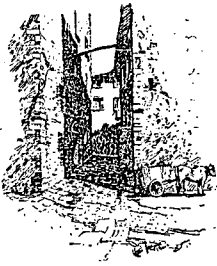


# MAURICE HEWLETT'S ITALY

WITH DRAWINGS BY WALTER HALE.



PERUGIA. VIA DELIZIOSA.

To the man of one talent, and that acquired with some difficulty, the thought of Maurice Hewlett, litterateur and financier, is disquieting to his peaceful lack of ambition and general satisfaction with himself. We who stumble over our accounts and write halting epistles when there is no escape from it gaze reproachfully Creatorward as we conjure up Mr. Hewlett doing sums with one-half of his brain, and evolving delicious chapters of *The Forest Lovers* with the other. As a rule it is some consolation to the green-eyed monster ramping within us that the man who can intoxicate us with his wealth of words cannot take care of the wealth of gold which is the reward for his labours. We do not begrudge him the gold. It is but admitting that the reading public accepts our own appreciation of a fine thing; our egotism, if no better trait, makes us kind. And again our pride asserts itself as we read Mr. Hewlett's stories and essays of Italy, for he has a very human way of thinking, a simple way that we can all think, and we murmur with delight and complacency as we find our own unformed impressions put into quick rushes of words.

For example, there is the cathedral of Siena, striped in black and white without and within, something of a shock to the New Yorker who has dubbed an edifice of similar style "the Church of the Holy Zebra." If he goes three times he will learn to love its *bijouterie*; and if he reads Hewlett he will whisper as he goes, "barred like a tiger, glistening snow and rose and gold," until the rhythm levels the steep ascent and brings him, breathful for once, before the glittering façade.

The ups and downs in Siena are many, both in its geography and history. The inhabitants centuries ago felt the influence of its hills and valleys, and spent their time fighting, love-making, revel-

ling, and praying in fine contradictory style. Pray they still do; revel, perhaps,—there is a music-hall in the main street which does a good business nightly; love-making? they are Italians, but to a casual observer the warlike spirit has departed. The only evidence of any significance manifests itself in a drum corps of the Forte Santa Bàrbera, which is up and doing at five every morning, and persistently tattoos wan tourists to coffee and rolls hours before their time. Once a year the Palio race is run, and in its brutality all the fierceness of a people, exquisitely courteous, is expended. In the roughly paved Piazza del Campo, in celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin, the contestants beat and slash the shoulders of their opponents and the badly-bred steeds under



PISTOJA. BELL TOWER OF SAN GIOVANNI.

"At the north angle of the church . . . there is a narrow lane."—*Messer Cino and the Live Coal.*

them until the blood of man and beast streams over the sanded stones in gruesome imitation of the cruel games and crueler feuds of the Middle Ages.

The story of *The Soul of a City* culminates in a Palio day tragedy. On any other evening one would think it impossible that two Sieneſe could harbor murder in their hearts at the same time, so singularly amiable are the citizens. They possess a certain explosiveness which might be mistaken for anger. We had an exhibition of this disappointing element one night in the Campo, where Marco sold his figs to the English ladies, where the race is run, where most things are begun and ended, in Siena. That it was a discussion of unusual force we knew by the curious crowd who came out of the thick night and gathered with us around the excited man and woman. We knew not of what he accused her, but she seemed to have the upper hand,

for with each retort he became whiter and more vituperative.

There was a peace-maker, a mild little fellow, a friend of the masculine end of the fracas, who from time to time uttered a hissing sound evidently designed to allay angry passions. The effect was not instantaneous, though twice he lured his raving comrade as far as the Fonte Gaia when an exasperating "La! La!" from the woman, who was twisting up her hair, brought him running back and the battle of words was renewed with greater violence. As we were asking ourselves the Italian for "police," the woman suddenly drew from her pocket a soldo,

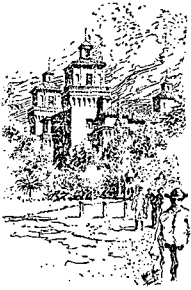


PISTOJA.  
THE PODESTA.



FLORENCE.

"At the Roman Gate."—*Eye of Italy.*



FERRARA.  
THE CASTLE.

that we had witnessed no tragedy that night.

*Earthwork Out of Tuscany* and *Little Novels of Italy* were not designed as substitutes for red guide books, but in both volumes the author has touched upon the distinguishing characters or characteristics of the citadels which served as a setting for his facts and fancies. And we who follow in his footsteps should not cavil over the dramatic license, one might say, in the narrowing of a street, the deepening of a balcony, or the planting of a peach orchard or two.

However, the Porta Eburnea of Perugia through which Mr. Hewlett rode his fanciful steed is there, and in pain-

