thing is dying out, as at least one Italian, in whose veins the new wine of Progress had wrought, rejoiced to tell me. I do not know whether I rejoiced so much to hear it; but I will own that I did not regret it a great deal. Italy is now so much the sojourn of barbarians that any such gayety must be brutalized by them, till the Italians turn from it in disgust. Then it must be remembered that the carnival was fostered by their tyrants to corrupt and ener-

vate them; and I cannot wonder that their love of Italy is wounded by it. They are trying to be men, and the carnival is childish. I fancy that is the way my friend felt about it.

IX.

AFTER the churches, the Italians are most at home in their theaters, and I went as often as I could to see them there, preferably where they were giving the Stenterello plays. Stenterello is the Florentine mask or type who survives the older Italian comedy which Goldoni destroyed; and during carnival he appeared in a great variety of characters at three different theaters. He is always painted with wide purplish circles round his eyes, with an effect of goggles, and a hare-lip; and his hair, caught into a queue behind, curls up into a pigtail on his neck. With this face and this wig he assumes any character the farce requires, and becomes delicious in proportion to his grotesque unfitness for it. The best Stenterello was an old man, since dead, who was very famous in the part. He was of such a sympathetic and lovely humor that your heart warmed to him the moment he came upon the stage, and when he opened his mouth, it scarcely mattered what he said: those Tuscan gutturals and abounding vowels as he uttered them were enough; but certainly to see him in "Stenterello and his own Corpse," or "Stenterello Umbrellamender," or "Stenterello Quack Doctor" was one of the great and simple pleasures. He was an actor who united the quaintness of Jefferson to the sweetness of Warren; in his wildest burlesque he was so true to nature in every touch and accent, that I wanted to sit there and spend my life in the innocent folly of enjoying him. Apparently, the rest of the audience desired the same. Nowhere, even in Italy, was the sense of rest from all the hurrying, great weary world outside so full as in certain moments of this Stenterello's absurdity at the Teatro Rossini, which was not otherwise a comfortable place. It was more like a section of a tunnel than like a theater, being a rounded oblong, with the usual tiers of boxes, and the pit where there were seats in front, and two-thirds of the space left free for standing behind. Every day there was a new bill, and I remember "Stenterello White Slave in America" and "Stenterello as Hamlet" among the attractions offered. In fact, he runs through an indefinite number of dramas, as Brighella, Arlecchino, Pantalone, Florindo, Rosaura and the rest, appear and reappear in the comedies of Goldoni while he is temporizing with the old *commedia d'arte*, where he is at his best.

At what I may call the non-Stenterello theaters in Florence, they were apt to give versions of the more heart-breaking, vow-broken, French melodramas, though occasionally there was a piece of Italian origin, generally Giacosa's. But it seemed to me that there were now fewer Italian plays given than there were twenty years ago; and the opera season was almost as short and inclement as in Boston.

X.

I VISITED many places of amusements more popular than the theater, but I do not know that I can fitly offer them all to the more polite and formal acquaintance of my readers, whom I like always to figure as extremely well-behaved and well-dressed persons. Which of these refined and fastidious ladies and gentlemen shall I ask, for example, to go with me to see a dying Zouave in wax in a booth at the Mercato Vecchio, where there were other pathetic and monstrous figures? At the door was a peasant-like personage who extolled himself from time to time as the inventor of a musical instrument within, which he said he had exemplarily spent his time in perfecting, instead of playing cards and *mora*. I followed him inside with the crowd, chiefly soldiers, who were in such overwhelming force that I was a little puzzled to make out which corps and regiment I belonged to; but I shared the common edification of the performance, when our musical genius mounted a platform before a most intricate instrument, which



THE CLOWN.

combined in itself, as he boasted, the qualities of all other kinds of instruments. He shuffled off his shoes and played its pedals with his bare feet, while he sounded its pipes with his mouth, pounding a drum-attachment with one hand and scraping a violin-attachment with the other. I do not think the instrument will ever come

into general use, and I have my doubts whether the inventor might not have better spared a moment or two of his time to *mora*. I enjoyed more a little vocal and acrobatic entertainment, where again I found myself in the midst of my brothers in arms. Civilians paid three cents to come in, but we military only two; and we had the best seats and smoked throughout the performance. This consisted of the feats of two nice, innocent-looking boys, who came

out and tumbled, and of two sisters who sang a very long duet together, screeching the dialogue with which it was interspersed in the ear-piercingest voices; it represented a lovers' quarrel, and sounded very like some which I have heard on the roof and the back fences. But what I admired about this and other popular shows was the perfect propriety. At the circus in the Via Nazionale they had even a clown in a dress-coat.

