CHAPTER XXII

THE PITTI

Luca Pitti's pride—Preliminary caution—A terrace view—A collection but not a gallery—The personally-conducted—Giorgione the superb—Sustermans—The "Madonna del Granduca"—The "Madonna della Sedia"—From Cimabue to Raphael—Andrea del Sarto—Two Popes and a bastard—The ill-fated Ippolito—The National Gallery—Royal apartments—The Boboli Gardens.

THE Pitti approached from the Via Guicciardini is far liker a prison than a palace. It was commissioned by Luca Pitti, one of the proudest and richest of the rivals of the Medici, in 1441. Cosimo de' Medici, as we have seen, had rejected Brunelleschi's plans for a palazzo as being too pretentious and gone instead to his friend Michelozzo for something that externally at any rate was more modest; Pitti, whose one ambition was to exceed Cosimo in power, popularity, and visible wealth, deliberately chose Brunelleschi, and gave him carte blanche to make the most magnificent mansion possible. Pitti, however, plotting against Cosimo's son Piero, was frustrated and condemned to death; and although Piero obtained his pardon he lost all his friends and passed into utter disrespect in the city. Meanwhile his palace remained unfinished and neglected, and continued so for a century, when it was acquired by the Grand Duchess Eleanor of Toledo, the wife of Cosimo I, who though she saw only the beginnings of its splendours lived there awhile and there

brought up her doomed brood. Eleanor's architect or rather Cosimo's, for though the Grand Duchess paid, the Grand Duke controlled—was Ammanati, the designer of the Neptune fountain in the Piazza della Signoria. Other important additions were made later. The last Medicean Grand Duke to occupy the Pitti was Gian Gastone, a bizarre detrimental, whose head, in a monstrous wig, may be seen at the top of the stairs leading to the Uffizi gallery. He died in 1737.

As I have said in chapter VIII. it was by the will of Gian Gastone's sister, widow of the Elector Palatine, who died in 1743, that the Medicean collections became the property of the Florentines. This bequest did not, however, prevent the migration of many of the best pictures to Paris under Napoleon, but after Waterloo they came back. The Pitti continued to be the home of princes after Gian Gastone quitted a world which he found strange and made more so; but they were not of the Medici blood. It is now a residence of the royal family.

The first thing to do if by evil chance one enters the Pitti by the covered way from the Uffizi is, just before emerging into the palace, to avoid the room where copies of pictures are sold, for not only is it a very catacomb of headache, from the fresh paint, but the copies are in themselves horrible and lead to disquieting reflections on the subject of sweated labour. The next thing to do, on at last emerging, is to walk out on the roof from the little room at the top of the stairs, and get a supply of fresh air for the gallery, and see Florence, which is very beautiful from here. Looking over the city one notices that the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio is almost more dominating than the Duomo, the work of the same architect who began this palace. Between the two is Fiesole. The

Signoria tower is, as I say, the highest. Then the Duomo. Then Giotto's Campanile. The Bargello is hidden, but the graceful Badia tower is seen; also the little white Baptistery roof with its lantern just showing. From the fortezza come the sounds of drums and bugles.

Returning from this terrace we skirt a vast porphyry basin and reach the top landing of the stairs (which was, I presume, once a loggia) where there is a very charming marble fountain; and from this we enter the first room of the gallery. The Pitti walls are so congested and so many of the pictures so difficult to see, that I propose to refer only to those which, after a series of visits, seem to me the absolute best. Let me hasten to say that to visit the Pitti gallery on any but a really bright day is folly. The great windows (which were to be larger than Cosimo de' Medici's doors) are excellent to look out of, but the rooms are so crowded with paintings on walls and ceilings, and the curtains are so absorbent of light, that unless there is sunshine one gropes in gloom. The only pictures in short that are properly visible are those on screens or hinges; and these are, fortunately almost without exception, the best. The Pitti rooms were never made for pictures at all, and it is really absurd that so many beautiful things should be massed here without reasonable lighting.