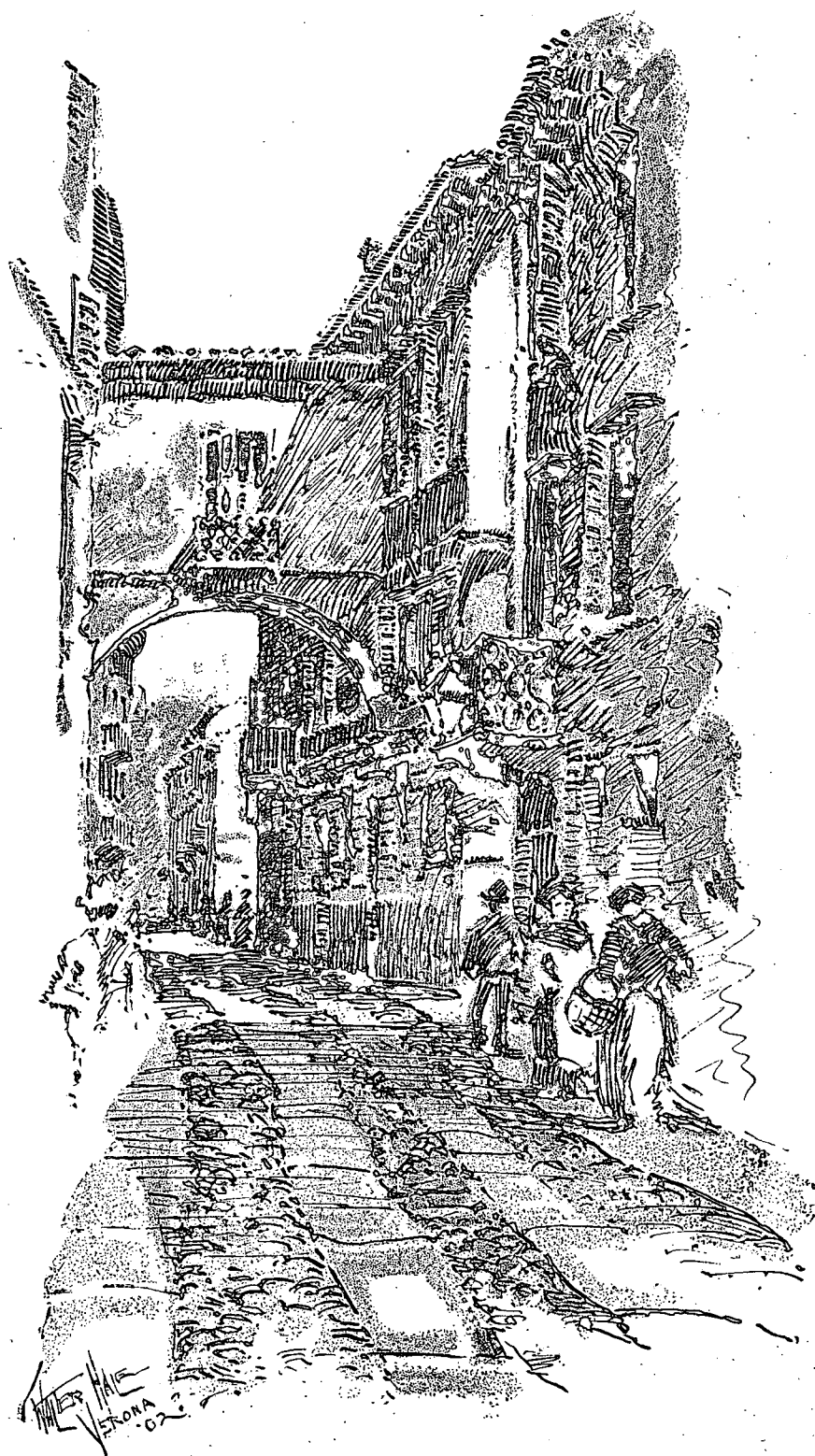
fully good condition. He does not tell us if there were tax collectors in the fifteenth century who poked about among his saddle-bags for eggs, or fowl, or garden truck. To-day the only use for the great gates of all the walled towns is to waylay the peasant and levy tribute on the produce he carries into the city. The tourist escapes much of the annoyance of petty taxation through the plea of the shopkeepers, who realise the advantage in granting privileges to "the millionaires," as the Americans are called, and a certain woman has a conscience that ought to trouble her for carrying a basket of vegetables past the gate, the property of a lean old peasant with hungry eyes.

There are no Baglioni left to sweep down upon the unwary traveller. They died with their boots on to a man, but they reigned while they lived, and had little Imola, the wife of Perugino's later years, been greatly coveted by young Semonetto, no doubt he would have ridden away with her on that same lathered steed and saved her kisses for the lips direct. She seems to have lived on with her famous spouse, Vanucci, renamed Perugino, bore him three children, and it is to be hoped survived him long

fully good condition. He does not tell us if there were tax collectors in the fifteenth century who poked about among his saddle-bags for eggs, or fowl, or garden truck. To-day the only use for the great gates of all the walled towns is to waylay the peasant and levy tribute on the produce he carries into the city. The tourist escapes much of the annoyance of petty taxation through the plea of the shopkeepers, who realise the advantage in granting privileges to "the millionaires," as the Americans are called, and a certain woman has a conscience that ought to trouble her for carrying a basket of vegetables past the gate, the property of a lean old peasant with hungry eyes.



"THE SEA GATE OF FERRARA."—"THE JUDGMENT OF BORSO."



VERONA.

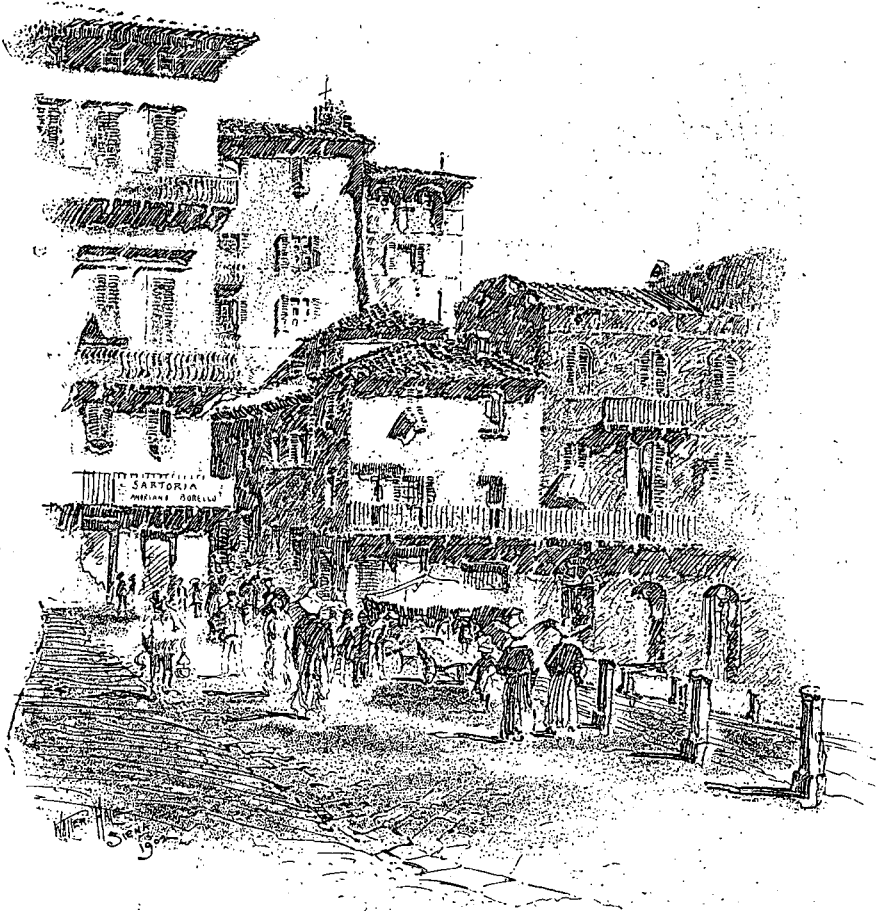
"In this very street of the stair." "His old clothes shop in the Via Stella."—  
*Madonna of the Peach-Tree*

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



enough to move out of the dingy Via Deliziosa into one of his more commodious houses. Kindly biographers who admit the great artist's parsimony speak of his poverty during his youth, and of his early struggles in Florence when pennies seemed the size of millstones, and the gathering of them as onerous a bur-

over them. The latter rejoice in a street or square to their memory, with an occasional statue, and pages of unsavory history. Too much is known of their lives to mould into impressive romance, and their portraits left us by the painters of their day betray an honesty in delineation that would cost a man his commis-



SIENA.