Of course, the two iron tanks full of young crocodiles which I saw in a booth in our piazza classed themselves with great moral shows, because of their instructiveness. The water in which they lay soaking was warmed for them, and the chill was taken off the air by a sheet-iron stove, so that, upon the whole, these saurians had the most comfortable quarters in the whole shivering city. Although they had up a sign, "*Animali pericolosi—non si toccano,*" nothing was apparently further from their thoughts than biting; they lay blinking in supreme content, and allowed a captain of horse to poke them with his finger throughout my stay, and were no more to be feared than that younger brother of theirs whom the showman went about with in his hand, lecturing on him; he was half-hatched from his native egg, and had been arrested and neatly varnished in the act for the astonishment of mankind.

XI.

WE had the luck to be in Florence on the 25th of March, when one of the few surviving ecclesiastical shows peculiar to the city takes place. On that day a great multitude, chiefly of peasants from the surrounding country, assemble in front of the Duomo to see the explosion of the Car of the Pazzi. This car somehow celebrates the exploit of a crusading Pazzi, who broke off a piece of the Holy Sepulcher and brought it back to Florence with him; I could not learn just how or why, from the very scoffing and ironical little pamphlet which was sold in the crowd; but it is certain the car is covered with large fire-crackers, and if these explode successfully, the harvest for that year will be something remarkable. The car is stationed midway between the Duomo and the Baptistry, and the fire to set off the crackers is brought from the high altar by a pyrotechnic dove, which flies along a wire stretched for that purpose. If a mother with a sick child passes under the dove in its flight, the child is as good as cured.

The crowd was vast, packing the piazza outside around the car and the cathedral to its walls with all sorts and conditions of people, and every age and sex. An alley between the living walls was kept open under

the wire, to let the archbishop, heading a procession of priests, go out to bless the car. When this was done, and he had returned within, we heard a faint pop at the high altar, and then a loud fizzing as the fiery dove came flying along the wire, showering sparks on every side; it rushed out to the car, and then fled back to the altar, amidst a most satisfactory banging of the fire-crackers. It was not a very awful spectacle, and I suspect that my sarcastic pamphleteer's description was in the mood of most of the Florentines looking on, whatever the peasant thought. "'Now, Nina,' says the priest to the dove, 'we're almost ready, and look out how you come back, as well as go out. That's a dear! It's for the good of all, and don't play me a trick—you understand? Ready! Are you ready? Well, then,—*Gloria in excelsis Deo,*—go, go, dear, and look out for your feathers! *Shhhhh!* pum, pum! Hurrah, little one! Now for the return! Here you come! *Shhhhh!* pum, pum, pum! And I don't care a fig for the rest!' And he goes on with his mass, while the crowd outside console themselves with the cracking and popping. Then those inside the church join those without, and follow the car up to the corner of the Pazzi palace, where the unexploded remnants are fired in honor of the family."

XII.

THE civil rite now constitutes the only legal marriage in Italy, the blessing of the church going for nothing without it before the law; and I had had a curiosity to see the ceremony which one may see any day in the office of the syndic. The names of those intending matrimony are posted for a certain time on the base of the Public Palace, which gives everybody the opportunity of dedicating sonnets to them. The pay of a sonnet is one franc, so that the poorest couple can afford one; and I suppose the happy pair whom I saw waiting in the syndic's anteroom had provided themselves with one of these simple luxuries. They were sufficiently commonish, kindly-faced young people, and they and their friends wore, with their best clothes, an air of natural excitement. A bell sounded, and we followed the group into a large handsome saloon hung with red silk and old tapestries, where the bride and groom sat down in chairs placed for them at the rail before the syndic's desk, with their two witnesses at their left. A clerk recorded the names and residences of all four; and then the usher summoned the syndic, who entered, a large, stout old gentleman, with a tricolor sash accenting his fat middle—waist he had none. Everybody rose, and he asked the bride and groom severally if they would help each other

through life and be kind and faithful; then in a long, mechanical formula, which I could not hear, he dismissed them. They signed a register, and the affair was all over for us, and just begun for them, poor things. The bride seemed a little moved when we returned to the ante-room; she borrowed her husband's handkerchief, lightly blew her nose with it, and tucked it back in his breast-pocket.

XIII.