The Pitti also is always crowded. The Uffizi is never crowded; the Accademia is always comfortable; the Bargello is sparsely attended. But the Pitti is normally congested, not only by individuals but by flocks, whose guides, speaking broken English, and sometimes broken American, lead from room to room. I need hardly say that they form the tightest knots before the works of Raphael. All this is proper enough, of course, but it serves to render the Pitti a difficult gallery rightly to study pictures in.

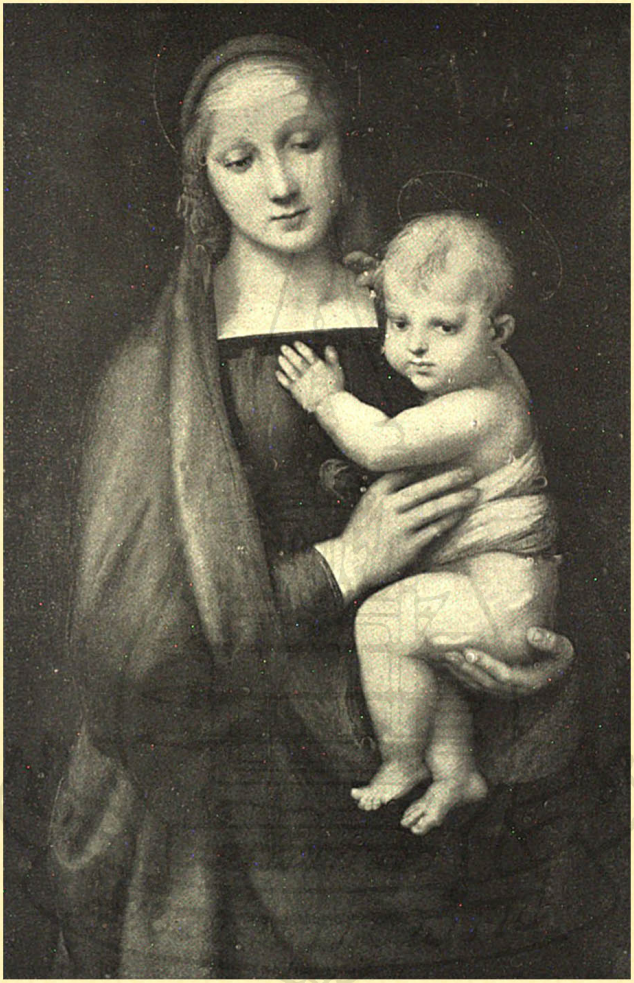
In the first chapter on the Uffizi I have said how simple it is, in the Pitti, to name the best picture of all, and how difficult in most galleries. But the Pitti has one particular jewel which throws everything into the background: the work not of a Florentine but of a Venetian: "The Concert" of Giorgione, which stands on an easel in the Sala di Marte.[1] It is true that modern criticism has doubted the rightness of the ascription, and many critics, whose one idea seems to be to deprive Giorgione of any pictures at all, leaving him but a glorious name without anything to account for it, call it an early Titian; but this need not trouble us. There the picture is, and never do I think to see anything more satisfying. Piece by piece, it is not more than fine rich painting, but as a whole it is impressive and mysterious and enchanting. Pater compares the effect of it to music (see opposite page 330).

