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THE CITY OF FLOWERS.

“ALONG the banks where smiling Arno sweeps
Was modern Luxury of Commerce born,
And buried Learning rose, redeem'd to a new morn.”



N a certain morning in the autumn of the year 1881, the four million inhabitants of the city of London awoke to find their city enveloped in a mist, which, in the absence of more suggestive terms, may be imperfectly described by the adjectives cold, thick, damp, and penetrating.

More than three-fourths of this vast population probably thought very little about the matter, as the phenomenon is by no means an unusual one at that season of the year, but it is certain that at least two individuals on that memorable day in November sat down to breakfast by gas-light, in a well-known hotel in London, in a profound and hopeless state of dejection; a lamentable condition, solely to be attributed to the depressing influence of the inclement weather.

Under ordinary circumstances, the hour for our morning repast was not sufficiently early to require the assistance of artificial light, and on that day the dark morning had caused us to rise later than usual, for the cathedral clock of Westminster was chiming the hour of eleven when we began to discuss the programme for the day. It was shortly agreed that nothing would be so suitable for a dark day as to quietly remain within doors until the fog lifted; but as the day wore on and a thick sulphurous smoke took possession of the atmosphere, bringing with it deeper shades of murky yellow gloom, it became evident that the light of day had altogether refused to visit London for the present, and that its imperfect substitute, gas, must be permitted to take its place until further notice.

Under these circumstances a proposition to go to the North Pole would have been hailed with joy. At the hour of two o'clock my companion, an elderly gentleman, who had been patiently reading aloud, laid aside his book and quietly wiped the fog from his spectacles, where it had so thickly accumulated as to seriously interfere with his vision.

“Dear me! This will never do,” said Paterfamilias, decisively. He walked across the room several times to and fro, reflectively, and presently stopped in front of a window.

The fog was worse than ever. It had now assumed that sickly hue that is classified by Londoners as a “pea-soup

fog.” A linkboy was rushing swiftly by with his flaring torch trying to penetrate the darkness for a passing cab.

“I never saw anything like this,” continued my irate parent. “And I think we had better be off before the explosion takes place.”

I quietly acquiesced in the verdict of his superior wisdom, and we forthwith began with one accord to consult the tables of departure of trains for the Continent, in search of means of relief by hasty and unpremeditated flight.

A week afterward the bright sunshine of Italy was streaming joyously and unchecked through the long balcony windows of a house in Florence on the Lung' Arno, which we had taken for the winter.

A journey to the antipodes could not have effected a greater change of climate. We were amply repaid for our sudden change of plans, which had brought us post-haste to Florence, by cheerfulness and contentment which the clear skies of Italy soon restored to their normal condition.

It was always our custom in traveling to keep a kind of journal or note-book in which daily events and impressions of various sorts were jotted down as they occurred; but as an account of this description would prove at best a somewhat egotistical and disjointed narrative, it would perhaps be more suitable to endeavor to modestly place the result of our experiences in an impersonal form, beginning with a brief account of Florence.

The city of Florence is supposed to have been founded by the Romans under Sulla, soon after the beginning of the Christian Era. History tells us that it was completely destroyed by barbarians during the dark ages, and by this term, barbarians, the lordly Romans were accustomed to describe all those who were not included in their own magnificent empire. This work of destruction was probably effected by the Gauls under Charlemagne or his successors, and was so completely carried out that literally nothing now remains of the original city; not even any portion of the walls, the four gates which are now standing, namely, the Porta Romana, Porta San Miniato, Porta Alla Croce, and the Porta Al Prato, all having been constructed when the city was re-

built. Thus, unlike Rome and many other Italian cities, Florence contains no ruins, but is at the present time in very nearly as substantial and perfect a condition as it has ever enjoyed since its destruction in the dark ages.

Early in the eleventh century Florence again grew up upon its former site, like the fabled Phoenix rising from its ashes. The city has extended its limits, for it has increased with the natural growth of generations, and now numbers not far from one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants; and the modern portion is laid out with spacious boulevards and fine residences. But the older portion of the city consists of narrow streets and high houses with old-fashioned roofs of tiles, just as it stood in the days of Dante, nearly six centuries ago.

The city of Florence is built upon both banks of the river Arno, which can only be described as a wide and turbid stream, utterly devoid of any pretensions to beauty, excepting from the borrowed loveliness of the valley through which it slowly winds its devious way. In its normal condition the Arno has no considerable volume of water, notwithstanding its width and high banks, but is fordable in many places. Peasants are often seen leisurely walking through the river, which in many places is scarcely more than knee-deep, even in mid-stream. These happy people do not seem to mind getting their clothes wet, and are generally singing or laughing with each other, their voices echoing merrily along the banks of the river.

The Italian name for Florence is *Firenze*, meaning flowers. The name is well chosen, for the profusion of roses, clematis, and other beautiful flowers is one of the first sights to attract a stranger's notice. Flowers seem to grow with such luxuriance in this climate that they have little or no value. Immense garlands of roses are carried about the streets in baskets in mid-winter; and the most exquisite bouquets are often carelessly tossed into carriages as they pass the stands of the flower-girls, in the hope of eliciting some trifling recompense in return. It would be considered very rude behavior to hurry past with no acknowledgment; but this, to the credit of travelers be it stated, is seldom done, and a small piece of silver is always gratefully received.

The River Arno at Florence is spanned by six bridges. Two of these, one at the upper, the other at the lower extremity of the city, are modern suspension bridges. Each of the other four has its own history and name: they are the Ponte Alle Grazie, Ponte Vecchio, Ponte Santa Trinità, and the Ponte Carraja. The Ponte Vecchio and the Ponte Santa Trinità are the most worthy of mention, and they are as unlike each other as can well be imagined.

