

length. In order that the occupants of palaces might enjoy street sights; and take the air, without moving among the vulgar crowds, it was once customary to build such loggie adjoining private and public ones. Some exquisite pieces of sculpture stand now in the old Loggia. To the left, Benvenuto Cellini's beautiful "Perseus with the head of Medusa," in bronze; then Donatelli's "Judith and Holofernes," and the marble groups of Giovanni da Bologna—"Rape of the Sabines," and "Hercules slaying the Centaur Nessus."

A tiny covered passage connects the Palazzo Vecchio with the Uffizi, south of it, and again this palace is joined to the Pitti by a long gallery skirting the river, crossing the Ponto Vecchio, and thus reaching the last-named edifice on the left bank of the Arno. If we can no longer catch a glimpse of the tall, grave poet, as we lie in wait for him near his humble dwelling of the Via San Martino; if among Florentine crowds to-day, our search is vain for many a painter's face, many a keen-sighted talker; at least we turn in no direction that their marble effigies do not look down upon us, quite calmly and unastonished. The honour and the praise would have to come some time. The world has made a stride, since these brave workers are her heroes now. No, nor need we regret that the smoke and din of battle have vanished, and we may sit in peace at the feet of the "noble army of martyrs," white-robed indeed, and crowned—with laurel!

The Uffizi Palace comprises two long galleries, running parallel, and separated by the road. The ground floor of these buildings opens into a portico, which connects them at the end next to the river. The niches of this portico were adorned in 1842-56 with the marble statues of celebrated Tuscans—a charming idea carried out in many public edifices in France and Italy. The Uffizi collection, as you know, is one of the finest in the world. It originated with the paintings and sculpture of the Medici, and received many additions from the Lorraine family. As we might not exhaust many of the Italian galleries in months, so the least worthy description of one could fill no mean space. But we are neither wise critics nor German *voyageurs*, only of the concourse of *dilittanti* who, though they have not too much time at their disposition, make travelling and sight-seeing a pleasure, not a task. Like the Tribune of the Louvre, a sort of sanctum sanctorum in these temples of art, so has the Uffizi its *tribuna*, and here are found some of the most beautiful pictures in the gallery, and several gems of ancient sculpture. Among the latter are the "Group of Wrestlers," the "Medici Venus," and the "Grinder." The marvellous paintings we recognise almost all, but gaze with greatest pleasure, perhaps, at Raphael's "Madonna del Cardinello," his "Fornarina," Titian's "Venus of Urbino," Dürer's "Adoration of the Magi," and Andrea del Sarto's delightful "Madonna." First, one of the sweet girl-faces, innocent and gentle, with no thought of a heavenly throne, no thought beyond the fair children on whom she gazes—a perfect expression of love and untroubled happiness. Raphael's portrait of his friend is but another example of that wonderful capacity not only to make a skilful likeness, but to depict the inner nature of his subject. A beautiful, good-natured, voluptuous-looking creature, this Fornarina, from whose day the light has not yet faded. Andrea del Sarto's work charms by its softness, and that hazy loveliness peculiar to all his compositions. Leaving the *tribuna*, we pass through saloons, each devoted to different schools—the Tuscan, North Italian, Venetian (in which we find Titian's "Flora"), Dutch, French, and Flemish. Then, in the hall of the ancient masters we find Fra Angelico's "Coronation of the Virgin"—a lovely "queen" encircled by the most charming of celestial musicians. A very delightful picture this, of an air exquisitely naive, one towards which it is pleasant to turn, sickened by the sight of martyred saints, and whole "infernos" of horrors. The rich gold *fond forms* a beautiful background to the sweet Madonna and her angelic companions—graceful and child-faced and happy, playing with delightful abandon on their several instruments. Two saloons are devoted to the portraits of painters, for the most part painted by themselves. It is a magnificent collection, where we find all the great artists, from the earliest down to Millais and Leighton. A hasty glance at one more hall of the Uffizi and we shall leave it; or, better, you may place yourself in the hands of an all-wise cicerone with more space and leisure to tell of its marvellous treasures. In the "Saloon of Niobe" stands the wonderful group of the agonised mother, surrounded by her seven sons and seven daughters, all in the pangs of death. The statues were found in Rome in 1583, and are supposed to be copies of a work by either Scopas or Praxiteles. One can describe many things, giving by no means an unfair idea of the subject; but do you not think that that of which a picture is most easily made with words or pencil is precisely that which loses least by description? From these, the superb conceptions of man's brain, the most perfect work of his hands, there emanates a subtle something I cannot name, a something that thrills our hearts but chains our lips. As a rule,

the ninety-nine voices call forth as many vulgar epithets, and the hundredth is silent. If he have skill, as well as deep sensibility, he will be able to tell the wherefore of much, but the profoundest effect of the whole will, doubtless, be passed over—what, I mean, he feels alone from having seen, others must behold to feel, and the language of the divinest beauty is always a silent one. Thus, possessing the magnificent Niobe group and the works I have already mentioned, the Uffizi shares with the Vatican and Capitoline Museums at Rome, and the Museum of Naples, the greater part of the most precious antique sculptures in existence.

Yes, with just such looks of admiration have millions before you, and will millions again, gaze upon these exquisite piles. The Duomo or Cathedral, with the Campanile and Battistero, are among the loveliest edifices in Italy. Built entirely of coloured marble, in the delicate Italian Gothic style, they present that light, lace-like appearance peculiar to but few churches. You doubtless know all about the competition for the design of the dome, and how Brunelleschi secured the victory. If one is awe-struck by the wonderful beauty of the exterior of the Cathedral, admiration receives a decided check from its chilling interior plainness. Tiny windows break the monotony of ghastly white walls, and all is painfully new-looking, bare and cold. The dimensions are grand, but of a grandeur which leaves us unmoved. To the right of the unfortunately covered façade of the Duomo rises the bell tower, the finest, perhaps, in existence. Four storeys in height, it is decorated with coloured marble statues, and its windows adorned with exquisite tracery. The Baptistery, Dante's *bel St. Giovanni*, founded about 1100, was originally the Cathedral of Florence. Of its bronze doors, fit to be the gates of Paradise, you have read a thousand times. There are three: The first by Andrea Pisano, completed in 1330, after twenty-two years of labour, bears in relief, in square panels, scenes from the life of John the Baptist, and allegorical representations of the eight cardinal virtues. Lovely, indeed, but exciting less wonder when compared with the other two, the superb work of Lorenzo Ghiberti. In the Bargello, or, rather, national museum, are two most interesting reliefs, the one by Brunelleschi, the other of Ghiberti, produced in the competition for the execution of the Battistero gates, and here we may easily mark the vast superiority of the latter artist over even one of the most formidable of his rivals. The subject of the compositions is Abraham's sacrifice, and, while the figures in the one are overstrained in action and really ugly, those of the other are remarkable for calmness and beauty. The first of Ghiberti's doors represents, in twenty-eight sections, the history of the life of Christ, the Apostles, and the Fathers of the Church; the second, ten reliefs of Biblical scenes. It is this latter which is the most marvellous, where we find veritable pictures in bronze, and the delicate borders vie in workmanship with nature.

Upon a stone, built into the wall of one of the houses near the Cathedral, we find the words "Sasso di Dante;" for on this stone used the poet to sit, on summer evenings; and if we care to thread a few narrow streets, we shall find the Casa di Dante, containing more interesting reminiscences of him,—the most modest of little flat-faced dwellings, squeezed between larger ones, and seemingly only some yards in width. The steep staircase, opening directly on the sidewalk, leads immediately to the second floor and to two small rooms, one behind the other, to which the only means of access seems by the said staircase. In the windowless back chamber the divine poet was born, and in the front one every remnant of ought that belonged to him—his chair, a portrait by Giotto, I think, a cast of his face taken after death and jealously guarded in a glass case, his fork, spoon, and a few other precious relics. I cannot tell you what a charm hangs about this little house; we hardly like to speak above a whisper, for we are indeed on holy ground, the holiest of our earth—even there where a great, noble, true soul has lived and suffered. L. L.

Sorrento, January, 1887.

#### SAUNTERINGS.

THE age! In the editorial columns of the daily press, on every other page of the popular magazine, among the imaginary scenes and people of the last novel, even in connection with the exact phrases of science and social economy, in the curate's sermon and the exchange of sentiment at five o'clock tea, in all places, and upon all occasions, where the pen and the tongue of civilised humanity finds more or less profitable employment, we run upon "the age." It walks abroad with dignity and decorum, it parades with vain coxcombry, it limps, it struts, it ambles, but it is everywhere to be met, and we always greet it respectfully. Its breadth of suggestion could not be expressed in the largest type, and no other combination of vowels and diphthongs could possibly convey the vast philosophical sound it has. We are somewhat vaguely conscious of its meaning,