The Sala dell' Iliade (the name of each room refers always to the ceiling painting, which, however, one quite easily forgets to look at) is chiefly notable for the Raphael just inside the door: "La Donna Gravida," No. 229, one of his more realistic works, with bolder colour than usual and harder treatment; rather like the picture that has been made its pendant, No. 224, an "Incognita" by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, very firmly painted, but harder still. Between them is the first of the many Pitti Andrea del Sartos: No. 225, an "Assumption of the Madonna," opposite a similar work from the same brush, neither containing quite the finest traits of this artist. But the youth with outstretched hand at the tomb is nobly done. No. 265, "Principe Mathias de' Medici," is a good bold Sustermans, but No. 190, on the opposite wall, is a far better—a most charming work representing the Crown Prince of Denmark, son

[1] The position of easel pictures in the Florentine galleries often changes.

of Frederick III. Justus Sustermans, who has so many portraits here and elsewhere in Florence, was a Belgian, born in 1597, who settled in Florence as a portrait painter to Cosimo III. Van Dyck greatly admired his work and painted him. He died at Florence in 1681. By the window is a Velasquez, the first we have seen in Florence, a little Philip IV on his prancing steed, rather too small for its subject, but very interesting here among the Italians.

In the next large room—the Sala di Saturno—we come again to Raphael, who is indeed the chief master of the Pitti, his exquisite "Madonna del Granduca" being just to the left of the door (see the opposite page). Here we have the simplest colouring and perfect sweetness, and such serenity of mastery as must be the despair of the copyists, who, however, never cease attempting it. The only defect is a little clumsiness in the Madonna's hand. The picture was lost for two centuries and it then changed owners for twelve crowns, the buyer being a bookseller. The bookseller found a ready purchaser in the director of the Grand Duke Ferdinand III's gallery, and the Grand Duke so esteemed it that he carried it with him on all his journeys, just as Sir George Beaumont, the English connoisseur, never travelled without a favourite Claude. Hence its name. Another Andrea del Sarto, the "Disputa sulla Trinità," No. 172, is close by, nobly drawn but again not of his absolute best, and then five more Raphaels or putative Raphaels—No. 171, Tommaso Inghirami; No. 61, Angelo Doni, the collector and the friend of artists, for whom Michelangelo painted his "Holy Family" in the Uffizi. No. 59, Maddalena Doni; and above all No. 174, "The Vision of Ezekiel," that little great picture, so strong and spirited, and—to coin a word—Sixtinish. All these, I may



MADONNA DEL GRANDUCA

FROM THE PAINTING BY RAPHAEL IN THE PITTI

say, are questioned by experts; but some very fine hand is to be seen in them any way. Over the "Ezekiel" is still another, No. 165, the "Madonna detta del Baldacchino," which is so much better in the photographs. Next this group—No. 164—we find Raphael's friend Perugino with an Entombment, but it lacks his divine glow; and above it a soft and mellow and easy Andrea del Sarto, No. 163, which ought to be in a church rather than here. A better Perugino is No. 42, which has all his sweetness, but to call it the Magdalen is surely wrong; and close by it a rather formal Fra Bartolommeo, No. 159, "Gesu Resuscitato," from the church of SS. Annunziata, in which once again the babies who hold the circular landscape are the best part. After another doubtful Raphael—the sly Cardinal Dovizio da Bibbiena, No. 158—let us look at an unquestioned one, No. 151, the most popular picture in Florence, if not the whole world, Raphael's "Madonna della Sedia," that beautiful rich scene of maternal tenderness and infantine peace. Personally I do not find myself often under Raphael's spell; but here he conquers. The Madonna again is without enough expression, but her arms are right, and the Child is right, and the colour is so rich, almost Venetian in that odd way in which Raphael now and then could suggest Venice (see opposite page 316).

It is interesting to compare Raphael's two famous Madonnas in this room: this one belonging to his Roman period and the other, opposite it, to Florence, with the differences so marked. For by the time he painted this he knew more of life and human affection. This picture, I suppose, might be called the consummation of Renaissance painting in fullest bloom: the latest triumph of that impulse. I do not say it is the best; but it may be called a crown on the whole movement both in subject and

treatment. Think of the gulf between the Cimabue Madonna and the Giotto Madonna, side by side, which we saw in the Accademia, and this. With so many vivid sympathies Giotto must have wanted with all his soul to make the mother motherly and the child childlike; but the time was not yet; his hand was neither free nor fit. Between Giotto and Raphael had to come many things before such treatment as this was possible; most of all, I think, Donatello and Luca della Robbia had to come between, for they were the most valuable reconcilers of God and man of them all. They were the first to bring a tender humanity into the Church, the first to know that a mother's fingers, holding a baby, sink into its soft little body. Without them I doubt if the "Madonna della Sedia" could be the idyll of protective solicitude and loving pride that it is.

