

FLORENCE

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Florence by Augustus J. C. Hare

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AUGUSTUS J. C. HARE

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BY

AUGUSTUS J. C. HARE

AUTHOR OF "WALKS IN ROME," "DAYS NEAR ROME," ETC.

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FLORENCE.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL ASPECT.

Hotels. *Hotel Europa*, Piazza della Trinità, is a good hotel in a central situation. The *H. del Arno*, *H. de la Grande Bretagne*, *H. New York*, *H. La Pace*, *H. de la Ville*, and *H. Vittoria*, on the Lung' Arno, have more sun and view. *Hotel Paoli*, at the end of the Lung' Arno near the Caseine, is a very comfortable hotel and pension. The *Hotel Milano*, 12, Via Cerretani; and *H. d'Alleanza*, Via della Scala, are comfortable and reasonable, receiving guests *en pension*. The *H. Porta Rossa* is a good Italian second-class hotel.

Lodgings. Good single rooms may be obtained at 30 frs. a month and 5 frs. a month for service, in sunny situations. Most of the houses on Lung' Arno and in the Borg' Ognisanti, which are not hotels, are let in lodgings. There are several excellent *pensions* on or near the Lung' Arno.

Caffè. Doney, 14, Via Tornabuoni, has a European *Restaurant* reputation.

Carriages. Excellent street carriages cost: the course 80 c. The first $\frac{1}{2}$ hour, 1 fr. 30 c.; every $\frac{1}{2}$ hour after, 70 c. Outside the walls, the first $\frac{1}{2}$ hour, 2 frs.; each $\frac{1}{2}$ hour after, 1 fr.

Post Office. In the Piazza of the Uffizi, opposite the entrance of the Gallery.

Telegraph Office. Pal. Ricciardi, 2 Via de' Ginori.

Photographers. The brothers Alinari, 8 Via Nazionale. Schemboche, 38 Borgognisanti. Brogi, close to Ponte S. Trinità.

Sights. Those who sojourn long at Florence will probably make themselves acquainted with most of the buildings described in these pages. A week at least should be given to Florence. For those who are unfortunate enough to spend only two days here it may be suggested that they should—

1st day, *Morning.* Visit the Piazza della Signoria; the Uffizi (especially the Tribune); and walk through the Galleries to the Pitti, returning by the Ponte Vecchio.

Afternoon. See the frescoes at the Carmine, and drive by the Colle to S. Miniato; and, if possible, see the lower part of the Boboli Gardens afterwards.

2nd day, Morning. See the Medici statues in S. Lorenzo; the Cathedral and Baptistery; S. Croce; the Bargello, and return by the Casa di Dante.

Afternoon. See S. Maria Novella, and drive either to Fiesole or Careggi.

'Of all the fairest cities of the earth
None is so fair as Florence. 'Tis a gem
Of purest ray; and what a light broke forth,
When it emerged from darkness! Search within,
Without; all is enchantment! 'Tis the Past
Contending with the Present; and in turn
Each has the mastery.'—*Rogers.*

THE radiant loveliness of the country immediately around Florence renders it the most delightful of all Italian cities for a spring residence, and no one who has once seen the glorious luxuriance of the flowers which cover its fields and gardens, and lie in masses for sale on the broad grey basements of its old palaces, can ever forget them. May is perhaps the most perfect month for Florence. In winter the ice-laden winds from the Apennines blow bitterly down the valley of the Arno. Forsyth mentions that physicians say they can scarcely conceive how people can live at Florence in the winter, or how they can die there in summer.

Florence, 'La bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma,' as Dante calls her, has been far less modernised than Rome since the change of Government, and though, during the short residence here of the Sardinian court, the magnificent old walls of Arnolfo, the greatest glory of the town, were destroyed, to the great injury of the place, with the towers which Varchi describes as 'encircling the city like a garland,'¹ several beneficial additions, such as the drive by the Colle, were introduced. Conservatism is a natural part of the Florentine character, and there is scarcely the site of an old building or a house once inhabited by any eminent person which is not marked by an inscription.

¹ Some of these were demolished in 1527.

Florence existed in Roman times, but never attained any importance till the Middle Ages. In 1198 it already stood at the head of a league of the Tuscan towns against Philip of Swabia. Dante complains of the changes which it strove to introduce in politics and civilisation:—

‘Quante volte del tempo che rimembre,
Leggi, monete, officii e costume
Hai tu mutato, e rinnovato membre?’

