

EPILOGUE

"The history of Florence is the history of civilisation, of Italian and European civilisation of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Florence was for these ages, what Athens had been in Antiquity."

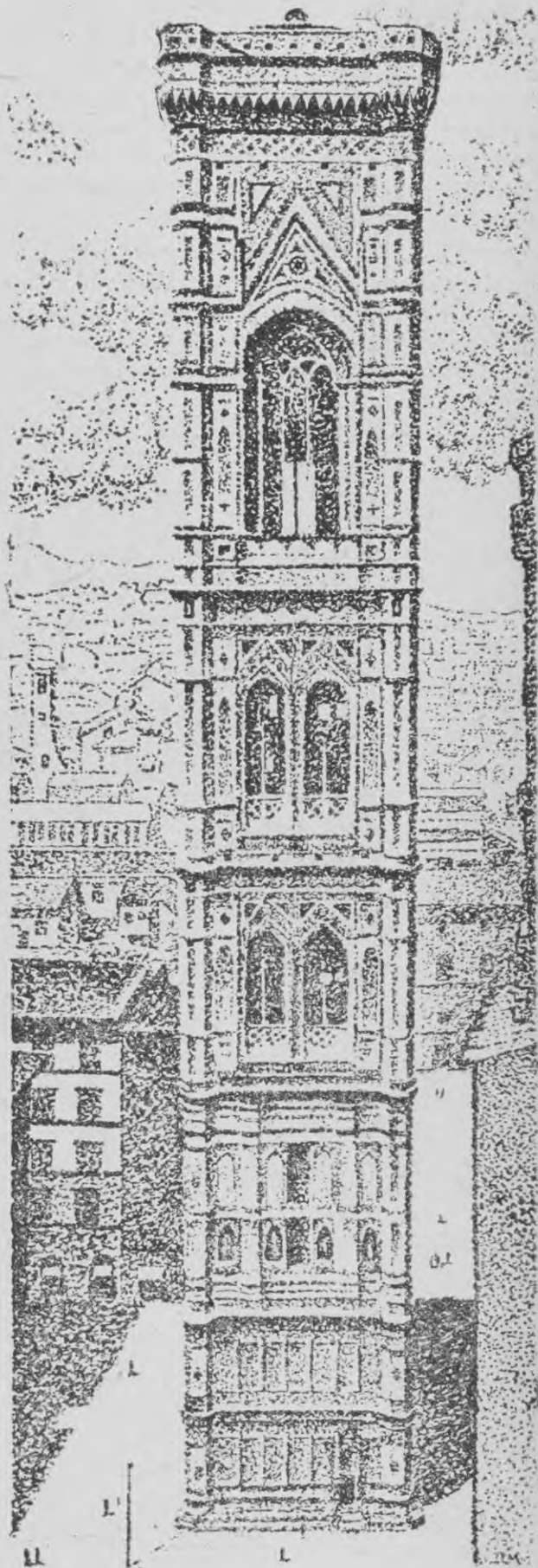
The last sentence of this apt appreciation of Florence's contribution to European culture demands but little further elaboration before concluding this booklet.

Florence, during the height of her power and creative achievement, was a sovereign City-Republic with dominion over other cities, which had once been greater than herself. Despite obvious lapses, her general instincts were always toward the maintenance of liberty and she was in the forefront of communal development. Even her tyrants, when drawn from her own citizens, were benevolent in their intentions and all fostered the best interests of the city's commerce and patronised her artists whenever it was possible for them to do so.

The genius of Florence, unlike that of Rome, was essentially creative. Florence was a pioneer in commerce, a great innovator and leader in banking and exchange, and in the forefront of the creative arts.

In painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature, Florence founded schools from which all Europe drew inspiration. When during the early decline of her fortunes, she no longer held her own artists, Florence continued to produce them, although their work was executed largely in Rome and elsewhere. Politically not so fortunate, Machiavelli advised her rulers.

The comparison between Florence and Athens is truly drawn and it is of interest to note the parallel with Rome. Mediaeval and Renaissance Rome, like its imperial predecessor, remained largely the patron and imitator of the arts, the regulator of the commerce she left to others. Florence was a creator in many spheres and the city preserves its heritage.



Giotto's Campanile.