I am left as a rule so cold by the work of Carlo Dolci that it is a pleasure to call attention to No. 154 with the perfectly drawn and painted infant S. John.

The Sala di Giove brings us to Venetian painting indeed, and glorious painting too, for next the door is Titian's "Bella," No. 18, the lady in the peacock-blue dress with purple sleeves, all richly embroidered in gold, whom to see once is to remember for ever. On the other side of the door is Andrea's brilliant "S. John the Baptist as a Boy," No. 272, and then the noblest Fra Bartolommeo here, a Deposition, No. 64, not good in colour, but superbly drawn and pitiful. In this room also is the monk's great spirited figure of S. Marco, for the convent of that name. Between them is a Tintoretto, No. 131, Vincenzo Zeno, one of his ruddy old men, with a glimpse of Venice, under an angry sky, through the window. Over the door, No. 124, is an Annunciation by Andrea, with a slight variation in it, for two angels accompany that one who

brings the news, and the announcement is made from the right instead of the left, while the incident is being watched by some people on the terrace over a classical portico. A greater Andrea hangs next: No. 123, the Madonna in Glory, fine but rather formal, and, like all Andrea's work, hall-marked by its woman type. The other notable pictures are Raphael's Fornarina, No. 245, which is far more Venetian than the "Madonna della Sedia," and has been given to Sebastian del Piombo; and the Venetian group on the right of the door, which is not only interesting for its own charm but as being a foretaste of the superb and glorious Giorgione in the Sala di Marte, which we now enter.

Here we find a Tintoretto portrait, No. 83, an old man: age and dignity emerging golden from the gloom. Next it is a prosperous, ruddy group of scholars by Rubens, who has placed a vase of tulips before the bust of Seneca. And we find Rubens again with a sprawling, brilliant feat entitled "The Consequences of War," but what those consequences are, beyond nakedness, one has difficulty in discerning. Raphael's Holy Family, No. 94 (also known as the "Madonna dell' Impannata"), next it, might be called the perfection of drawing without feeling. The authorities consider it a school piece: that is to say, chiefly the work of his imitators. The vivacity of the Child's face is very remarkable. The best Andrea is in this room—a Holy Family, No. 81, which gets sweeter and simpler and richer with every glance. Other Andreas are here too, notably on the right of the further door a sweet mother and sprawling, vigorous Child. But every Andrea that I see makes me think more highly of the "Madonna del Sacco," in the cloisters of SS. Annunziata. Van Dyck, who painted much in Italy before settling down at the English court, we find in this room with a masterly full-length

seated portrait of an astute cardinal. But the room's greatest glory, as I have said, is the Giorgione on the easel. Such a glow as this painting generates and diffuses is not to be found elsewhere: a light that only once was on sea or shore.

In the Sala di Apollo, at the right of the door as we enter, is Andrea's portrait of himself, a serious and mysterious face shining out of darkness, and below it is Titian's golden Magdalen, No. 67, the same ripe creature that we saw at the Uffizi posing as Flora, again diffusing Venetian light. On the other side of the door we find, for the first time in Florence, Murillo, who has two groups of the Madonna and Child on this wall, the better being No. 63, which is both sweet and masterly. In No. 56 the Child becomes a pretty Spanish boy playing with a rosary, and in both He has a faint nimbus instead of the halo to which we are accustomed. On the same wall is another fine Andrea, who is most lavishly represented in this gallery, No. 58, a Deposition, all gentle melancholy rather than grief. The kneeling girl is very beautiful.