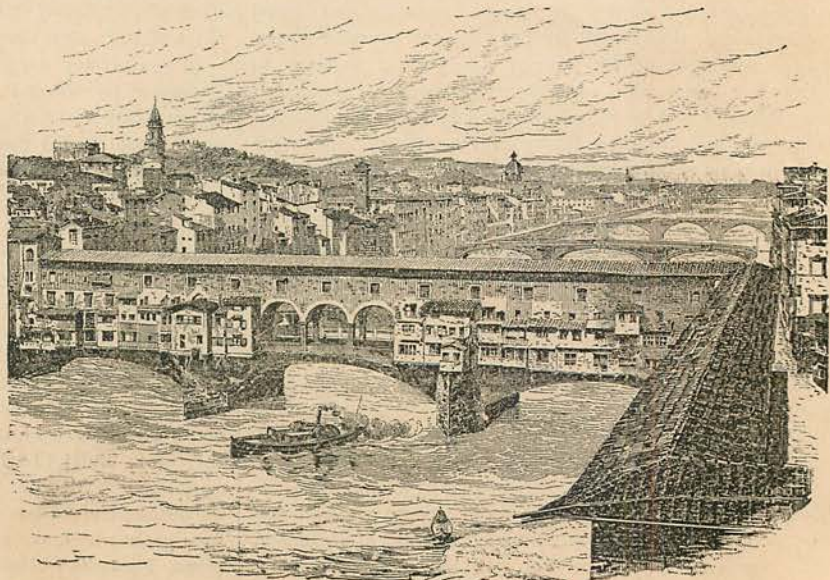
The Ponte Santa Trinità was originally constructed in the year 1252, and rebuilt three centuries later, so that the present structure is only a little more than three centuries old. It is a massive stone bridge, with heavy buttresses, admirably constructed to withstand the floods which at times fill the ordinarily sluggish and shallow Arno to overflowing. The Ponte Santa Trinità is a wonderfully graceful bridge, and spans the river with three symmetrical arches. At either end it is ornamented with statues representing the four seasons.

The Ponte Vecchio is said to

have existed as early as the Roman period. The present bridge was built by Taddeo Gaddi in the year 1362. The Ponte Vecchio consists entirely of houses and shops, which belong to the goldsmiths. On either side of the street there are little booths, just as they are in an Oriental bazar, the only difference being that there is no roof overhead. Windows and show-cases are rich with the well-known Florentine and Byzantine mosaics, Neapolitan coral, and other pretty kinds of jewelry. These shops are not always the best places to patronize, for there are greater varieties to be found in some of the better class of shops on the Via Tornabuoni or the Lung' Arno, especially in articles of Etruscan workmanship, and the latter shops are also more to be depended upon. The Ponte Vecchio is a quaint old structure, probably quite unlike any other bridge in the world. Unfortunately it has been found to be unsafe, owing to its age and the great weight of buildings which it supports. It is very much to be hoped that some expedient may be devised by which the Ponte Vecchio can be repaired and preserved in its picturesque condition, for it is quite a distinctive feature of the landscape. At the center of this bridge there is an open place between the houses on either side, from which an extended view of the River Arno is disclosed in both directions.

The greater portion of the city of Florence is situated on the right bank of the Arno, which is bordered on both sides by a wide street or esplanade. Houses are built on the side of the esplanade farthest from the river and facing it, while a stone parapet protects the banks of the stream from causing danger to passing vehicles or to pedestrians. It may be observed, in this place, that carriage-hire is most inexpensive in Italy, and that a strong prejudice exists against going on foot to any place to which it is possible to drive. It is indeed most unfashionable among the natives to walk, and it is only strangers who make their excursions in this way. The broad expanse of the river Arno is exposed to view on both sides, and a wide boulevard thus created, of which the river forms the center. This boulevard is the Lung' Arno, each different portion of which has its own name, for the boulevard is a long one, extending the entire length of the city, and on both sides of the river. Names like Lung' Arno Corsini and Lung' Arno Serristori serve to indicate the place exactly, and there are various other sections of the Lung' Arno, each with its own distinguishing name.

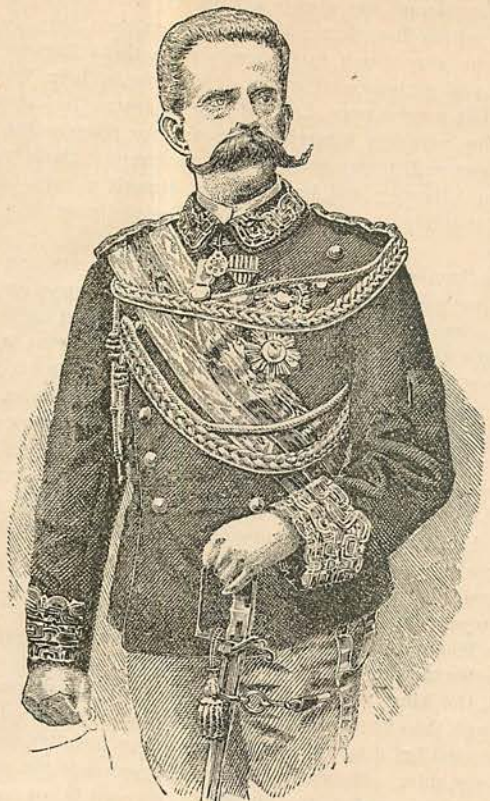
On the right bank the Lung' Arno Nuovo terminates



PONTE VECCHIO (OLD BRIDGE) BUILT 1355.

at a broad square, the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele; at this point the Cascine, the favorite drive of the Florentines, begins.

