



FLORENCE

The city of Florence is one of the many whose English name bears little apparent resemblance to the native and yet, as in the case of Livorno, which we call Leghorn, the difference is essentially one of local dialect and Latin origin. Originally Florence was known as Florentia, a name which indicates the profusion of flowers for which the district is still renowned.

Florence is situated on both banks of the River Arno, at a point where

the hills constrict the lower plain of the Arno Valley to a narrow level, which is entirely filled by the modern extension of the city. This near approach of the hills, which are studded with small villages and many mediaeval and older remains, gives Florence its peculiar charm for, from no matter what part of the town one looks, the slopes of the surrounding hills are clearly visible.

FOREWORD

The story of Florence cannot be told easily as a simple chronological story. It is simpler and less tedious to give an outline of the development of the old city and the early communes, to continue with the story of Florence from the XIIIth to XVth century, with notes on its later story. The varied aspects of mediaeval and Renaissance city life; leading personalities; the economic struggle and above all the artistic and creative achievements of the city in commerce, art and administration require separate elaboration and can only be touched upon in this booklet.

As in the case of the Rome booklet issued by ERS no attempt will be made to give more than brief mention of the more important and historical and artistic monuments and collections in the town. For these a guide book and actual visit are necessary. This pamphlet

aims only at giving the historical background against which monuments and collections were created and a short itinerary with notes on the more interesting places.

The Roman city contained the usual amphitheatre, baths, temples and legionary camp, but little structural evidence of these can be seen today. The outline of the Roman "Castra" can be traced in the street plan of the old city. This influence of the Roman nucleus on the street plans of the mediaeval town is one which can be traced in almost every former province of the Roman Empire including such English cities as York and Chester and in a large number of the Roman provincial centres of Gaul or modern France, where the complex of Roman nucleus, mediaeval church and castle are the chief common characteristics.