IN pursuance of an intention of studying Florence more seriously than anything here represents, I assisted one morning at a session of the police court, which I was willing to compare with the like tribunal at home. I



A SCAVENGER.

found myself in much the same sort of crowd as frequents the police court here; but upon the whole the Florentine audience, though shabby, was not so truculent-looking nor so dirty as the Boston one; and my respectability was consoled when I found myself shoulder to shoulder with an *abbate* in it. The thing that chiefly struck me in the court itself was the abundance of form and "presence," as compared with ours. Instead of our clerk standing up in his sack-coat, the court was opened by a crier in a black gown with a white shoulder-knot, and order was kept by others as ceremoniously appareled, instead of two fat, cravatless officers in blue flannel jackets

and Japanese fans. The judges, who were three, sat on a dais under a bust of King Umberto, before desks equipped with inkstands and sand-boxes exactly like those in the theater. Like the ushers, they wore black gowns and white shoulder-knots, and had on visorless caps bound with silver braid; the lawyers also were in gowns. The business with which the court opened seemed to be some civil question, and I waited for no other. The judges examined the witnesses, and were very keen and quick with them, but not severe; and what I admired in all was the good manner—self-respectful, unabashed; nobody seemed brow-beaten or afraid. One of the witnesses was one whom people near me called a *gobbino* (hunchbackling), and whose deformity was so grotesque that I am afraid a crowd of our people would have laughed at him, but no one smiled there. He bore himself with dignity, answering to the beautiful Florentine name of Vanuccio Vanucci; the judges first addressed him as *voi* (you), but slipped insensibly into the more respectful *lei* (lordship) before they were done with him. I was too far off from them to make out what it was all about.

XIV.

I BELIEVE there are not many crimes of violence in Florence; the people are not brutal, except to the dumb brutes, and there is probably more cutting and stabbing in Boston; and for shooting, it is almost unheard of. A society for the prevention of cruelty to animals has been established by some humane English ladies, which directs its efforts wisely to awakening sympathy for them in the children. They are taught kindness to cats and dogs, and it is hoped that when they grow up they will even be kind to horses. These poor creatures, which have been shut out of the pale of human sympathy in Italy by their failure to embrace the Christian doctrine ("*Non sono Cristiani!*"), are very harshly treated by the Florentines, I was told; though I am bound to say that I never saw an Italian beating a horse. The horses look wretchedly underfed and overworked, and doubtless they suffer from the hard, smooth pavements of the city, which are so delightful to drive on; but as for the savage scourgings, the kicking with heavy boots, the striking over the head with the butts of whips, I take leave to doubt if it is at all worse with the Italians than with us, though it is so bad with us that the sooner the Italians can be reformed the better.

If they are not very good to animals, I saw how kind they could be to the helpless and hapless of our own species, in a visit which I paid one morning to the Pia Casa di Rico-



A COURT-YARD NEAR FLORENCE.

vero in Florence. This refuge for pauperism was established by the first Napoleon, and is formed of two old convents, which he suppressed and joined together for the purpose. It has now nearly eight hundred inmates, men, women, and children; and any one found begging in the streets is sent there. The whole is under police government, and an officer was detailed to show me about the airy wards and sunny courts, and the clean, wholesome dormitories. The cleanliness of the place, in fact, is its most striking characteristic, and is promoted in the persons of the inmates by baths, perfunctory or voluntary, every week. The kitchen, with its shining coppers, was deliciously fragrant with the lunch preparing, as I passed through it: a mush of Indian meal boiled in a substantial meat-broth. This was served with an abundance of bread and half a gill of wine in pleasant refectories; some very old incapables and incurables were eating it in bed. The aged leisure gregariously gossiping in the wards, or blinking vacantly in the sunshine of the courts, was an enviable spectacle; and I should have liked to know what these old fellows had to complain of; for, of course, they were discontented. The younger inmates were all at work; there was an admirably appointed shop where they were artistically instructed in wood-carving and fine cabinet-work; and there were whole rooms full of little girls knitting, and of big girls weaving; all the clothes

worn there are woven there. I do not know why the sight of a very old tailor in spectacles, cutting out a dozen suits of clothes at a time, from as many thicknesses of cloth, should have been so fascinating. Perhaps in his presence I was hovering upon the secret of the conjectured grief of that aged leisure: its clothes were all cut of one size and pattern!

XV.

I HAVE spoken already of the excellent public schools of Florence, which I heard extolled again and again as the best in Italy; and I was very glad of the kindness of certain friends, which enabled me to visit them nearly all. The first which I saw was in that famous old Via de' Bardi where Romola lived, and which was inspired by a charity as large-minded as her own. It is for the education of young girls in book-keeping and those departments of commerce in which they can be useful to themselves and others, and has a subsidy from the state of two-fifths of its expenses; the girls pay each ten francs a year for their tuition, and the rest comes from private sources. The person who had done most to establish it was the lady in whose charge I found it, and who was giving her time to it for nothing; she was the wife of a professor in the School of Superior Studies (as the University of Florence modestly calls itself), and I hope I may be forgiven, for the

sake of the completer idea of the fact which I wish to present, if I trench so far as to add that she found her devotion to it consistent with all her domestic duties and social pleasures: she had thoroughly philosophized it, and enjoyed it practically as well as æsthetically. The school occupies three rooms on the ground floor of an old palace, whose rear windows look upon the Arno; and in these

She said she had no trouble with her girls, and she was experiencing now, at the end of the first year, the satisfaction of success in her experiment: hers I call it, because, though there is a similar school in Naples, she was the foundress of this in Florence.