The Cascine (*pronounced Casheeny*), is to Florence what Hyde Park is to London, or rather what Central Park is to New York, for in many ways it resembles the latter more closely than it does the former, being more out of the city, and long and narrow in shape. Many gay equipages are to be seen here every afternoon, for the wealthy Florentines are fond of display, and the Cascine is both a convenient



UMBERTO I., KING OF ITALY.

and a fashionable promenade. The drive is two miles in length, with an oval in the center, in which a military band often plays.

Cascine means a dairy, and the drive was so named because there used to be a dairy farm where the park has been laid out. At the end of the drive is a monument surmounted by a statue. The statue was erected in memory of a young Indian Prince, the Rajah of Kohlapore, who died at Florence fifteen years ago, and was reduced to ashes, according to Indian rites, on a funeral pyre at this spot.

We found the climate of Florence to be an exceedingly temperate and salubrious one. Extremes of heat and cold are rarely felt, although at times the winds are keen in winter; and in summer an occasional sultry day is experienced when the sirocco or south wind is blowing. Winter is decidedly the best time to visit Italy, especially the six months from November to May. During the summer season there is very little rain, and the dust and glare sometimes become oppressive. Strangers are not altogether safe in remaining after the first of June.

There is a Roman proverb:

*"Dogs and foreigners alone walk in the sun;
Christians in the shade."*

Even in winter it is imprudent to court too much exposure to the sun's dazzling rays, however acceptable their warmth may be. This is a mistake frequently made by strangers,

who instinctively avoid the shady side of a street in winter, an error which a more extended experience teaches them is often attended with headache and lassitude, and sometimes with far more serious results.

The difference in temperature between sunshine and shadow we often discovered to be something marvelous. The native Italian, however, stoically throws the end of his long cloak over his shoulder and always keeps in the shade, knowing the treachery of the sun's fierce rays.

If this beautiful and brilliant sunshine is dangerous to natives, it is even more to be dreaded by those who come from a different and more rugged climate, as they are consequently more susceptible to its dangerous influence.

During the course of our protracted stay in Italy, we had the good fortune to make a number of acquaintances, having friends residing both in Florence and in Rome. The inhabitants of Tuscany—and especially does this remark apply to Florence—are noted for their kind and courteous treatment of



QUEEN MARGARET OF ITALY.

strangers. Their innate politeness is made manifest not only in the tendencies of society life, which are hospitable and attentive, but even in the polite and deferential manners of the peasants, and of those of whom a chance question may be inquired in the street. If a beginner in the language commit any errors in the construction of his sentences, or in the choice of words, as is in fact unavoidable, no notice is taken of the error, which is often ludicrous in the extreme, but with true forbearance and politeness an attempt is made to gather the meaning carefully and earnestly, and the reply is couched in terms which readily make themselves understood. This is of itself of the greatest assistance and encouragement in the study of a language, and is notably not the case with either the French or the Germans. The former being only too ready to find fault with slight defects of pronunciation, accent, or idiom; while the latter seem positively unable to comprehend the possibility of a mistake in their difficult language. The Italians, on the contrary, and especially the Florentines, are very quick to catch an idea,

and a single word is only required in order to suggest a rapid train of thought. The student also shortly becomes aware of his own shortcoming by example and by further study, and thus gains confidence, which is really the most important thing of all in conversation, by reason of the indulgence with which his faults are overlooked.

Admission being gained to the social life of Florence by means of resident friends or by good letters of introduction, the pleasure of a visit there is greatly increased by the natural urbanity of the upper classes, who are in this respect notably different from the Roman nobility, although their lineage and social position is not in any way inferior to that of the latter. Your Florentine friends may often place their carriage and pair at your disposal, or include you in their party at the box at the opera for an entire season, to come and go at your own pleasure. But the haughtiness of some of the Romans is proverbial, and possesses an element of the ridiculous in its absurd and lofty arrogance. It is said there are families in Rome who actually refuse to attend the court balls of the king and queen at the Quirinal Palace, or to recognize them in any way except officially, because they are not princes by birth and of true royal extraction.

The House of Savoy, from which Umberto or Humbert I., the present king of Italy, is descended, dates back to the eleventh century, at which time they were counts of Savoy. In the fifteenth century, they became a powerful family, and the title was changed to duke. Their possessions included Piedmont, Savoy, Province, and the Island of Sicily. An exchange was made from Sicily to Sardinia, and they became kings of Sardinia, the palace being at Turin. During the reign of Carlo Emmanuel IV., father of Victor Emmanuel I. of Sardinia, all of their possessions were swept away, excepting Sardinia, by the French Revolution and the conquests of Napoleon.

Thus, at the beginning of the present century, the condition of the Duke of Savoy and kings of Sardinia was worse than it had ever been since their foundation by their illustrious ancestor Wittekind, a contemporary and opponent of Charlemagne. If it had not been for English protection, caused by hostility to the Little Corporal and dread of his success, their only remaining possession, the Island of Sardinia, might also have been seized upon by the mighty conqueror, and the House of Savoy thus have become extinct.