"In the Campo."—*The Soul of a City.*

den. He was proud of his young wife, and was known to have spent goodly sums of money on head-dresses for the golden hair he loved to play with, and if we are to believe the chronicles of those days, the price of millinery was, as ever, a subject for connubial infelicitities.

In Italy the artist has a better chance of living fondly in the remembrance of the people than have the men who rule

sion in this free age. But a master of the arts receives the homage due him in the way of streets, appears and reappears in marble, and gains a happy notoriety from the conjectures of the romancist. And there is a pleasant daring to a reader of modest scope in separating the real from the ideal in fiction, not with the savage joy of the iconoclast, but with a certain titillation in view of the story-teller himself swooping down upon

the dismemberer of his romancing with dusty tomes of evidence.

An art critic of more sense than sentiment writes that recent enthusiasm over Botticelli borders upon lunacy. His *Primavera* looks out from all the shop windows; photographs of Venus are to be found among the outgoing baggage of

renzo's time, the "lady of Guliano," as she was called. It is known that the Venus watching by the side of the sleeping Mars was the portrait of Simonetta, and Mars that of Guliano. The painting was made in commemoration of the famous tournament of Guliano, which took place in the square before Santa Croce,

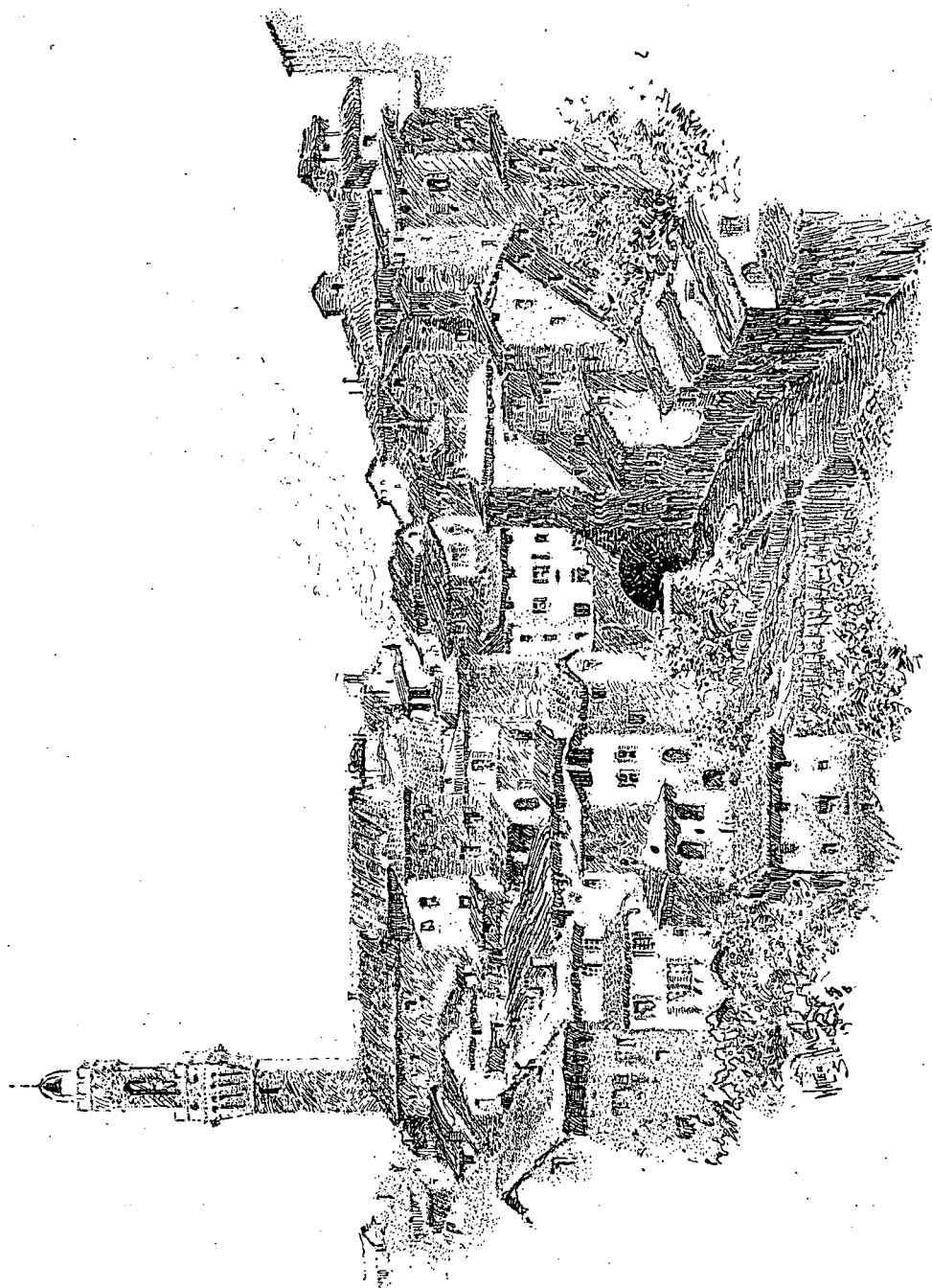


PADUA.

"She lived in the Vicolo Agnus Dei." "The Vicolo Agnus Dei—a blind alley of low, jutting houses over arcades."—*Ippolita in the Hills*.

every art student; and his dolorous Madonnas, neatly framed in walnut, are to be had for the paying. We read "Quattrocentisteria," and from that hour see Simonetta in all the lovely downward curves of his women's faces. There is every reason to believe that his type was influenced by this beautiful girl of Lo-