Finally there are Van Dyck's very charming portrait of Charles I of England and Henrietta, a most deft and distinguished work, and Raphael's famous portrait of Leo X with two companions: rather dingy, and too like three persons set for the camera, but powerful and deeply interesting to us, because here we see the first Medici pope, Leo X, Lorenzo de' Medici's son Giovanni, who gave Michelangelo the commission for the Medici tombs and the new Sacristy of S. Lorenzo; and in the young man on the Pope's right hand we see none other than Giulio, natural son of Giuliano de' Medici, Lorenzo's brother, who afterwards became Pope as Clement VII. It was he who laid siege

THE MADONNA DELLA SEDIA (OF THE CHAIR)

FROM THE PAINTING BY RAPHAEL IN THE PITTI

to Florence when Michelangelo was called upon to fortify it; and it was during his pontificate that Henry VIII threw off the shackles of Rome and became the Defender of the Faith. Himself a bastard, Giulio became the father of the base-born Alessandro of Urbino, first Duke of Florence, who, after procuring the death of Ippolito and living a life of horrible excess, was himself murdered by his cousin Lorenzino in order to rid Florence of her worst tyrant. In his portrait Leo X has an illuminated missal and a magnifying glass, as indication of his scholarly tastes. That he was also a good liver his form and features testify.

Of this picture an interesting story is told. After the battle of Pavia, in 1525, Clement VII wishing to be friendly with the Marquis of Gonzaga, a powerful ally of the Emperor Charles V, asked him what he could do for him, and Gonzaga expressed a wish for the portrait of Leo X, then in the Medici palace. Clement complied, but wishing to retain at any rate a semblance of the original, directed that the picture should be copied, and Andrea del Sarto was chosen for that task. The copy turned out to be so close that Gonzaga never obtained the original at all.

In the next room — the Sala di Venere, and the last room in the long suite—we find another Raphael portrait, and another Pope, this time Julius II, that Pontiff whose caprice and pride together rendered null and void and unhappy so many years of Michelangelo's life, since it was for him that the great Julian tomb, never completed, was designed. Another version of this picture is in the Uffizi and a third in our National Gallery. Here also are two Rubens landscapes not equal to ours at Trafalgar Square, but spacious and lively. The

gem of the room is a lovely Titian, No. 92, on an easel, golden work of supreme quietude and disguised power. The portrait is called sometimes the Duke of Norfolk, sometimes the "Young Englishman".

Returning to the first room—the Sala of the Iliad—we enter the Sala dell' Educazione di Giove, and find on the left a little gipsy portrait by Boccaccio Boccaccino (1497-1518) which has extraordinary charm: a grave, wistful, childish face in a blue handkerchief: quite a new kind of picture here. I reproduce it opposite page 344, but it wants its colour. For the rest, the room belongs to less-known and later men, in particular to Cristofano Allori (1577-1621), with his famous Judith, reproduced in all the picture shops of Florence. This work is no favourite of mine, but one cannot deny it power and richness. The Guido Reni opposite, in which an affected fat actress poses as Cleopatra with the asp, is not, however, even tolerable.

We next, after a glance perhaps at the adjoining tapestry room on the left and a peep into the most elegant bathroom imaginable, fit for anything rather than soap and splashes, come to the Sala di Ulisse and some good Venetian portraits: a bearded senator in a sable robe by Paulo Veronese, No. 216, and No. 201, Titian's fine portrait of the ill-fated Ippolito de' Medici, son of that Giuliano de' Medici, Duc de Nemours, whose tomb by Michelangelo is at S. Lorenzo. This amiable young man was brought up by Leo X until the age of twelve, when the Pope died, and the boy was sent to Florence to live at the Medici palace, with the base-born Alessandro, under the care of Cardinal Passerini, where he remained until Clarice de' Strozzi ordered both the boys to quit. In 1527 came the third expulsion of the Medici from Florence, and Ippolito wandered about until Clement