It was reserved for Victor Emmanuel II. of Sardinia, and afterwards Victor Emmanuel I. of Italy, to retrieve the fallen fortunes of his ancestors; which he effected in so masterly a manner that in the year 1860 he was crowned King of Italy. Assisted by the bravery of his intrepid general, Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel succeeded in establishing the independence of Italy, and made a place for her among the nations of the earth. By doing this he also rescued Italy from the abyss of ignorance and superstition into which she had been dragged by papal and hierarchical supremacy. Victor Emmanuel was always a great enemy to the pope, an enmity which has descended to his son, and they have both done very much to do away with the influences of bigotry and prejudice of every description in their dominions. The present pope, Leo XIII., never leaves the Vatican, where he considers himself a prisoner, for reasons that do not appear sufficiently evident, as no attempt is made to restrict his liberty; still he considers himself a very badly treated individual, and his power is undoubtedly on the wane in Italy.

King Humbert is greatly beloved by his subjects, and his wife, Queen Margaret, the Pearl of Savoy, is almost an object of adoration among them. During the recent outbreak of Asiatic cholera at Naples, the king fearlessly went to the plague-stricken city, while the pestilence was at its highest, and remained at Naples for several weeks, careless of the great personal danger which he incurred, and thinking only of the influence of his own example of courage and of the good which it lay in his power to do to his afflicted countrymen. The king never left Naples until the cholera commenced to abate, and continuously visited the sick and the dying with kind words of sympathy and tender sorrow that endeared his name to every heart.

Two years ago, after the great earthquake at Casamicciola, in the Island of Ischia (a favorite health resort from Naples), a disaster in which many hundred unfortunate victims perished, the king promptly visited the scene of desolation, although the effects of the earthquake had scarcely left the island, and buildings were still continuing to totter and fall on every side. Manfully hiding his emotion at the sufferings of the wounded, the king with his own hands assisted to rescue them from perilous positions, saw that every care and attention was bestowed upon them, and finally drew largely upon his own private resources for the public good.

A good and noble nature like this can afford to despise the affected indifference of patrician arrogance, even if its pedigree dated from the time of Noah.

The early history of Florence, from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, discloses a stormy and restless conflict between two hostile factions, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, representing respectively the spiritual and the temporal power, or, as they were also styled, Neri and Bianchi. These political struggles are worthy of notice, partly because they led to the banishment of Dante, when the Guelphs finally gained the ascendancy, and also because it was the natural result of an agitated community that a powerful family like the Medici should obtain the reins of government. The history of the Medici forms a prominent feature in the archives of Tuscany, and it was *under their government as grand*



CHURCH OF ST. MARCO, FLORENCE.



ONE OF FRA ANGELICO'S ANGELS, UFFIZI GALLERY.

dukes of Tuscany that art and science made the greatest strides in Florence. They were enabled to become patrons of the fine arts by means of their vast wealth, to which fact their supremacy was also due, for we are told that the Medici's were not of patrician origin. This is also indicated by their coat of arms, in which three balls play a conspicuous part. Their coat of arms is still engraved upon the fronts of many noble palaces and public buildings not only in Florence, but also in Sienna and other Tuscan cities in which they resided from time to time. The device is said to represent three pills, in allusion to the art of healing which their name is supposed to indicate. An equestrian statue in bronze of Cosimo de Medici is now standing in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence in a large public square, the Signoria. Cosimo was surnamed Pater Patriæ, and was the grandfather of Lorenzo el Magnifico, who attained a very high reputation as a statesman, poet, and patron of art and science.

After the death of Lorenzo, Hieronymus Savonarola founded a hierarchical republic in Florence, but this only lasted for a few years. Savonarola was burned at the stake as a heretic, in the year 1498, for questioning the infallibility of the pope.

Opposite the statue of Cosimo de Medici, also in the Signoria, is a bronze fountain representing Neptune and the Tritons. This fountain marks the spot where Savonarola and two other Dominican monks suffered martyrdom. Shortly after this melancholy event, which effectually disestablished a theocratic form of government, the Medici family again obtained control of Tuscany, which they retained possession of until the middle of the eighteenth century.

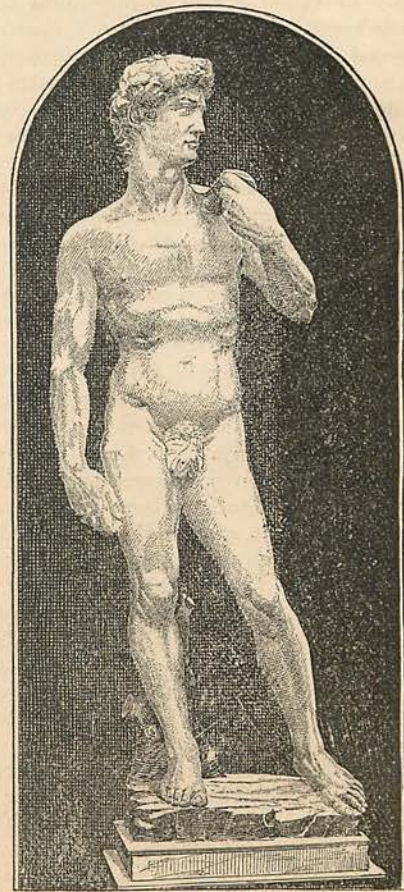
Florence is noted, among other things, for its picture galleries, two of the grandest collections in existence being in that favored city. There is probably no place in the world which contains so many masterpieces as the Pitti and the Uffizi galleries, both of which have a world-wide celebrity; the tribuna of the Uffizi being considered almost a standard of excellence. Many visits are required to do anything like justice to these extensive and wonderful collections of paintings, while any attempt to describe the galleries and the gems of art which they contain would not only be futile and inadequate, but would also be altogether inconsistent with the limits or purpose of the present article.

