



VII.

THE cavalcade made much better progress after the incident of the inn, and there was little to do except admire the country through which we passed. This, indeed, being one of the best in the world gave us much whereon to think. Nay, the more active of the young gallants went racing about seeking the choicest flowers to present to the young ladies, who, most of them, would have gladly gone off on like expeditions rather than abide the slower pace of their elders.

One day at noon just before we paused for luncheon, coming to the summit of a hill, we saw in the distance the bright walls of the city of Florence. At the sight the animation of the entire party leaped forth, for here we were to make a halt of some length before again setting out on the road for Rome. It was well into evening before we arrived in the city, where our appearance caused a considerable stir. In an hour we were safely housed and fed, and before long, leaving the party to their own devices, I went forth to see for myself the city whereof the fame had gone forth over the whole earth. I found it indeed handsomer than any of our own towns of France, for the number of its beautiful homes was very great. But it is not a large city, not to be compared with many French cities which surpass this wonderful Florence in size and activity, though in the making of great men none of them is its equal. Walking thus about I observed coming in my direction a man past the middle life but yet strong and active in his bearing. From his broad shoulders there hung a long cloak of black material reaching nearly to his feet. This he held wrapped close to his person. His head was covered by a crimson turban under which nought showed save his face. The striking garb could not fail anywhere to attract attention by reason of its severe simplicity. But it was when the man drew nearer and one could observe the deep lines of power in the face, that