There is now in Italy much inquiry as to what the Italians can best do to resume their place in the business of the world; and in



ON THE ARNO — REAR OF VIA DE' BARDI.

rooms are taught successively writing and mathematics, the principles of book-keeping, and practical book-keeping, with English and French throughout the three years' course. The teacher of penmanship was a professor in the Academy of Fine Arts, and taught it in its principles; in this case, as in most others, the instruction is without text-books, and seemed to me more direct and sympathetic than ours: the pupil felt the personal quality of the teacher. There are fifty girls in the school, mostly from shop-keeping families, and of all ages from twelve to seventeen; and although it had been established only a short time, several of them had already found places. They were prettily and tidily dressed, and looked interested and happy. They rose when we entered a room, and remained standing till we left it; and it was easy to see that their mental training was based upon a habit of self-respectful subordination, which would be quite as useful hereafter. Some little infractions of discipline—I have forgotten what—were promptly rebuked by Signora G——, and her rebuke was received in the best spirit.

giving me a letter to the director of the Popular Schools in Florence, Signora G—— told me something of what certain good heads and hearts there had been thinking and doing. It appeared to these that Italy, with her lack of natural resources, could never compete with the great industrial nations in manufacturing, but they believed that she might still excel in the mechanical arts which are nearest allied to the fine arts, if an intelligent interest in them could be reawakened in her people, and they could be enlightened and educated to the appreciation of skill and beauty in these. To this end a number of Florentine gentlemen united to establish the Popular Schools, where instruction is given free every Sunday to any man or boy of any age who chooses to wash his hands and face and come. Each of these gentlemen pledges himself to teach personally in the schools, or to pay for a teacher in his place; there is no aid from the state; all is the work of private beneficence, and no one receives pay for service in the schools except the porter.

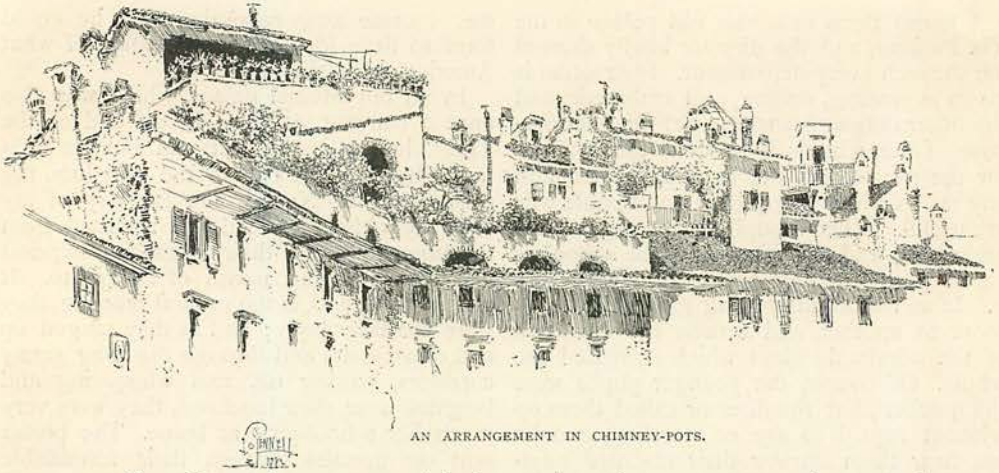
I found them in a vast old palace in the Via Parione, and the director kindly showed me through every department. Instruction is given in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and the other simpler branches; but the final purpose of the schools is to train the faculties for the practice of the decorative arts, and any art in which disciplined and nimble wits are useful. When a pupil enters, his name is registered, and his history in the school is carefully recorded up to the time he leaves it. It was most interesting to pass from one room to another, and witness the operation of the admirable ideas which animated the whole. Of course, the younger pupils were the quicker; but the director called them up without regard to age or standing, and let me hear them answer their teachers' questions, merely saying, "This one has been with us six weeks; this one, two; this one, three years," etc. They were mostly poor fellows out of the streets, but often they were peasants who walked five or six miles to and fro to profit by the chance offered them for a little life and light. Sometimes they were not too clean, and the smell in the rooms must have been trying to the teachers; but they were decently clad, attentive, and well-behaved. One of the teachers had come up through the schools, with no other training, and was very efficient. There was a gymnasium, and the pupils were taught the principles of hygiene; there was abundant scientific apparatus, and a free circulating library. There is no religious instruction, but in one of the rooms a professor from the *Studii Superiori* was lecturing on the Duties of a Citizen; I heard him talk to the boys about theft; he was very explicit with them, but just and kindly; from time to time he put a question to test their intelligence and attention. An admirable spirit of democracy—that is to say, of humanity and good sense—seemed to prevail throughout. The director made one little fellow read to me. Then, "What is your business?" he asked. "Cleaning out eave-troughs." Some of the rest tittered. "Why laugh?" demanded the director, sternly. "It is an occupation, like another."