The Uffizi and Pitti galleries are daily visited by artists who obtain permission to copy pictures. It frequently happens that they are obliged to wait for many weeks, owing to the fact that several artists have applied for the same subject. This is especially the case with the Madonnas of Raphael, Carlo Dolci, and Murillo, copies of which are always in demand.

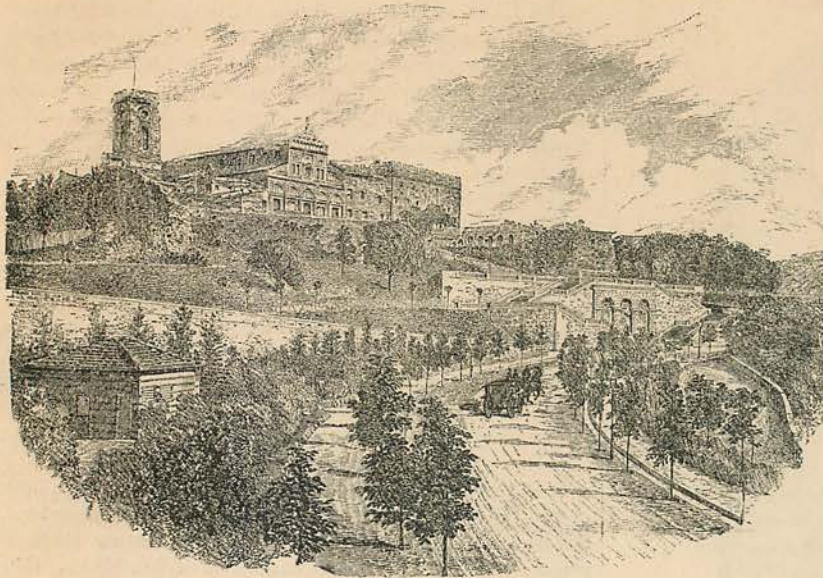
The Monastery of San Marco is not in use at the present time, but contains relics of Savonarola, who was formerly an inmate of the monastery, and frescoes by Fra Angelico, representing sacred subjects, in the conception and portrayal of which the artist-monk was without a rival. Many of his frescoes represent angels, and the deep piety of the artist as well as his simplicity and purity of character can be detected in his treatment of the subject. Profound and unlimited scope is afforded to the ideal, for his creations would be purely imaginary, and as such afford an index to his inmost thoughts.

In the cell of Savonarola in San Marco the chair and desk of the great preacher and reformer are carefully preserved. Savonarola's autograph and a picture representing his martyrdom are also among the curiosities of San Marco. The building was originally occupied by Silvestrine monks, but was given to the Dominicans by Cosimo de Medici. The cloisters of San Marco are not so finely decorated as some of the interior rooms of the monastery, notably the sacristy, the chapter-house, and the refectory, the walls of which are covered with frescoes of sacred subjects by Fra Angelico and Fra Bartolomeo, another Dominican, who was a worthy disciple of the same school of painting.

The science of illuminating books and manuscripts was brought to great perfection by the Dominicans, and many



STATUE OF DAVID BY MICHAEL ANGELO.



SAN MINIATO, FLORENCE.

manuscripts are preserved in San Marco to which years of patient labor have been devoted, their contents being carefully printed by hand and richly illuminated with colors and with gold. The time-stained pages of these huge folios are made of vellum or parchment, and their thick leather covers are bound together with bands of brass or iron, and secured by heavy clasps.

In the Piazza San Marco is also situated the Academia di Belle Arte. This collection of paintings is interesting rather from an historical point of view, as illustrating the development of the Tuscan and Umbrian schools, than on account of any special object of art. The paintings of Cimabue, Botticelli, and Giotto seldom form an attractive feature to mere amateurs; but there are others in this collection by Perugino which are much admired. Some of Fra Angelico's finest works are preserved in the Belle Arte, which also contains bas-reliefs in terra-cotta by Luca della Robbia.

Here is also the original of the colossal statue of David by Michael Angelo. Owing to its great size, the statue is named *Il Gigante* (the Giant), and stands quite alone in a well-lighted circular room surmounted by a dome, in which the graceful symmetry of the statue appears to great advantage. The statue was placed in the Belle Arte, after its removal from the Palazzo Vecchio, at the entrance to which it at one time occupied a prominent position. The statue of David was one of the earlier works of Michael Angelo, who was only about twenty years old at the time of commencing the task, and it has been pronounced one of his grandest masterpieces. It is said to have been constructed from an immense block of marble, which had been rejected as spoiled at the quarries at Carrara, but at the present time no defects can be observed in the marble which would lead to its condemnation. All of the original imperfections have been carefully worked out by the skillful hands of the great sculptor, while, at the same time, the attitude and general effect of the statue have not been impaired by reason of the causes, whatever they may have been, which led to the block of marble being rejected for other uses.

A copy of this statue of David in bronze now occupies an imposing position on the summit of a hill near Florence. Placed in the center of a large open square, the "*Piazza Michelangelo*," the Titanic figure can be seen from a distance clearly defined against the sky. The hill is a favorite resting-place for visitors, who ascend it in order to examine the statue of David more minutely, and also on account of the

bird's-eye view of Florence which is obtained from this elevated position.

At the foot of the hill the road passes the ancient Franciscan monastery of San Salvatore del Monte, while on the summit of the hill, opposite the statue of David, stands the old marble church of San Miniato, supposed to have been built in the twelfth century, one of the oldest buildings in Florence. Owing to its position, the statue and the church behind it form a prominent feature in the landscape. There is a large cemetery near San Miniato, which is usually open, as it is still in use, being in fact the principal cemetery of Florence.