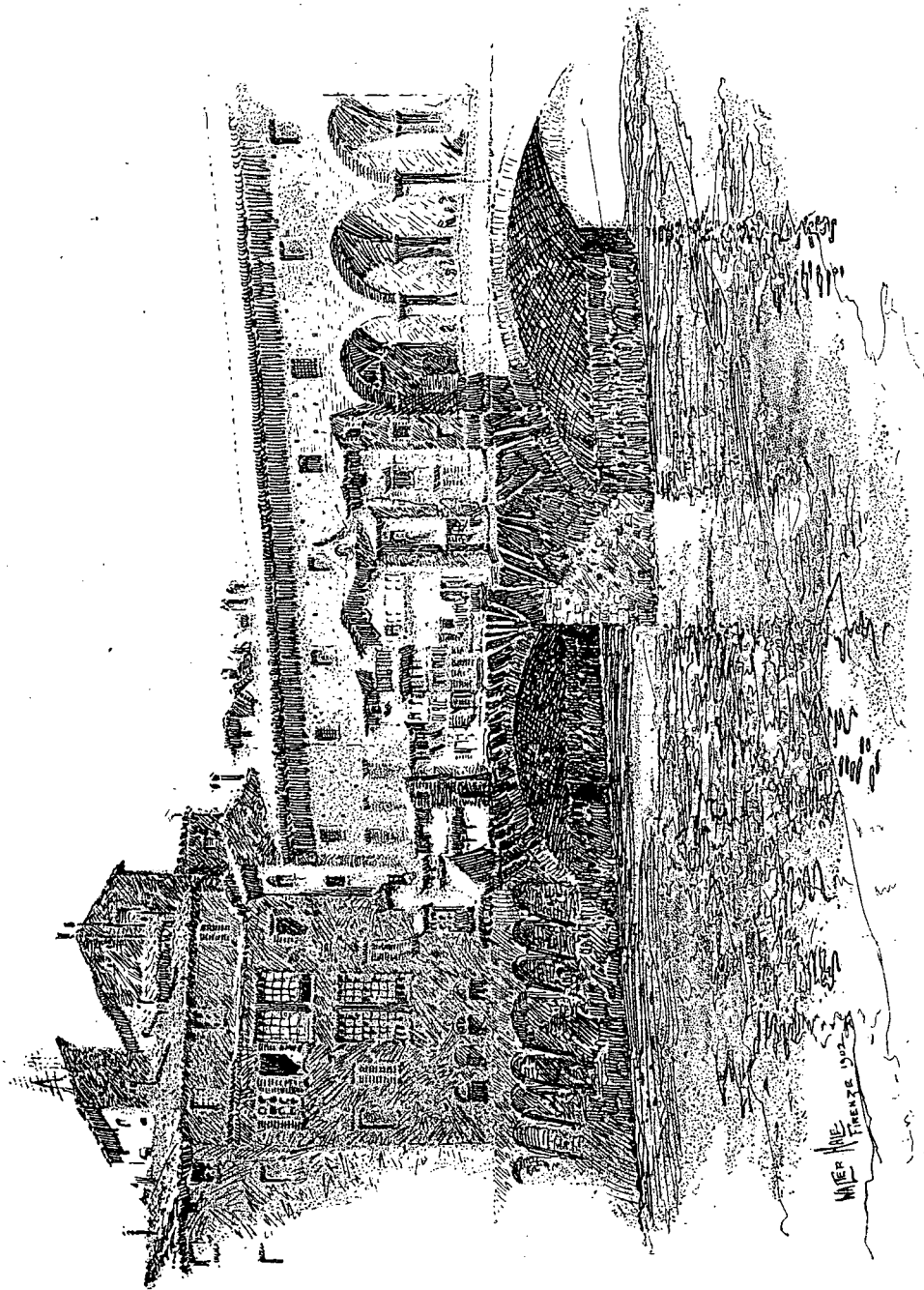
and was the most brilliant spectacle of its kind during the reign of the Medici family. Angelo Poliziano has put the great tilt into lasting verse, that same Agnolo of Mr. Hewlett's story who upon a summer day on the heights of Fiesole, with the monastery frowning down upon the villa, spoke of the purity of beauty,



SIENA.

“The precipitous fortress town huddled red and grey on its three red crags.”—*The Burden of New Tyre.*

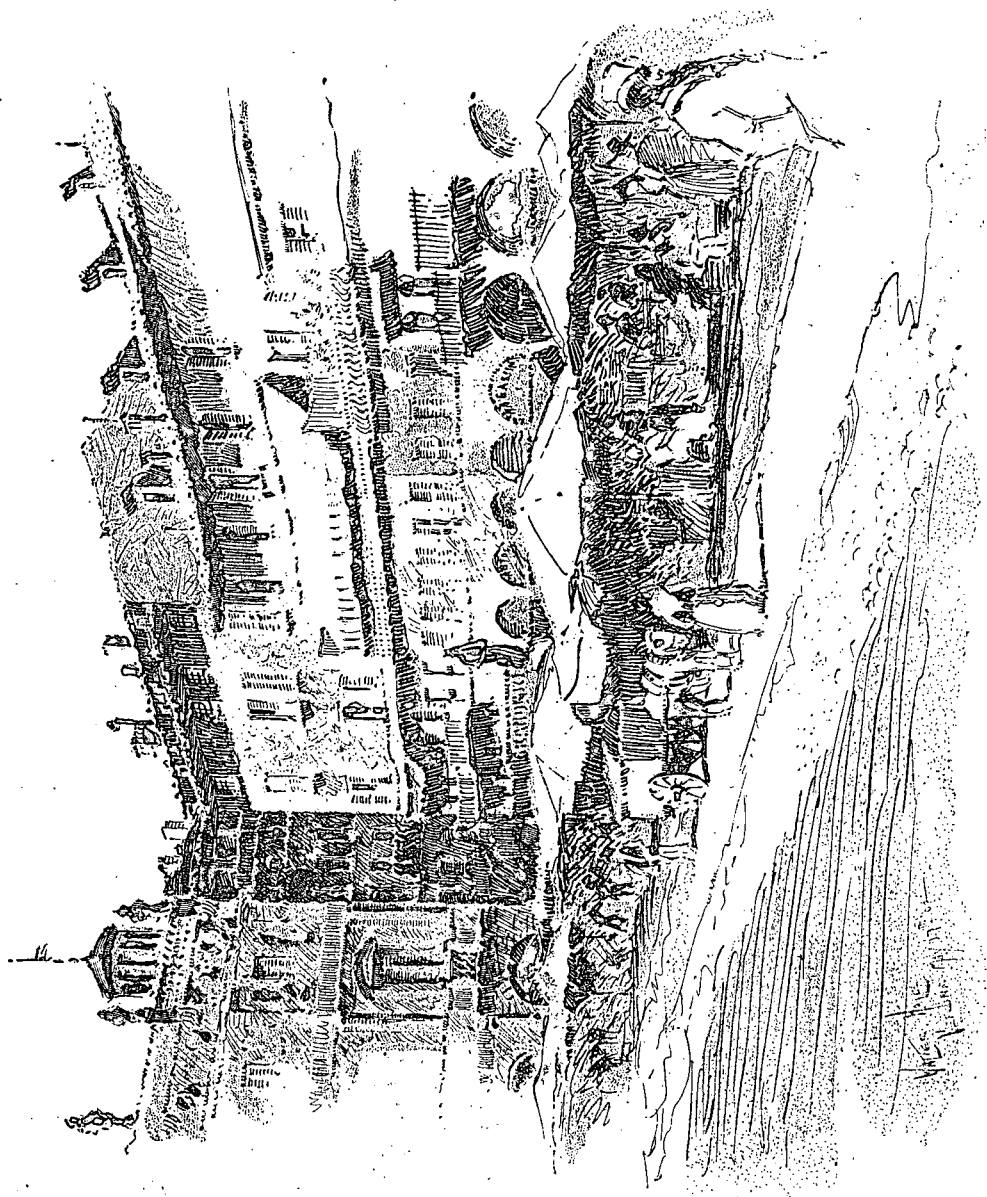




FLORENCE. "THE PONTE VECCHIO."—QUATTROCENTISTERIA.