There are no punishments; for gross misbehavior the offender is expelled. On the other hand, the pupils are given premiums for excellence, and are encouraged to put them into the savings-bank. The whole course is for four years; but in the last year's room few remained. Of these was a certain *rosso* (red-head), whom the director called up. Afterwards he told me that this *rosso* had a wild romantic passion for America, whither he supremely desired to go, and that it would be an inexpressible pleasure for him to have seen

me. I came away regretting that he could form so little idea, from my looks, of what America was really like.

In an old Medici palace, which was also once a convent, at the Oltarno end of the Trinità bridge, is the National Female Normal School, one of two in the kingdom, the other being at Naples. On the day of my visit, the older girls had just returned from the funeral of one of their professors—a priest of the neighboring parish of S. Spirito. It was at noon, and, in the natural reaction, they were chatting gayly; and as they ranged up and down stairs and through the long sunny corridors, pairing off, and whispering and laughing over their luncheon, they were very much like school-girls at home. The porter sent me upstairs through their formidable ranks to the room of the professor to whom I was accredited, and he kindly showed me through his department. It was scientific, and to my ignorance, at least, was thoroughly equipped for its work with the usual apparatus; but at that moment the light, clean, airy rooms were empty of students; and he presently gave me in charge of the directress, Signora Billi, who kindly led the way through the whole establishment. Some Boston lady, whom she had met in our educational exhibit at the Exposition in Paris, had made interest with her for all future Americans by giving her a complete set of our public-school textbooks, and she showed me with great satisfaction, in one of the rooms, a set of American school furniture, desks, and seats. But there the Americanism of the Normal School ended. The instruction was oral, the text-books few or none; but every student had her notebook in which she set down the facts and principles imparted. I do not know what the comparative advantages of the different systems are; but it seemed to me that there must be more life and sympathy in the Italian.

The pupils, who are of all ages from six years to twenty, are five hundred in number, and are nearly all from the middle class, though some are from the classes above and below that. They come there to be fitted for teaching, and are glad to get the places which the state, which educates them for nothing, pays scantily enough—two hundred and fifty dollars a year at most. They were all neatly dressed, and well-mannered, of course, from the oldest to the youngest; the discipline is perfect, and the relation of teachers and pupils, I understood, most affectionate. Perhaps after saying this I ought to add that the teachers are all ladies, and young ladies. One of these was vexed that I should see her girls with their hats and sacks on: but they were little ones and just going home; the little



AN ARRANGEMENT IN CHIMNEY-POTS.

ones were allowed to go home at one o'clock, while the others remained from nine till two. In the room of the youngest were two small Scotchwomen who had quite forgotten their parents' dialect; but in their blue eyes and auburn hair, in everything but their speech, they were utterly alien to the dusky bloom and gleaming black of the Italians about them. The girls were nearly all of the dark type, though there was here and there one of those opaque southern blondes one finds in Italy. Fair or dark, however, they all had looks of bright intelligence, though I should say that in beauty they were below the American average. All their surroundings here were wholesome and good, and the place was thoroughly comfortable, as the Italians understand comfort. They have no fire in the coldest weather, though at Signora G——'s commercial school they had stoves, to be used in extreme cases; but on the other hand they had plenty of light and sunny air, and all the brick floors and whitewashed walls were exquisitely clean. I should not have been much the wiser for seeing them at their lessons, and I shall always be glad of that impression of hopeful, cheerful young life which the sight of their leisure gave me, as they wandered happy and free through the corridors where the nuns used to pace with downcast eyes and folded palms; and I came away very well satisfied with my century.

My content was in nowise impaired by the visit which I made to the girls' public school in Via Montebello. It corresponded, I suppose, to one of our primary schools; and here, as elsewhere, the teaching was by dictation; the children had readers, but no other text-books; these were in the hands of the teachers alone. Again everything was very clean, very orderly, very humane and kindly. The little ones in the various rooms, called up at random, were wonderfully proficient in reading,

mathematics, grammar, and geography; one small person showed an intimacy with the map of Europe which was nothing less than dismaying if one had had his difficulties in keeping the Caspian Sea out of it.