VII, the second Medici Pope, was in Rome, after the sack, and, joining him there, he was, against his will, made a cardinal, and sent to Hungary: Clement's idea being to establish Alessandro (his natural son) as Duke of Florence, and squeeze Ippolito, the rightful heir, out. This, Clement succeeded in doing, and the repulsive and squalid-minded Alessandro—known as the Mule—was installed. Ippolito, to whom this proceeding caused deep grief, settled in Bologna and took to scholarship, among other tasks translating part of the Æneid into Italian blank verse; but when Clement died and thus liberated Rome from a vile tyranny, he was with him and protected his corpse from the angry mob. That was in 1534, when Ippolito was twenty-seven. In the following year a number of exiles from Florence who could not endure Alessandro's offensive ways, or had been forced by him to fly, decided to appeal to the Emperor Charles V for assistance against such a contemptible ruler; and Ippolito headed the mission; but before he could reach the Emperor an emissary of Alessandro's succeeded in poisoning him. Such was Ippolito de' Medici, grandson of the great Lorenzo, whom Titian painted, probably when he was in Bologna, in 1533 or 1534.

This room also contains a nice little open decorative scene—like a sketch for a fresco—of the Death of Lucrezia, No. 388, attributed to the School of Botticelli, and above it a good Royal Academy Andrea del Sarto.

The next is the best of these small rooms—the Sala of Prometheus—where on Sundays most people spend their time in astonishment over the inlaid tables, but where Tuscan art also is very beautiful. The most famous picture is, I suppose, the circular Filippino Lippi, No. 34[illegible], but although the lively background is very entertaining and the Virgin most wonderfully painted, the Child is a serious

blemish. The next favourite, if not the first, is the Perugino on the easel—No. 219—one of his loveliest small pictures, with an evening glow among the Apennines such as no other painter could capture. Other fine works here are the Fra Bartolommeo, No. 256, over the door, a Holy Family, very pretty and characteristic, and the adorable circular Botticini (as the catalogue calls it, although the photographers waver between Botticelli and Filippino Lippi), No. 347, with its myriad roses and children with their little folded hands and the Mother and Child diffusing happy sweetness, which, if only it were a little less painty, would be one of the chief magnets of the gallery.

Hereabout are many Botticelli school pictures, chief of these the curious girl, called foolishly "La Bella Simonetta," which Mr. Berenson attributes to that unknown disciple of Botticelli to whom he has given the charming name of Amico di Sandro. This study in browns, yellow, and grey always has its public. Other popular Botticelli derivatives are Nos. 346 and 357. Look also at the sly and curious woman (No. 102), near the window, by Ubertini, a new artist here.

From this room we will enter first the Corridoio delle Colonne where Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici's miniature portraits are hung, all remarkable, but unfortunately not named, together with a few larger works, all very interesting.

In the Sala della Giustizia we come again to the Venetians: a noble Piombo, No. 409; the fine Aretino and Tommaso Mosti, a subtle harmony in blacks by Titian; Tintoretto's portrait of a man, No. 410; and two good Moronis. But the superbly distinguished Dosso Dossi's "Nymph and Satyr" on the easel is the most popular achievement here.

MADONNA ADORING

FROM THE PAINTING BY BOTTICELLI (?) IN THE PITTI

In the Sala di Flora we find some interesting Andreas; a beautiful portrait by Puligo, No. 184; and Giulio Romano's famous frieze of dancers. Also a fine portrait by Allori, No. 72. The end room of all is notable for a Ruysdael.

Next there is the Sala del Poccetti, out of the Sala di Prometeo. Here are four rich Poussins; two typical Salvator Rosa landscapes and a battle piece from the same hand; and, by some strange chance, a portrait of Oliver Cromwell by Sir Peter Lely. But the malachite table again wins most attention.