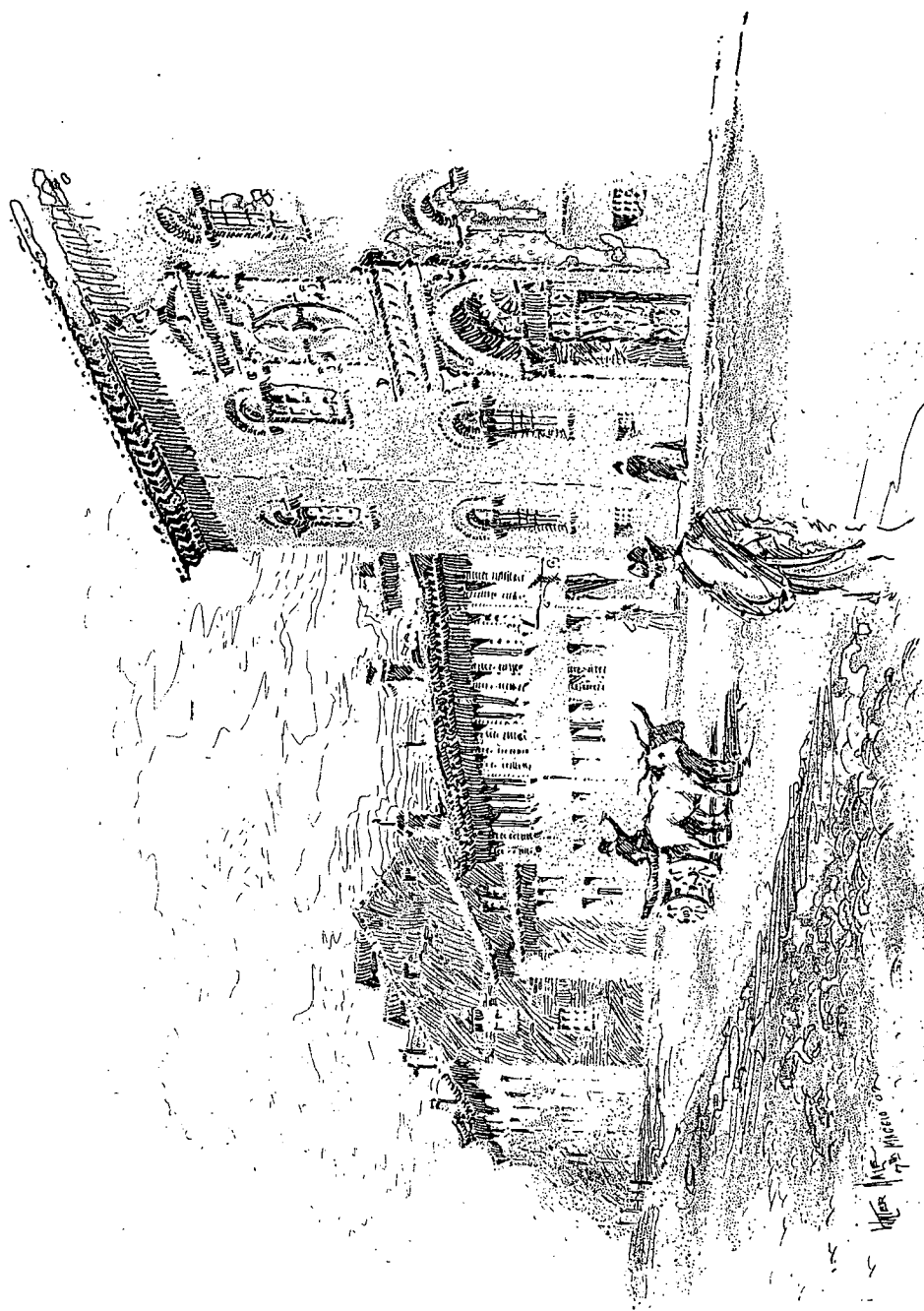
"The bridge whereunder turbid Arno glitters like brass."—*Eye of Italy.*





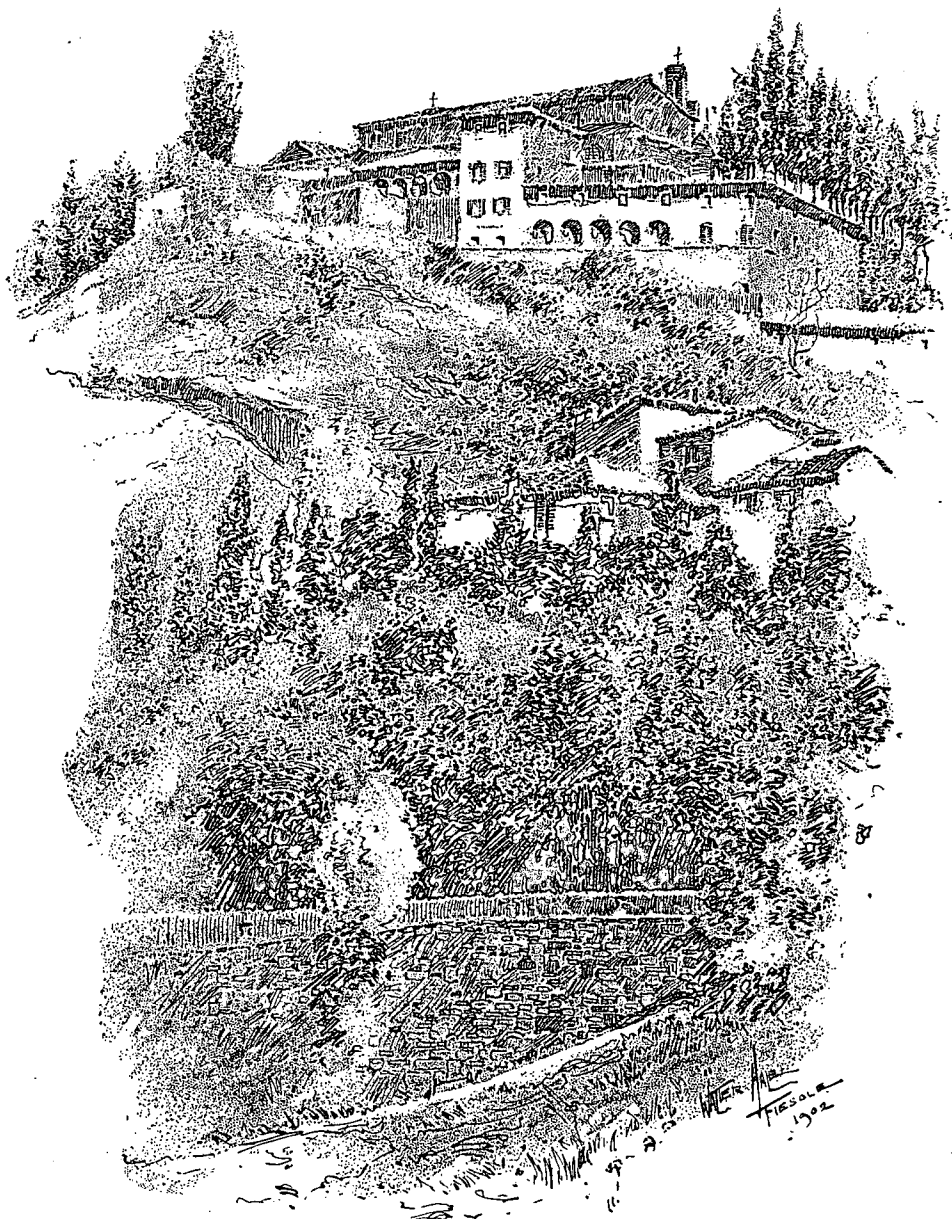
VERONA.

