

unwarranted renown for the picturesque appearance of the bridge with its houses and its gateways. The second bridge above the houses is a more modern addition and it connects the *Uffizi Galleries* with the *Pitti*, both now largely empty.

Proceeding directly northward past the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, one comes into the Piazza S. Giovanni and Piazza del Duomo around which are to be found five most important buildings:—

1. *The Baptistry*. This octagonal church is the oldest in Florence, and its foundations are said to date from the VIth Century. This building was probably the original cathedral, although possibly, it was always used as a baptistry. It conceals beneath a modern marble facade and bomb protection, some of the finest art in Florence, and the world's finest bronze doors. (See page 12).

There are three groups of bronze doors. An earlier one by Andrea Pisano, facing the Bigallo, with 28 panels, illustrates the life of John the Baptist and the Christian Virtues. On the east side, the Ghiberti doors show in 10 panels, scenes from the Old Testament, including a favourite Florentine subject of the drunkenness of Noah. The north door, like the south, has 28 panels and is also by Ghiberti. The Ghiberti doors are unique and are the first examples of perspective in bronze relief panels. The interior of the cupola is covered with XIII Century mosaics. Many of the other works are stored in the museum nearby.

2. *The Bigallo*. Opposite the baptistry is a decorative and impressive Gothic building, erected in the XIIIth Century for the Compagnia Della Misericordia which concerned itself largely with the rescuing of Florentine sick.

3. *The Cathedral—Santa Maria Del Fiore*. This magnificent example of Italian Gothic was commenced by Arnolfo in the XIIIth Century, continued by Giotto and crowned in 1446 by Brunelleschi's dome. The dome, 300ft. high, is kept in place by massive chains, a precaution that might well have been followed by Wren for St. Paul's, London, to which similar chains were added

during recent restorations.

The facade of the church is modern, but luckily some of the fine original doorways including the Porto del Mandorla have been preserved. The interior has been decorated and adorned by the finest artists and sculptors of Florence—della Robbia, Donatello, Ghiberti, Uccello, Michelangelo and others. There is a portrait of Hawkewood, the Condottiere and help of Conan Doyle's *White Company*. The new sacristy was the scene of the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478.

4. *The Campanile—"Giotto's Tower."* This campanile has always excited intense admiration and often wonder that such a slender structure could indeed stand so long. In the extravagant words of Bertrand: "This slender plant whose flower is in Heaven and whose roots are in the wonderful garden of Tuscany." The campanile was originally intended to carry a 50ft. spire. Indeed from its upper courses project the foundations for the addition which would have made it even more lovely. Around the base are a number of sculptured Old Testament scenes such as that of Noah shown on page 6.

5. *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo*. This contained the most important works of Della Robbia, Donatello, Verrocchio and other sculptors, removed from the cathedral and the baptistry. Some of these treasures have been placed elsewhere for safety.

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Leaving the Cathedral Square by the Via del Calzaioli, turn down Via del Corso into the Via delle Alighiere where *Dante's* house can be seen. Just beyond it, are two important buildings, one with a spire and one with a tower. They are the *Abbey* or *Badia* and the *Bargello*.

*The Bargello* is a somewhat grim structure built with an eye to defence, yet containing some very attractive work. The original *Marzocco* or Lion of Florence, is in the courtyard at the base of the stairway, the walls of which are decorated with many heraldic plaques. These show how very much heraldry is the shorthand of history. Unfortunately, to most of us, these Italian