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FLORENCE.

LORENCE, the chief town of Tuscany, and some time capital of the Kingdom of Italy, lies in the valley of the Arno, and upon that river. It is a beautiful city, remarkable for architectural triumphs as well as for the wealth of its galleries of art.

Of the immortal artists of Italy, some of the principal were Florentines. Giotto laboured here in the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century, and here were produced by him works in which

Podesta's palace, famous by including a portrait of the poet of the "Divine Comedy," and which was coated over with whitewash to suit the altered circumstances of the building where it had been placed, when this was transformed into a prison. Florence likewise boasts itself to have been the birthplace of Michael Angelo, as prior to his time it had been of Dante, author of the "mystic unfathomable song"—

"Who from the human reached to things divine,
And, still in time, attained eternity."

In ancient days the city had been placed under the protection of Mars, the god of war, and it was not until the year 1333 of the Christian era that his statue was removed from its position at the



truth to nature replaced the Greek style which had prevailed for some two hundred years, and which was noted for its stiffness; but to the everlasting shame of the town, the chief productions of his pencil were permitted to suffer irreparable injury, and amongst them that which existed as a fresco on the chapel walls of the

head of the Ponte Vecchio, or old bridge; its removal then being due, not to intention, but to a flood of the river Arno, which overthrew the sculptured deity. During the irruptions of the barbarians into Italy, Florence was destroyed by Totila; and in more modern times the mediæval factions of the Guelphs and Ghibellines,