"The Della Scala Palace, in the very heart of the city."—*Madonna of the Peach-Tree.*



FERRARA.

"This is the fine new palace of the Duke's, which he calls his Schifanoia."—*The Judgment of Borso.*



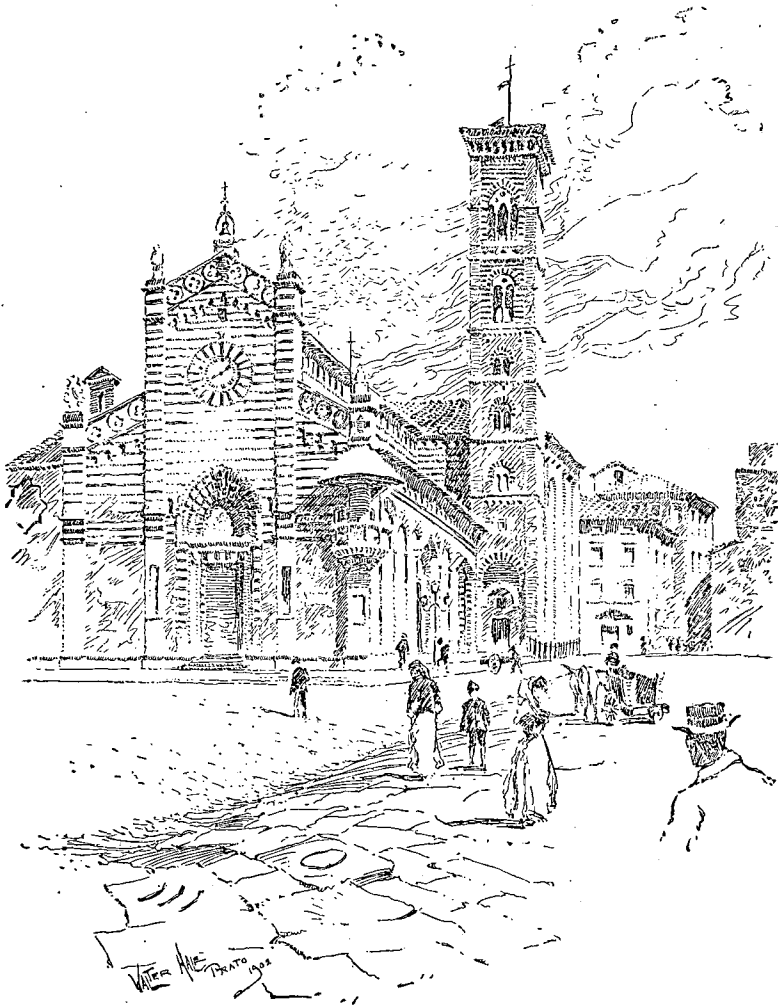
FIESOLE.

"Up at Fiesole, among the olives and chestnuts."—*Quattrocentisteria*.

and inspired Simonetta to offer her lovely body for the betterment of Art. Eighteen months after the tournament "La Belle Simonetta" died, and was carried through the streets of Florence with her dead face uncovered to the multitude; but the Venus of Botticelli was not known to have been created until ten years later. In the meantime he is recorded as going about playing practical jokes, bending a servile knee as courtier, and with heaven knows what weight on his breast, painting his sad madonnas.

The models of great artists have always been of interest to a large part of the picture-loving public unfamiliar with

studio life; and the individual who is put into a story is often as much lionised as the story-teller. The feeling is something akin to the craving to loiter about stage doors to "see the actors come out." It is a harmless curiosity, and we were not ashamed when we journeyed to Prato to look for healthy types of womanhood, such as Luca della Robbia might have found in Mariota, who now smiles above the cathedral door. The road was dusty. Mr. Hewlett, taken *à la Baedeker*, had found it so before us. There was no festival, so the shrines lacked floral offerings; but the lilacs and roses in the church were fresh and sweet,



"Prato, dusty little city of mid-Tuscany."—*Of Poets and Needlework.*

"A very fair building, lofty and many windowed."—*A Sacrifice at Prato.*





PADUA.  
RIVIERA BUSINELLO.

something we had seldom seen before in our wanderings. And the women were gracious and most industrious, for they did their marketing, admonished their children and said their prayers with hands working rapidly at a prickly straw braid, making enough, it would seem, to cover the heads of all Europe. In the street of the Eye we found a Mariota to our liking, and longed for Luca della Robbia to wake from his five centuries' repose and pronounce our judgment good. She was not gracing a domestic hearth, but was discovered pummeling a big, lazy fellow who lay sprawled upon the stone flaggings. Later she pulled him up, goddess, indeed; but when he kissed her on the mouth she flushed a rosy red, and straightway became a girl.