In a side street at right angles to the Lung' Arno is the Casa Guidi, where, under the title of "*Casa Guidi's Windows*," Mrs. Browning wrote that beautiful poem descrip-

tive of Tuscany and her beloved Florence. The Casa Guidi is noteworthy only for the associations with which it is connected, for it is a plain stone house with white walls like many others in Florence.

In the Protestant Cemetery, which is in a retired part of the city, there is a magnificent sarcophagus of white marble, on which is recorded the fact that Elizabeth Barrett Browning was born in the year 1809, and died at Florence in 1861.

Near at hand is a modest tablet of brown stone erected to the memory of Theodore Parker, born 1812, died 1860, whose last days were also passed at Florence, after he fell a victim to the lingering disease, consumption, which brought his remarkable career to an untimely end.

There is something inexpressibly touching about a lonely grass-grown grave in a foreign land, and the mingled thoughts and recollections which a visit of such a nature calls to memory. The entire absence of any ornament seemed to be typical of the quiet, unassuming demeanor of this wonderfully gifted man, and his unselfish and fearless life.

A prominent feature in every Italian town is its churches, rich as they are with works of art by the hands of well-known painters and sculptors. The principal churches in Florence are San Lorenzo, Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Annunziata, Santo Spirito, and last, but not least, the Duomo or Cathedral. A detailed description of these churches and their contents would rather be the province of a guide-book than of a paper devoted to a brief retrospect of Florence and its surroundings; but a few words may be said to indicate the position which they occupy in the history of Florentine art.

San Lorenzo is the oldest church in Florence, and one of the most ancient in Italy, having been founded originally in the fourth century. It has been twice rebuilt upon its former site. The sacristy was built by Michael Angelo as a Mausoleum for the Medici family, with whose statues it is richly ornamented.

The church of Santa Croce is the Westminster Abbey of Florence, containing as it does the tombs and monuments of her most illustrious citizens.

"In Santa Croce's holy precincts lie
Ashes which make it holier, dust which is
Even in itself an immortality.
Though there were nothing save the past, and this,
The particle of those sublimes

Which have returned to chaos ; here repose
 Angelo's, Alfieri's bones, and his,
 The starry Galileo with his woes.
 Here Machiavelli's earth returned to whence it rose.

* * * * *

"Ungrateful Florence ! Dante sleeps afar,
 Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding shore :
 Thy factions, in their worse than civil war,
 Proscribed the bard, whose name for evermore
 Their children's children would in vain adore
 With the remorse of ages : and the crown
 Which Petrarch's laureate brow supremely wore
 Upon a far and foreign soil had grown !
 His life, his fame, his grave—though rifled—not thine own."

Childe Harold, canto iv., verse 57.

It is remarkable in these verses how much Lord Byron has described of what is interesting in the church of Santa Croce.

The superb monument to the memory of Dante is a cenotaph, for at the time of his banishment Dante went to Ravenna, where he died in 1321. Some years afterward, much to the regret of the Florentines, the citizens of Ravenna refused to allow him to be buried in the city of his birth, and from which he had been exiled in disgrace.

Michael Angelo died at Rome in 1564, at an advanced age, being more than eighty years old at the time of his death. His monument in Santa Croce rivals that of Dante in its magnificence ; unlike the illustrious poet, he rests in Santa Croce, being removed from Rome a few weeks after his decease, his remains being in perfect preservation.

The quaint, unpretentious little house in which Dante was born more than six centuries ago is still standing in a narrow street, the Via San Martino, and a memorial tablet on the walls has this inscription :

"In questa casa degli Alighieri nacque il divino poeta."

Dante's family name was Alighieri, and the house was probably occupied by his family for several generations before his birth ; it is most likely not far from eight centuries old. From its extreme age the building became dilapidated and in danger of falling. It has now been restored to its former condition, and all of its original features have been carefully preserved ; the inscription, "In this house of the Alighieri was born the divine poet," being of comparatively modern date.

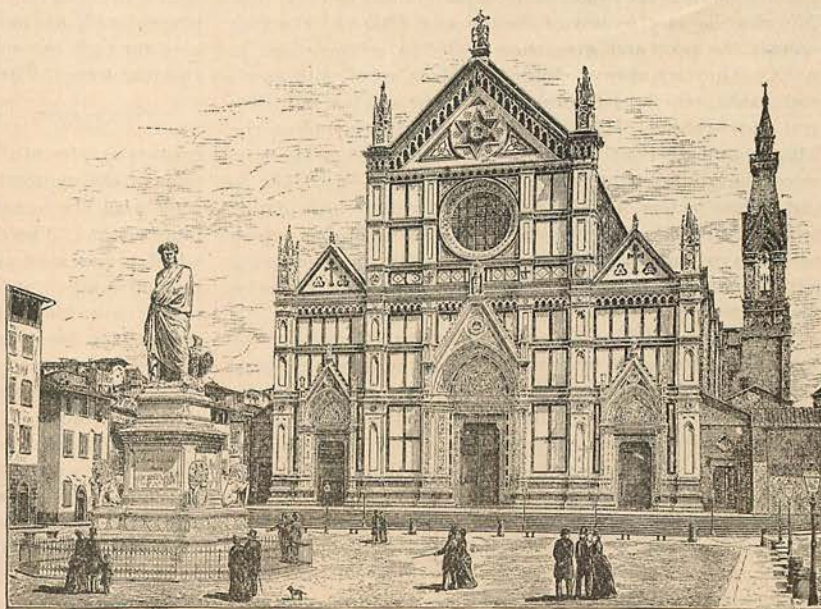
Parallel to the Via de' Bardi, a name which will be recognized by all who have read *Romola*, is the Via della Costa. Here is a house formerly inhabited by Galileo, who died in 1642. On a hill beyond the city gates is the villa of Galileo, from which, and from the Torre del Gallo, Galileo used to make his astronomical observations. At this villa Galileo was visited by Milton shortly before his death, and the latter portion of his life was passed there after he lost his sight and was obliged to relinquish his scientific investigations.