I did not succeed in getting to the boys' schools, but I was told that they were practically the same as this; and it seemed to me that if I must miss either, it was better to see the future mothers of Italy at their books. Here alone was there any hint of the church in the school: it was a Friday, and the priest was coming to teach the future mothers their catechism.

XVI.

FEW of my readers, I hope, have failed to feel the likeness of these broken and ineffectual sketches to the pictures in stone which glare at you from the windows of the mosaics on the Lungarno and in the Via Borgognissanti; the wonder of them is greater than the pleasure. I have myself had the fancy, in my work, of a number of small views and figures of mosaic, set in a slab of black marble for a table-top,—or, if the reader does not like me to be so ambitious, a paper-weight; and now I am tempted to form a border to this *capo d'opera*, bizarre and irregular, such as I have sometimes seen composed of the bits of *pietra viva* left over from a larger work. They are mere fragments of color, scraps and shreds of Florence, which I find still gleaming more or less dimly in my note-books, and I have no notion of making any ordered arrangement of them.

But I am sure that if I shall but speak of how the sunshine lies in the Piazza of the Annunziata at noonday, falling on the feebly dribbling grotesques of the fountain there, and on John of Bologna's equestrian grand duke, and on that dear and ever lovely band of babes by Luca della Robbia in the façade

of the Hospital of the Innocents, I shall do enough to bring it all back to him who has once seen it, and to justify myself at least in his eyes.

The beautiful pulpit of Donatello in San Lorenzo I find associated in sensation with the effect, from the old cloistered court of that church, of Brunelleschi's dome and Giotto's tower showing in the pale evening air above all the picturesque roofs between San Lorenzo and the cathedral; and not remote from these is my pleasure in the rich vulgarity and affluent bad taste of the modern decoration of the *Caffè del Parlamento*, in which one takes one's ice under the chins of all these pretty girls, popping their little sculptured heads out of the lunettes below the frieze, with the hats and bonnets of fifteen years ago on them.

Do you remember, beloved brethren and sisters of Florentine sojourn, the little windows beside the grand portals of the palaces, the *cantine*, where you could buy a graceful wicker-covered flask of the prince's or marquis's wine? "Open from ten till four—till one on holidays," they were lettered; and in the Borgo degli Albizzi I saw the Cantina Filicaja, though it had no longer the old sigh for Italy upon its lips:

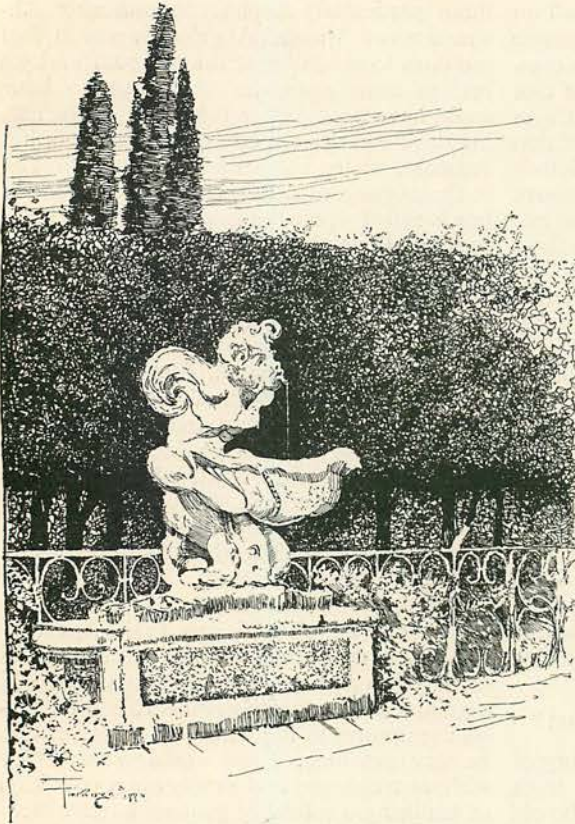
"Deh, fossi tu men bella o almen più forte!"

I am far from disdainng the memory of my horse-car tour of the city, on the track which followed so nearly the line of the old city wall that it showed me most of the gates still left standing, and the last grand duke's arch of triumph, very brave in the sunset light. The tramways make all the long distances in the Florentine outskirts and suburbs, and the cars never come when you want them, just as with us, and are always as crowded.

