

After another brief return to republican government, the city was besieged successfully in 1530. Alexander di Medici assumed the title of head of the republic being elected Duke shortly afterwards. From then on the city gradually became the centre of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and, though retaining most of its past spirit and magnificence, underwent no further expansion of any importance until comparatively modern times.

This does not mean that life in the city was uneventful or that it did not suffer periodic alarms and military threats.

*It did mean that the great age of its creative activities ended with the passing of its confused faction politics. The great buildings of its rival guilds and magnates which survive to-day are the product of its turbulent days.*

**XVII-XIX CENTURY**—In the XVIIIth century, Florence must be considered as the capital of Tuscany. The Port of Livorno was founded and the Tuscan Duchy acquired much the same boundaries as the present province. The Medici dukes came to an end in 1737, and were succeeded by Duke Stefano di Lorena who proved as successful, enlightened and progressive ruler. The tradition was maintained by his descendants.

The Grand Duchy of Tuscany played an important, if unwarlike, part in the European wars of the XVIIIth century, and concentrated on its own development. As a result Tuscany has had many close connections with the Royal Navy, especially after the foundation of Leghorn (Livorno), the original population of which was drawn from the outcasts of all creeds of Europe.

This port played a part in the provisioning of almost every British Mediterranean Fleet from the first visit of Robert Blake, in 1655, to those of Horatio Nelson and his successors. Tuscany later became a favourite centre for the then fashionable "Grand Tours" and it has many associations with English literature. Shelley was drowned at Leghorn. Byron, Leigh Hunt and Keats all lived there for a time.

The Napoleonic Wars led in 1799 to the flight of the Grand Duke and the temporary conversion of the Duchy into the Kingdom of Etruria under a Bourbon. In 1808, it was annexed by France and a year later was recreated a Grand Duchy, ruled over by Napoleon's sister. On the fall of Napoleon, the Lorena dukes returned and Florence and Tuscany enjoyed good rule and freedom from civil disturbances, even during the European revolutions in 1848.

The last Dukes of Tuscany were much in advance of their times but were an obstacle to a united Italy. Under external pressure the Grand Duke Leopold fled from Florence in 1849. In the following year, Tuscany became a province of the Kingdom of Italy, of which Florence was the capital from 1865 to 1871.

At this point the history of Florence can be left, although a final note is required. When in August, 1944, Allied troops entered the southern suburbs, the old traditions were in full force—sporadic fighting between Fascist and Partigiani, creditor and debtor were widespread. The tower of the Palazzo Vecchia was serving its traditional role—it had been seized and held by the Partigiani who were able to communicate with the relieving force.

Latest reports do not suggest any serious damage to the city's monuments. Of the destroyed bridges, the Ponte Trinita was certainly of extreme grace and beauty and its statues of the seasons were very fine. The houses near the Ponte Vecchia were certainly of great importance.

The most valuable exhibits of the Uffizi Pitti and other galleries were scattered in numerous repositories around the city. Whatever has been lost, Florence will remain a city of great charm to all who love the best in Mediaeval and Renaissance architectures.