Near Santa Croce is the Via Buonarrotti, named after the family of Michael Angelo, whose former habitation is still standing. A lofty building, almost opposite the celebrated Pitti Palace, is pointed out as having once been the home of Macchiavelli.

The Italian name of the cathedral, which is a central figure in the views of Florence, is Il Duomo di Santa Maria del Fiore, St. Mary of Florence, or literally, "of the Flowers."

The cathedral was commenced in the beginning of the fourteenth century, and has passed through skillful hands in course of its construction. The dome was the first that had ever been erected on a cathedral, and the idea that walls could be made strong enough to bear the immense weight of a dome was ridiculed. The original design was made by Arnolfo di Cambio da Colle, and modified by Filippo Brunelleschi. This building, which is principally celebrated for its bronze doors by Ghiberti, pronounced by Michael Angelo "fit to be the gates of Paradise," is octagonal in shape and surmounted by a dome ; but it was thought dangerous in the extreme to place a dome on the roof of the cathedral at a so much greater height from the ground and with different conditions of support. Brunelleschi was confident of his ability to make the structure sufficiently strong by supporting the dome on the four corners where the nave and the transept intersect each other. Finally, exasperated by repeated refusal to listen to his plans, he became so much annoyed and so vehement in his denunciations of the stupidity of the council, that some of their number lifted him from the ground, being a small man, and carried him bodily out of the assembly, still loudly vociferating and gesticulating fiercely, greatly to the amusement of all present. It is worthy of note that his design was subsequently adopted, and has served for a model for every cathedral in Italy since that time.

Adjacent to the cathedral is the campanile, or bell-tower, a square structure three hundred feet in height, built in a style to correspond with the cathedral. The campanile was commenced by Giotto, who also at one time had charge of the cathedral, but neither edifice was completed in his lifetime. The windows of the campanile are Italian Gothic in style, and rich in delicate tracery. It is decorated with statues of the four evangelists by no less a sculptor than Donatello, and with four sibyls by the hand of Luca della Robbia. Below are bas-reliefs representing various subjects, among which may be mentioned the Seven Cardinal Virtues, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Beatitudes, and the Seven Sacraments—all from designs by Giotto, Pisano, and Luca della Robbia.



CHURCH OF SANTE CROCE AND STATUE OF DANTE.



ONE OF THE MISERICORDIA.

Tuscany was at one time the seat of government of Italy, the court being held at Florence after the accession of Victor Emmanuel. The apartments of state in the Pitti Palace are open to visitors, including the suit of rooms devoted to the Princes Humbert and Amadeus, his younger brother, who was King of Spain before the accession of Alphonso I. to the throne.

In the Piazza del Duomo, and directly opposite the cathedral, is the church of the Misericordia founded in 1244. The Misericordia is a society of Brothers of Charity, who visit among the poor and give them relief in sickness and in want. They are always clothed in black robes with cowls and masks, which give them a somewhat somber and funereal appearance. Many prominent people, including the king and members of the nobility, are members of the Misericordia, giving it their pecuniary support, even if they do not take an active part. Another of the functions of this society is to conduct the funerals of the poorer classes, which are defrayed out of the funds of the society, thus removing a frequent source of distress from those who would otherwise feel the weight of the expenditure.

The environs of Florence are very beautiful, owing to the mountainous country by which it is surrounded. Situated on the hills to the north is the ancient town of Fiesole, three miles distant from Florence, which it is said to have at one time rivaled in size and prosperity. Fiesole was founded at about the same time as Florence, and the growth of the one has also witnessed the decline of the other. At the present time, Fiesole numbers barely three thousand inhabitants. They are mostly poor, and support themselves by the manufacture of straw goods. Beyond the brow of the hill on which Fiesole is situated, there is a well-preserved fragment of an ancient Etruscan wall, which furnishes a remarkable evidence of the stability of ancient architecture,

and shows the enormous blocks of stone, worthy of the Herculean strength of the fabled Cyclops, which were employed in its construction. Recent excavations at Fiesole have also brought to light an old stone amphitheater, a further proof of its former consequence. Fiesole was the native town of Fra Angelico, and here is also kept the "Golden Book," which was supposed to ennoble those whose names are inscribed upon its pages, connected with a donation for charitable purposes.

In a precisely opposite direction from Florence, and at nearly the same distance as Fiesole, is an ancient Carthusian monastery, the Certosa di Val d'Ema. This monastery is also situated on a hill covered with cypress and olive trees, and commands fine views of the surrounding country. The interior of the building is richly decorated with frescoes and carving, the ancient marble chapel with the crypt beneath it and the cloisters and chapter-house furnishing an example of mediæval architecture and fertility of design. The monastery has now but few inmates, and has always been celebrated for the manufacture of Chartreuse, a delicate cordial which takes its name from the Carthusians. In an inner courtyard is an old well of pure spring water, deliciously cold, clear, and sparkling. This deep spring is surmounted by a curiously carved stone basin, representing an urn, over the center of which is suspended the oaken bucket for drawing water, the rope passing over an iron wheel above. The basin is said by the monks to have been designed by Michael Angelo, but it seems more probable that it was made before his time, and that Brunelleschi was the sculptor who made the drawings for its construction.