A few miles further on is the Pistoja, the birthplace of pistols we are told, and the home of Messer Cino we are sure. He has a street, a square and a monument to prove it; of Selvaggia we know little, and of the live coal nothing, but we are eager to believe the story. Mr. Hewlett has a commendable lack of sympathy for the married man of diplomatic principles who casts about him for a subject for metrical hysterics without so much as a "by your leave." Lorenzo de Medici enjoyed his brother's Simonetta for the inspiration her beauty offered his jaded pen; possibly her death gave him greater satisfaction, in that it gave him greater scope. Selvaggia's little life flickered out and the flames of the eminent jurist's passion grew more scorching, until his love became the theme for later poets. The rhymsters of the *quattro cento*, and those of finer verse, felt themselves to be a new line of gods, who in their singing made the fair subjects of their themes immortal beings. Even Selvaggia may have in time cultivated a taste for sonnets, but she, poor child, should have emulated a love of Boccaccio who repulsed his advances, hoping, in proportion, to prolong his effusions and deepen her notoriety into fame. Instead of this wiliness, Cino's little lady died, and left

him to pour out his woe with no possibility of awkward damage suits.

The sun had learned to creep into the lane where Guittonicino de Sigibuldi (to give him his due) first met his laughing love, and was shedding approving rays on a plebeian courtship that was going on as we walked through. He taking the initiative by loutish, furtive lurches against a brimming copper vessel that the maiden bore. She, dripping but delighted, carrying her nose in the air and singing a little song that may have been of Messer Cino's own making. One doubts not but their flirtation ended at the altar, as all such open manifestations of affection should, with never a sonnet to add fuel to her honest flame, nor a madrigal beneath the window to senselessly arouse her from her healthy sleep.

"Ferrara, that city of warm red brick, of broad eaves, of laughter, and bowered in rustling green," writes Mr. Hewlett. There are no booms in Ferrara; as it was in the days when Borso judged wisely, so it now is. We go about with the story of little Bellaroba and Angioletto fresh in our minds, and a knot in our throats from the good, old-fashioned joy in the tale that ends well. It matters not if the descendants from the court of the Este family whiz through the streets in automobiles. "Art will endure," says Mr. Hewlett, though we may "go to bed by electricity, and have our hair brushed by machinery." The garden of the Schifanoia where Angioletto sang his little songs to the Countess was full of baby chickens, and on the spot where the Venetians drew weary rein to watch the cavalcade enter the gates small boys were flying kites—a pastime old enough to satisfy the hungriest antiquarian, and full of tremendous subtlety, for what instinct is it that causes the season of kite-flying, or top-spinning and rope-jumping, either, for that matter, to begin on a certain day and run its limit without even an almanac to regulate its rise and decline? The small boy is ubiquitous in Ferrara. He turns alluring flipflaps for coppers in the open space before the cathedral, and fishes in the real water that fills the real moat of the Castello, unmindful of the grim fortress where the Venetian duo lay for many hours, with Angioletto nearer than they knew.

The Castello has its black pages in his-

tory. A quarter of a century before the date of Borso's ascendancy Parisina Malatesta and her stepson awaited death in these same dungeons, the rightful vengeance of her lord, ruler of the house of Este. Byron has made verse of the unsavoury story, and d'Annunzio is soon to put it into prose. For four hundred years the Esti ruled over Ferrara, and there were none wiser than Borso, who judged as Solomon did. He took great pride in the University, which now barely survives, and made his boast that his soldiers and professors were paid on the hour that their hire was due—an unusual proceeding, to judge by the emphasis history lays upon the act. Another custom of his, less pleasing, perhaps, but more common in that day, was to visit yearly the nobles of his little kingdom and receive as his rightful tribute magnificent offerings from silken hose to

diadems, which were used for the public good. "And when he was buried," writes a scribe of his century, "the whole people felt as if God himself had died a second time."

"The Paduan girls are all charming and mostly pretty." And after this Mr. Hewlett goes on to say beautiful things of beautiful Ippolita, and gives us a vision of the rare blonde loveliness possessed by his finest women. All of which shows the cunning of the master-hand. He does not mean his creations to be sullied by rash comparisons with the maid who brings hot water to our door, nor allow us to cheapen his ideals by discovering at every street corner a Bellaroba or Vanna; and, though we may sit all day among the tubs of the Via Agnus Dei and squint our eyes, rabidly impressionistic, not one of the happy, blowsy women chattering there can be likened to



FLORENCE.

"The Via Del Monte Alle Croce is a leafy way."—*Little Flowers*.

the Ippolita who hung out of her window one April morning a few centuries ago and was seen and worshipped by Alessandro, Sub-Prefect of Padua.

They were very merry in the Agnus Dei, that street of "squalour, pink wash, children and cats." In the Prato, a circular sort of park where Ippolita walked at the close of day with her friends, numerous giggling couples were wandering about, making the most of a holiday which some kindly saint had occasioned. Since early morn the Santo was a scene of fervid religious gymnastics and pleasant bustle. Before eight a procession of many banners and white-robed girls, with carolling choir boys and chanting priests, had gone into the church, and trade was brisk for the candle sellers. At noon they issued from the great doors in the same orderly manner, save for an angel of five in blue cambric sown with white stars and a paper crown on one ear, whose loud wails forced an admonishment from a fat priest and a hasty withdrawal that might be termed a "yank" by a disgraced mother. A burnished head such as Ippolita must have carried was seen among the damsels bearing a statue of Our Lady, but closer acquaintance was met with the usual disappointment. The owner of the golden fleece was sniggering hysterically, and weakly endeavouring to hide a face, ever at its best when screened, with a large white cotton-gloved paw. The procession crossed the bridge that Ippolita's glittering cavalcade must have taken, for the Villa Venusta lies on the route. It is not known as the Villa Venusta, and there was more ill-controlled mirth among the young women of the neighbourhood when we probed into its whereabouts.

Considering the sombreness of the grey arcaded houses and the majesty of the churches and municipal buildings, these Paduans have shown a remarkable strength of character in that they have remained flippant and impervious to the influence of their dignified surroundings. Perhaps the gay little canals edged by gardens top-heavy with foliage, that run hither and thither through the town like truant schoolboys, account for the citizens' wayward turn of mind. There is just enough of the country in the air to make one long to burst all bonds of care

and state and fly beyond the gates. Small wonder that Ippolita grew sick for the hills as she looked from the windows of her room into the Riviera Businello. She would be as fascinated now as in the days of the goat herds, for the place has every morning a mushroom growth of wash-tubs, and a clangour of gossip that seems to attend all such social meetings in Italy.

Washing is a thriving industry in the northern provinces; the clothesline replaces the strings of macaroni of the South, and the noisy, drenched women go about like steam calliopes. The laundry business was omnipresent in Ferrara, in Padua, in Siena, even grim Perugia, but Verona went dirty. The swift river of the Adige rushes between stone embankments, and the modern Ponte Navi, from which old Baldassare tossed a compliment to Vanna of the tubs, rises high above the stream.