I had a great deal of comfort in two old fellows, unoccupied custodians, in the convent of San Marco, who, while we were all fidgeting about, doing our Fra Angelico or our Savonarola, sat motionless in a patch of sunshine and tranquilly gossiped together in senile falsetto. On the other hand, I never saw truer grief, or more of it, in a custodian than the polite soul displayed in the Bargello on whom we came so near the hour of closing one day that he could show us almost nothing. I could see that it wrung his heart that we should have paid our francs to come in then, when the Dante in the peaceful Giotto fresco was only a pensive blur to the eye, and the hideous realizations of the great Pest in wax were mere indistinguishable nightmares. We tried to console him by assuring him of our delight in Della Robbia's singing boys in another room, and of the compensation we had in getting away from the Twelve (Useless) Labors of Hercules by Rossi, and two or

three particularly unpleasant muscular Abstractions of Michael Angelo. It was in fact too dark to see much of the museum, and we had to come again for that; but no hour could have been better than that of the falling dusk for the old court, with its beautiful staircase, where so many hearts had broken in the anguish of death, and so many bloody heads rolled upon the insensible stones since the first Podestà of Florence had made the Bargello his home, till the last Medici had made it his prison.

Of statues and of pictures I have spoken very little, because it seems to me that others have spoken more than enough. Yet I have hinted that I did my share both of suffering and enjoying in galleries and churches, and I have here and there still lurking in my consciousness a color, a look, a light, a line from some masterpiece of Botticelli, of Donatello, of Mino da Fiesole, which I would fain hope will be a consolation forever, but which I will not vainly attempt to impart to others. I will rather beg the reader, when he goes to Florence, to go for my sake, as well as his own, to the Academy and look at the Spring of Botticelli as long and often as he can keep away from the tender and dignified and exquisitely refined Mino da Fiesole sculptures in the Badia, or wherever else he may find them. These works he may enjoy without technique, and simply upon condition of his being a tolerably genuine human creature. There is something also very sweet and winningly simple in the archaic reliefs in the base of Giotto's tower; and the lessee of the Teatro Umberto in showing me behind the scenes of his theater had a politeness that was delicious, and comparable to nothing less than the finest works of art. In quality of courtesy the Italians are still easily first of all men, as they are in most other things when they will, though I am not sure that the old gentleman who is known in Florence as The American, *par excellence*, is not perhaps preëminent in the art of driving a circus-chariot. This compatriot has been one of the most striking and characteristic features of the place for a quarter of a century, with his team of sixteen or twenty horses guided through the Florentine streets by the reins gathered into his hands. From time to time his horses have run away and smashed his carriage, or at least pulled him from his seat, so that now he has himself strapped to the box, and four grooms sit with folded arms on the seats behind him, ready to jump down and fly at the horses' heads. As the strange figure, drawn at a slow trot, passes along, with stiffly-waxed mustache and impassive face, it looks rather like a mechanical contrivance in the human form; and you are yielding to this fancy, when, approaching



FOUNTAIN IN THE BOBOLI GARDENS.

a corner, it breaks into a long cry, astonishingly harsh and fierce, to warn people in the next street of its approach. It is a curious sight, and seems to belong to the time when rich and privileged people used their pleasure to be eccentric, and the "madness" of Englishmen especially was the amazement and delight of the Continent. It is in character with this that the poor old gentleman should bear one of our own briefly historical names, and that he should illustrate in the indulgence of his caprice the fact that no great length of time is required to arrive at all that centuries can do for a noble family. I have been sorry to observe a growing impatience with him on the part of the Florentine journalists. Upon the occasion of his last accident they asked if it was not time his progresses should be forbidden. Next to tearing down the Ponte Vecchio, I can imagine nothing worse.

Journalism is very active in Florence, and newspapers are sold and read everywhere; they are conspicuous in the hands of people who are not supposed to read; and more than once the cab-driver whom I called at a street corner had to fold up his cheap paper and put it away before he could respond. They are of a varying quality. The "Nazione," which

is serious and political, is as solidly, if not so heavily, written as an English journal; the "Fanfulla della Domenica," which is literary, contains careful and brilliant reviews of new books. The cheap papers are apt to be inflammatory in politics; if humorous, they are local and somewhat unintelligible. The more pretentious satirical papers are upon the model of the French—a little more political, but abounding mostly in jokes at the expense of the seventh commandment, which the Latins find so droll. There are in all thirty periodicals, monthly, weekly, and daily, published in Florence, which you are continually assured is no longer the literary center of Italy. It is true none of the leaders of the new realistic movement in fiction are Florentines by birth or residence; the chief Italian poet, Carducci, lives in Bologna, the famous traveler De Amicis lives in Turin, and most new books are published at Milan or Naples. But I recur again to the group of accomplished scholars who form the intellectual body of the *Studii Superiori*, or University of Florence; and thinking of such an able and delightful historian as Villari, and such a thorough and indefatigable littérateur as Gubernatis, whom the

congenial intellectual atmosphere of Florence has attracted from Naples and Piedmont, I should not, if I were a Florentine, yield the palm without a struggle.