In the neighborhood of Certosa, Monte Oliveto (Mount of Olives) and Bello Sguendo are also points from which can be seen the best views of the Valley of the Arno and the distant Apennines, while in the dim distance toward the sea loom up the marble mountains of Carrara, from whose quarries comes the pure white marble with which the interior of many palaces and public buildings is richly decorated in all parts of the world.

It would be unfair to bid farewell to Florence without a word devoted to Vallombrosa, a shaded and sequestered spot high up in the Apennines, twenty-five miles distant from the city. Vallombrosa is often visited by Florentines, as well as by strangers, on account of the cool retreat which it affords during the long Italian summer. The Apennines are thickly covered with firs and pines, the cones of which are largely used for fuel, but on the hills of Vallombrosa are also many chestnut trees. The line,

"Thick as autumn leaves that strew the brooks of Vallombrosa,"

conveys an idea of the rarity of deciduous trees in other portions of the mountains, which is found to be quite in character with the numerous evergreens with which the Apennines abound. There is an ancient monastery at Vallombrosa which is now used principally for guests, as it has been suppressed and its former uses abandoned. A legend relates that it was founded by one San Giovanni Gualberto (John Albert), the descendant of a wealthy and powerful family of Florence, who was a profligate youth, but whose life afterward became converted by remorse to one of unusual austerity and penitence. His brother Hugo having perished by the hand of an assassin, Giovanni was pledged by family traditions to avenge his brother's death. Happening to meet the cowering miscreant on a certain Good Friday, Giovanni, although accompanied by a retinue of armed followers, unexpectedly spared his enemy's life. Moved by a sudden generous impulse, Giovanni listened to his cowardly supplications for mercy and threw down his avenging sword. From that day he resolved to amend his dissolute ways and enter a cloister. He therefore retired to the Monastery of

San Miniato, but finding the discipline not sufficiently rigorous for his altered tastes, he sought the sequestered glades of Vallombrosa, and was the founder of the monastery which is still standing in that mountainous retreat.

All of the larger cities of Italy, and Florence is no exception to the rule, are infested with mendicants, who are frequently a source of no little annoyance to strangers by their persistent demands. The average Italian beggar has been aptly defined as a mere speculator, and therefore not a deserving object of charity. As regards the beggars who sit all day long at the entrances to the principal churches and attract attention by vigorously rattling a box containing a few *soldi*, it may be observed that their demands are not ruinous, and that many of them are cripples, blind, or otherwise incapacitated from earning a living. It is perhaps due to an inadequate system of public relief that they resort to this means of alleviating their distress, but it is also no doubt attributable to the fact that strangers usually visit the cathedrals, and that they look to them rather than to their own countrymen for assistance. These cases would probably not be included under the term speculators, but it is greatly to be feared that children are frequently taught to beg at an early age by some lazy scoundrel who keeps them for this express purpose and appropriates their alms to his own undeserving use. This wicked man, the *padrone*, or master, as he is called, beats and ill-uses them when they return to him empty handed, and teaches them such words and falsehoods as are most likely to appeal to the sympathy of foreigners, for it is always the stranger to whom such supplication is addressed.

"*Fame, signori, fame! Niente mangiare,*" "Hungry, sirs,

hungry! Nothing to eat," is a very usual form with which the childish petition for alms is accompanied, and it rarely fails to obtain relief, enforced as it is by stories of sickness and want, most of which are undoubtedly mere fabrications. As it is impossible and useless to investigate such cases, or otherwise to discriminate the good from the bad, it is perhaps wiser to act upon the assumption that those cases in which any good would or ought to be done by giving alms are in great measure provided for by the community in which they exist. This is one argument against indiscriminate alms-giving, but the strongest argument is that it only serves to encourage a pernicious system which the government is doing its best to eradicate, and the evil effects of which are only felt by those who thoughtlessly become its victims. It is, however, best for everybody to consult their own ability to give assistance, and judge where it is most likely to do good.

In conclusion, it is impossible to condemn too strongly the not uncommon practice of visiting a great many places in rapid succession, devoting perhaps two or three days to each, and then rushing on to the next point, under the impression that everything has been seen in the place that is worth looking at, and that everything is known about it that is worth knowing. Impressions derived in this way are rarely favorable ones, and the results so obtained are usually confused and inaccurate to the last degree. A comparison might almost be drawn with the system of cramming for an examination, only this system of traveling, if it deserves the name, is even worse than cramming; because the latter requires a certain amount of study, whereas this insanely rushing about, merely in order to say that such a place has been seen, not only leads to nothing, but is positively detrimental.

In order to form anything like an adequate conception of a country, it is necessary in the first instance to study the language of that country, and to become familiar with the ideas with which different subjects are viewed; to appreciate its interests; to know something of the people and their customs; and, finally, to be as far as possible in sympathy with the surroundings and the daily life of its inhabitants. Thus it happens that different impressions and new ideas are created and the education of travel is begun. For traveling is an education, as much as anything else; not only in knowing what to do and how to do it, but also in studying those things which are worthy of remembering in a way to derive benefit from the advantages which they offer.

Nearly every town on the continent, as well as the larger cities, is admirably adapted for a protracted stay, providing it possesses sufficient objects of interest to make it worthy of a visit. In many places, notably in the case of Florence and Rome, furnished houses, or flats, are generally to be obtained for a sojourn of anything over a month's duration.

It is hardly possible to do anything like justice to either place in less than this period, while a great deal more time might be employed to advantage by those who are desirous of studying more deeply the subjects to which their attention will be attracted.

EVA WORDSWORTH.



OLD WELL AT CERTOSA (BY MICHAEL ANGELO).