Verona is a curious mixture of modern, mediæval and ancient architecture. There is a Roman gate or two in fair condition, and an amphitheatre in excellent shape; there is a smart street full of good shops, and some fine residences with a glimpse of beautiful courtyards to be caught from the gates. Throughout his country the Italian lives for himself, and his vanity, though enormous, does not manifest itself in a stretch of front yard for the confounding of his neighbours' estates. Even the Via Stella held some surprises for us in the shape of hidden gardens, and doubtless Baldassare's Vanna had a wisteria vine climbing up over her back door. The Via Stella is a narrow way of mediæval Verona, with a vista of gentle hills at the end; in an adjoining street, with the tramcars rattling by, is the palace of the Capulets, reputed to be Juliet's home, and though neighbours of Vanna, probably not on her calling list. The house has but one balcony—some fifty feet up in the air. Seeing it, one is inclined to wander from the original matter in hand and speculate on the risks a sighing lover will take.

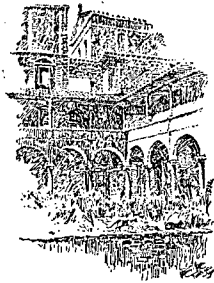
A little further on is one of the finest squares in all Italy, and, like the Piazza del Campo of Siena, the centre of strife, of life, and all material transactions. It is a market by day, a promenade by night, a delight to the eye at all times. It comforts one who sighs for real peach-

trees beyond Porta San Zeno; and the very finest of all the buildings in the square is the Della Scala Palace, with no sign of a staircase in front, but a long, satisfying one running up the back. After the fashion of the Veronese decoration in the Middle Ages, its outside walls are richly frescoed, which age has dulled into soft harmonies. The palace stands on a corner, and the arch which separates it from the other buildings on the right of the square is the Volto Barbaro, with an inscription in the street of the stair telling him who reads that it was an ancestor of Can Grande II. who was murdered there, while further researches disclose that the ruler of Verona at the time of the "Madonna of the Peach Tree" died comparatively peacefully at the hand of his brother. At the farther end of the town, a long walk, and a drive varying in expense from fifty centimes to three francs, according to the length of time one has lived among the Italians, is the Castel Vecchio, built by Can Grande of the story. It is, as usual, a barracks, and of unusual commodity. One wonders if the Italian government could have afforded the luxury of a standing army had not the bloodthirsty

warriors of early days left as a gift, perforce, these magnificent domiciles for the shelter of their mild-eyed successors.

There may have been women as lovely as Mr. Hewlett's fair creations; there may have been facts as curious as his fiction—after all, it is not the matter, but the manner, of his prose which holds us. The scenes from our hotel windows he could make into ravishing tales. The man at the corner with the shoe strings would love the girl around the corner with her matches; the old crone in the doorway making lace would have a knife in her garter for the hunchback who sells her a soldo's worth of chestnuts. The game of cards in the alley would be dramatised, the sunlight on the river wall would be poetised, and we would wonder that we had never thought of doing it ourselves. But we must be content with milder colours in our imaginative pallets—at least, Italy is ours to enjoy. We will not leave it as did a little old lady because she had exhausted her adjectives. In time that little old lady will learn to keep silent, read Hewlett as a relief to her emotions—and stay on.

*Louise Closser Hale.*



FLORENCE.  
SAN LORENZO.



## W. S. GILBERT

It is always a delicate proceeding to write about a man still numbered among the living. The result so often savours of the obituary notice. The fact which helps the case at bar is that the subject of this paper has confessedly retired from public view, having given to the world all that it can expect from him. Already a new generation has arisen that knows not Mr. Gilbert. With this preliminary apology, therefore, we may with a clear conscience examine into the work of one of the most idiosyncratic writers of the Victorian Era.

William Schwenk Gilbert was born in a London suburb in 1836. The son of a surgeon with pronounced literary inclinations, he was brought up in an atmosphere friendly to his natural talents. As a boy he tried his hand at play-writing, never becoming discouraged by repeated failure to secure recognition from theatrical managers. His reputation in school was that of a belligerent, and between play-writing and fighting he had little time for his studies. At college he seems to have applied himself with more zeal to the work in hand, and the result was his capture of a number of prizes. At nineteen he graduated from the University of London, and by his father's desire commenced to study law. He became a clerk in the Privy Council Office, and after five years of preparation was admitted to the bar. During this time his boyhood's ambition to be a dramatist never left him, and he wrote a number of plays, mostly farces and burlesques. Even thus early in his career his originality displayed itself. One of his pieces, it is said, called for eighteen scenes, four cataracts, and a house on fire! There is no record of its production by any manager.

Gilbert joined the staff of *Fun*, a comic weekly, in 1861, and contributed to its columns his *Bab Ballads*. He had offered the first of the series, and probably the best known, "The Yarn of the *Nancy Bell*," to *Punch*; but the conservative editor rejected it on the plea that it was "too cannibalistic for his readers' tastes." These ballads, written over a period of three or four years, were subsequently collected and published in book form, and they have since passed through sev-

eral editions. Gilbert's verse is notable for its facility. His ear for rhythm is extremely sensitive, seldom misleading him. The variety of his metrical schemes is unusual, and some of them are daringly complicated. He has been justly compared in this respect with Aristophanes, his only rival. In his later work with Sir Arthur Sullivan, Gilbert became more and more venturesome in the use of difficult and complicated rhythmic feet. He delights in making unusual rhymes, too, such as "Peak-haunting Feveril" with "Dr. Sacheverell," and "monotony" with "got any." The *Bab Ballads* are witty, amusing, clever and original; but they are doggerel verse after all, and show their author's peculiar gifts in only a moderate degree. There are, however, characteristic touches here and there which reveal, or, at any rate, hint at the talent of the later Gilbert. The little sketches with which he himself illustrated them are inimitably Gilbertian, and add materially to the point and humour of the lines.

In several of the ballads Gilbert touched upon situations of which he afterward availed himself in his librettos. Thus, "The Baby's Vengeance" is the basis of the plot of *Pinafore*, and "The Bumboat Woman's Story" is that of Little Buttercup from the same opera, thinly disguised, while "Captain Reece" bears a close family resemblance to Captain Corcoran of Her Majesty's ship, and "The Fairy Curate" contains the germ of *Iolanthe*. Gilbert never hesitated to borrow from himself, and in his later works continually harked back to the products of his more youthfully exuberant imagination. In taking leave of the *Bab Ballads* it may not be amiss to quote a brief one, typical both in form and in sentiment:

### TO THE TERRESTRIAL GLOBE.

By a Miserable Wretch.

Roll on, thou ball, roll on!  
Through pathless realms of space  
Roll on!  
What though I'm in a sorry case?  
What though I cannot meet my bills?  
What though I suffer toothache's ills?