One does not turn one's face from Florence without having paid due honors in many a regretful, grateful look to the noble and famous river that runs through her heart. You are always coming upon the Arno, and always seeing it in some new phase or mood. Belted with its many bridges, and margined with towers and palaces, it is the most beautiful and stately thing in the beautiful and stately city, whether it is in a dramatic passion from the recent rains, or dreamily raving of summer drouth over its dam, and stretching a bar of silver from shore to shore. The tawny splendor of its flood; the rush of its rapids; the glassy expanses in which the skies mirror themselves by day, and the lamps by night; the sweeping curve of the pale buff line of houses that follows its course, give a fascination which is not lost even when the anxiety of a threatened inundation mingles with it. The storms of a single night, sending down their torrents from the hills, set it foaming; it rises momentarily, and nothing but the presence of all the fire-engine companies in the city allays

public apprehension. What they are to do to the Arno in case it overflows its banks, or whether they are similarly called out in summer when it shrinks to a rill in its bed, and sends up clouds of mosquitoes, I do not know; nor am I quite comfortable in thinking the city is drained into it. From the vile old rancid stench which steam up from the crevices in the pavement everywhere, one would think the city was not drained at all; but this would be as great a mistake as to think New York is not cleaned, merely because it looks filthy.

Before we left Florence we saw the winter drowse broken in the drives and alleys of the Cascine; we saw the grass, green from November till April, snowed with daises, and the floors of the dusky little dingles empurpled with violets. The nightingales sang from the poplar tops in the dull rich warmth; the carriages blossomed with lovely hats and parasols; handsome cavaliers and slim-waisted ladies dashed by on blooded horses (I will say blooded for the effect), and a fat flower-girl urged her wares upon every one she could overtake. It was enough to suggest what the Cascine could be to Florence in the summer, and enough to make one regret the winter, when one could have it nearly all to one's self.

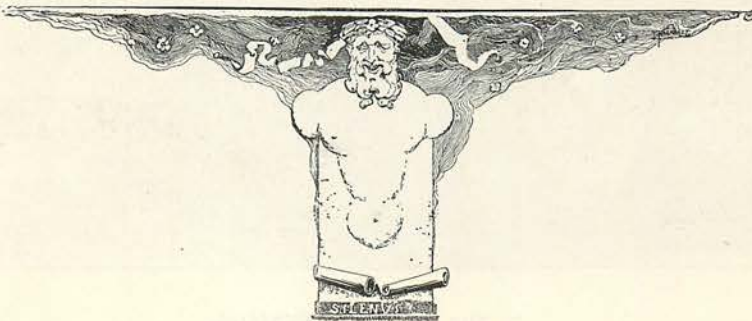
You can never see the Boboli Garden with the same sense of ownership, for it distinctly belongs to the king's palace, and the public has the range of it only on Sundays, when the people throng it. But, unless one is very greedy, it is none the less a pleasure for that, with its charming, silly grottoes, its masses of ivy-covered wall, its curtains of laurel-hedge, its black spires of cypress and domes of pine, its weather-beaten marbles, its sad, unkempt lawns, its grotesque, overgrown fountain, with those sea-horses so much too big

for its lake, its wandering alleys and moss-grown seats abounding in talking age and whispering lovers. It has a tangled vastness in which an American might almost lose his self-consciousness; and the view of Florence from one of its heights is incomparably enchanting,—like every other view of Florence.

Like that, for instance, which one has from the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio, looking down on the picturesque surfaces of the city tiles, the silver breadth and stretch of the Arno, the olive- and vine-clad hills, the vast champaign widening in the distance till the misty tops of the mountains softly close it in at last. Here, as from San Miniato, the domed and galleried bulk of the cathedral showed prodigiously first of all things; then the eye rested again and again upon the lowered crests of the mediæval towers, monumentally abounding among the modern roofs that swelled above their broken pride. The Florence that I saw was indeed no longer the Florence of the sentimentalist's feeble desire, or the romancer's dream, but something vastly better: contemporary, real, busy in its fashion, and wholesomely and every-daily beautiful. And my heart still warms to the famous town, not because of that past which, however heroic and aspiring, was so wrong-headed and bloody and pitiless, but because of the present, safe, free, kindly, full of possibilities of prosperity and fraternity, like Boston or Denver.

The weather had grown suddenly warm overnight. I looked again at the distant mountains, where they smoldered along the horizon: they were purple to their tips, and no ghost of snow glimmered under any fold of their mist. Our winter in Florence had come to an end.

W. D. Howells.



RELIEF FROM PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA.