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SANTA CROCE

AND THE FRANCISCAN QUARTER

[**S**T. FRANCIS of **Assisi**, the Apostle of the Poor, died in 1226, and was promptly canonized in 1228. His followers spread at once over every part of Italy, choosing in each town the poorest quarters, and ministering to the spiritual and temporal needs of the lowest classes. They were representatives of Works, as the Dominicans of Faith. In 1294 (some 16 years later than the Dominicans at Santa Maria Novella) they began to erect a church at Florence, outside the walls, on the poorer side of the city, close by their monastery. It was dedicated under the name of SANTA CROCE, and shortly adorned by Giotto and his pupils with beautiful frescoes, the finest works of art yet seen in Italy. Two things must thus be specially borne in mind about this church : (1) it is a church of the **Holy Cross**, whose image and history meet one in it at every turn ; (2) it is a **Franciscan church**, and therefore it is largely occupied with the glorification of St. Francis and of the order he founded. Their coarse **brown robes** appear in many of the pictures. Look out for their great saints, Bernardino of Siena, Louis of Toulouse, Antony of Padua, etc.

The Franciscans were a body of popular preachers. Hence, in their church, the immense nave, which includes the pulpit, was especially important. It was designed to accommodate large numbers of hearers. But its width and empty spaces also gave free room for many burials ; whence Santa Croce became one of the principal churches in Florence for interments. In time it grew to be the recognized **Pantheon** or "Westminster Abbey" of the town,