

A DAY IN ORVIETO.

ABOUT midway between Rome and Florence, in the valley of the Paglia, a turbulent tributary of the Tiber, there rises sheer up from the plain an isolated conical hill of tufa with steep sides and flat top nearly 800 feet high. On the very summit of it, like an eagle's aërie, stands the old city of Orvieto, the *Urbibentium* of Procopius, the *Urbs Vetus* of other writers, with a present population of 8,000 or so, and one of the most interesting towns in Italy outside the great Capitals. It is a natural stronghold and one of those spots sure to be occupied in troublous times as the site of a fortress. In mediæval days it was one of the vantage points of the Guefts in their interminable conflicts with the Ghibellines and for nearly three centuries was the favourite refuge of the popes when too sore pressed by the partisans of the imperial faction. No fewer than thirty-four of them resided here at intervals during their reign. To this fact is due most of its former importance and much of its present interest. But it was an Etruscan town long before the Christian era, and numerous remains of their occupation—tombs, pottery, gems—have been found in the immediate neighbourhood.

In the good old days of its glory, the ascent to it must have been a serious business for the road which winds up the face of the cliff is steep and hard. But modern science has simplified matters by erecting an elevator which in a trice lifts you up from the railway station in the valley to the very gateway of the old citadel within the walls. You hardly land at the top before you feel that it has also lifted you backward some 600 years or so into the middle ages.

The *fortezza* or castle that once crowned the steepest brow of the cone and gave shelter to the garrison is now removed, and its site turned into a public park with a small open amphitheatre. But the streets are still as narrow and gloomy as ever, and every house looks as if it might have been built before America was discovered. As a matter of fact many of the finest date from the thirteenth century, two hundred years before Columbus. The only modern thing we saw in the place was a marble slab let into the wall of an old palace, to commemorate the fact that Garibaldi had addressed the people from an adjoining window in favour of the unification of Italy. Nor does one see any reason why they should not stand as they are for all time to come, so strong and solid are they. Almost everything is of stone,—the