The famous collection of auto-ritratti, or self-portraits, of artists, which for so long was in the Uffizi, is now in the Pitti. Moved to Florence from Rome many years ago, it has been accumulating and will continue to do so. Though the collection is historically and biographically valuable, it contains for every interesting portrait three or four dull ones, and thus becomes something of a weariness. Among the best are Lucas Cranach, Anton More, Van Dyck, Rembrandt (three), Rubens, Seybold, Jordaens, Reynolds, and Romney, all of which remind us of Michelangelo's dry comment, "Every painter draws himself well." Among the most interesting to us, wandering in Florence, are the two Andreas, one youthful and the other grown fatter than one likes and very different from the melancholy romantic figure elsewhere in the Pitti; Verrocchio, by Di Credi; Carlo Dolci, surprising by its good sense and humour; Raphael, angelic, wistful, and weak; Tintoretto, old and powerful; and Jacopo Bassano, old and simple. Among the moderns, Corot's portrait of himself is one of the most memorable, but Fantin Latour, Flandrin, Leon Bonnat, and Lenbach are all strong and modest: which one cannot say of our own Leighton.

Among the later English heads are Mr. Sargent's, Mr. Steer's, and Sir John Lavery's.

And here as we leave my last of the great picture collections of Florence, I would say how interesting it is to the returned visitor to London to go quickly to the National Gallery and see how we compare with them. Florence is naturally far richer than we, but although only now and then have we the advantage, we can valuably supplement her in a great many cases. In Leonardo the Louvre is of course far richer, even without the Gioconda, but we have at Burlington House the cartoon for the Louvre's S. Anne, which may pair off with the Uffizi's unfinished Madonna, and we have also at the National Gallery his finished "Virgin of the Rocks," while to Burlington House one must go too for Michelangelo's beautiful tondo.

The Pitti palace contains also the apartments in which the King and Queen of Italy reside when they visit Florence. These are also shown to visitors for their furniture and decoration. Florence became the capital of Italy in 1865, on the day of the six-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dante. It remained the capital until 1870, when Rome was chosen.

The Boboli gardens climb the hill from the Pitti. The panorama of Florence and the surrounding Apennines which one has from the Belvedere makes a visit worth while; but the gardens themselves are, from the English point of view, poor, save in extent and in the groves on the way to the stables (scuderie). Like all gardens where clipped walks are the principal feature, they want people. They were made for people to enjoy them, rather than for flowers to grow in, and at every turn there is a new and charming vista in a green frame.

It was from the Boboli hill-side before it was a garden

that much of the stone of Florence was quarried. With such stones so near it is less to be wondered at that the buildings are what they are. And yet it is wonderful too—that these little inland Italian citizens should so have built their houses for all time. It proves them to have had great gifts of character. There is no such building any more.

The Grotto close to the Pitti entrance, which contains some of Michelangelo's less remarkable "Prisoners," intended for the great Julian tomb, is so "grottesque" that the statues are almost lost, and altogether it is rather an Old Rye House affair; and though Giovanni da Bologna's fountain in the midst of a lake is very fine, I doubt if the walk is quite worth it. My advice rather is to climb at once to the top, at the back of the Pitti, by way of the amphitheatre where the gentlemen and ladies used to watch court pageants, and past that ingenious fountain above it, in which Neptune's trident itself spouts water, and rest in the pretty flower garden on the very summit of the hill, among the lizards. There, seated on the wall, you may watch the peasants at work in the vineyards, and the white oxen ploughing in the olive grovos, in the valley between this hill and S. Miniato, for in Italy town and country meet instantly; there is no debatable allotment and waste ground as with us. In spring the contrast between the greens of the crops and the silver grey of the olives is vivid and comely; in September, one may see the grapes being picked and piled into the barrels, immediately below, and hear the squdge as the wooden pestle is driven into the purple mass and the juice gushes out.