The principal families at this time were the *Buondelmonte* and *Uberti*, the *Amidei* and *Donati*. A widow of the noble house of Donati being determined to have no other son-in-law than the head of the great family of Buondelmonte, persuaded him to marry her daughter, who was of matchless beauty, while he was engaged to one of the Amidei. When the marriage was known, the Amidei, and their relations the Uberti, fell upon young Buondelmonte as he was riding across the Ponte Vecchio, and slew him at the foot of the statue of Mars. This murder threw the whole city into confusion, half the citizens siding with the Buondelmonti, half with the Uberti. But in 1246, when the Emperor Frederick II. favoured the Uberti, who as imperialists were now called Ghibellines, the Gueffs or Buondelmonti faction were expelled from Florence.

Upon the death of Frederick II., the Gueffs returned in 1250, and there was a reconciliation. A military confederation was then formed. The six divisions—*Sestiere*—of the town each chose two burgesses—*Anziani*—for a year, and, the better to avoid party spirit, two foreigners, one of whom was to serve as *Podesta*, the other as *Capitano del Popolo*. The confederation was divided under twenty standards, with an annual change of captains—*Gonfalonieri*. In battle, the *Carroccio*, a huge car, drawn by oxen with scarlet trappings, and supporting the standard of Florence, and a bell which was to ring ceaselessly, was to be the great centre and rallying-point.

When Manfred had gained possession of Naples, the Ghibellines hoped by his assistance once more to obtain the supreme power in Florence, but the Anziani discovered their plot and drove them out of the city. They fled to Siena, where, under Farinata degli Uberti, they completely defeated the Florentine army of the Gueffs in the *Battle of Montaperto*, and re-entered Florence in triumph. They would even have destroyed the city but for the noble defence of Farinata, who declared that he had only been induced to conduct the war by the hope of returning to his beloved native place. After Manfred, in fighting against Charles of Anjou, had lost his life and his kingdom, the Gueffs regained their lost power, and a new democratic constitution was formed. The town was then divided into guilds—*Arti*, and to each guild was given a responsible governor—*Consul*, with a *Capitano* and a peculiar standard—*Bandiera*. The guilds, originally only twelve, of which seven were of the upper classes (*il Popolo grasso*) and seven of the

lower (*il Popolo minuto*), were afterwards increased to twenty-one, and even the nobles, if they wished to take part in the government of the town, were enrolled in a guild. When the Guelfs further established their power by calling in Charles of Anjou, before whom the Ghibellines took flight, the council called *Signoria* was formed for the government of Florence. In 1289, the Florentine Guelfs, having established their own power, assisted the popular party at Arezzo in gaining the bloody *Battle of Campaldino*, in which Dante, who had been received into the Guild of Doctors, fought amongst the Guelfic troops. In 1298 the *Palazzo della Signoria* was built at Florence—*per maggior magnificenza e più securità de' Signori*, and many other new buildings were erected. Macchiavelli says—'Never was the town in a more happy or flourishing condition than at this time, rich in population, treasure, and aspect; having 30,000 armed citizens, and 70,000 from its territory (*suo contado*); while the whole of Tuscany was either subject or allied to it.'

Florence had now such power as to fear neither the empire nor its own exiles, but its strength continued to be wasted by internal strife. Fresh elements of discord were found in the quarrels of the great family of the Cerchi, who had become powerful through trade, and the noble race of the Donati. The Cerchi adopted the name of *Bianchi*, the Donati of *Neri*, names borrowed from the Ghibelline and Guelfic divisions of the neighbouring Pistoia. Both were banished in turn, and it was the anger excited by the recall of the Ghibelline Guido Calvacanti which led to the banishment of Dante, who was his personal friend, and who was condemned by a Guelfic court, under the influence of Corso Donati, afterwards himself exiled and put to death.

After the death of Charles of Calabria (in 1328), whose aggressions had made the foreign Signorie unpopular, foreigners were excluded from the government, till the successes of the Frenchman, Walter de Brienne, Duke of Athens, as general of the Florentine army, led to his so far gaining the affections of the people, that, on Sept. 8, 1342, he was invested by popular acclamation with the sovereignty for life, but his rule of violence and pride was of short duration, and he was exiled in the following year. The Guelfs now returned to power, and strengthened their influence by the benevolence they showed during the great plague of 1348, which is described by Boccaccio (born 1313). The noble family of the *Albizi* was now at the head of the Guelfs, and their arrogance was such that the Ghibellines and not the Guelfs became now rather the representatives of the popular party. Such was the case when the *Revolution of the Ciompi* took place under Michele Lando, who was chosen Gonfalonere, and, in the words of Macchiavelli—'overcame every citizen by his uprightness, cleverness, and kindness, like a true deliverer of his country.' The Ciompi, however, were soon expelled, and the Ghibelline family of the Medici, who had risen to wealth under the banker *Giovanni de' Medici*, coming forward as patrons of the *popolo minuto*, began to rise to power in spite of the utmost efforts