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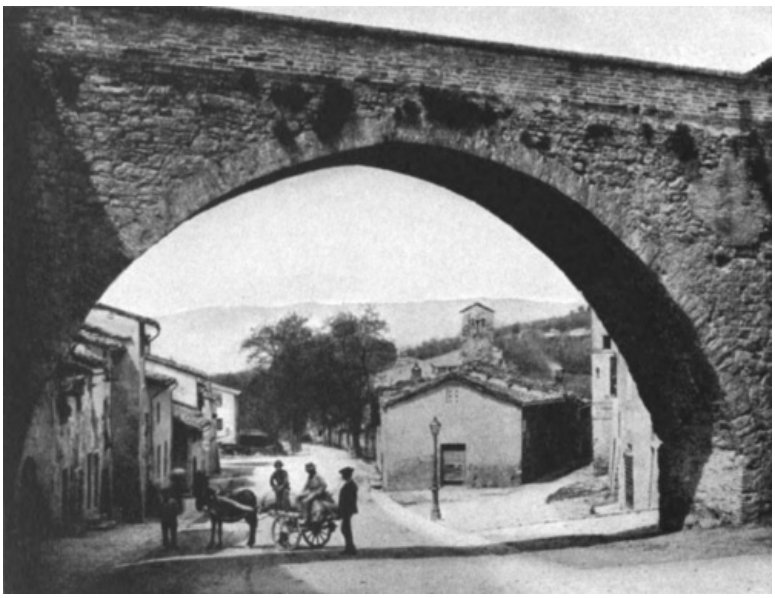
IRMA IN ITALY



PERUGIA. *Frontispiece*
(*See page* 205.)

IRMA IN ITALY

A TRAVEL STORY

BY

HELEN LEAH REED

**AUTHOR OF "THE BRENDA BOOKS," "IRMA AND NAP,"
"NAPOLEON'S YOUNG NEIGHBOR," ETC.**

**ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS
AND FROM DRAWINGS BY WILLIAM A. McCULLOUGH**

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To M. E. F.
A TRUE TRAVELLER

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IRMA IN ITALY

CHAPTER I

THE START

"Of course it's great to go to Europe; any one would jump at the chance, but still——" [1]

As the speaker, a bright-eyed girl of sixteen, paused, her companion, slightly younger, continued:

"Yes, I know what you mean—it doesn't seem just like Irma to go away before school closes. Why, if she misses the finals, she may have to drop from the class next year."

"Probably she expects Italy to help her in her history and Latin."

"Travelling is all very well," responded the other, "but there's nothing better than regular study. [2] Why, here's Irma coming," she concluded hastily; "she can speak for herself."

"You are surely gossiping about me," cried Irma pleasantly, as she approached her two friends seated on the front steps of Gertrude's house. "You have surely been gossiping, for you stopped talking as soon as you saw me, and Lucy looks almost guilty."

"Listeners sometimes hear good of themselves," replied Lucy, "but we'll admit we have been wondering how you made up your mind to run away from school. I shouldn't have dared."

"My father and mother decided for me, when Aunt Caroline said she must know at once. There was some one else she would invite, if I couldn't go. I simply could not give up so good a chance to see Europe. But of course I am sorry to leave school."

"Now, Irma, no crocodile tears." Gertrude pinched her friend's arm as she spoke. "Fond as I am—or ought to be—of school, I wouldn't think twice about leaving it all, if I had a chance to shorten this horrid winter."

"Winter! And here we are sitting in the open air. In six weeks it will be May, and you won't find a [3] pleasanter month in Europe than our May," protested Lucy.

"We intend to have some fine picnics this spring; you'll lose them if you go," added Gertrude.

"One can't have everything," sighed Irma. "I know that I must lose some good things if I go away."

"Examinations, for instance," cried George Belman, who had joined the group.

"And promotions, perhaps," added John.

"But still," continued George, "I say Irma deserves a change for her unselfishness in having whooping-cough last summer, just to keep Tessie company."

"Well, it was considerate in Irma to get over it before school opened; stand up, dear, and let yourself be counted."

"Oh, Gertrude, how silly you are!" but even while protesting Irma rose slowly to her feet, and her friends, looking at her, noticed that she was paler and thinner than she had been a year earlier.

"Come, now," said Lucy, rising, and affectionately slipping her arm around Irma's waist, "tell us [4] your plans. Gertrude knows them, but I have heard only rumors."

"I am not quite sure myself about it all. Only I am to sail with Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim to Naples by the southern route, and, after going through Italy, we shall be home in July—and a niece of Aunt Caroline's, or rather of Uncle Jim's, is going with us."

"You didn't tell *me* that," interposed Gertrude. "You won't miss us half as much if you have another girl with you. I begin to be jealous."

"If there were ten other girls in our party I'd miss my friends just as much," said Irma. "Besides, I'll be too busy to take an interest in mere girls."

"Busy!" It was George who said this, with a little, mocking laugh.

"Yes, busy; busy sightseeing and reading, and perhaps studying a little. For you know I must take a special examination in September. How mortifying if I had to stay behind next year!"

"Then I shall drop behind, too, or at least I should wish to," said George gallantly.

"Did some one speak of summer?" asked Lucy, rising. "Now that the sun is low I am half frozen. [5] Come, Irma, I will walk to your door with you," and, after a word of farewell to the others, the two friends walked away together.

Irma, now in her second year in the High School, had really enjoyed her studies, and she was sure that her ancient history was to be made much more vivid by her journey, and even the dry

hours she had spent on Cæsar would count for much when she reached Italy. It was well, perhaps, that Irma herself had little to do in preparing for her journey. As it was, it was hard enough to keep her mind on lessons those last weeks, when there was so much besides to think of. Still, the March days flew by swiftly. Irma was to sail from New York the Saturday before Easter, which this year came very early. A week before she was to start a steamer trunk arrived from New York, accompanied by a letter from Aunt Caroline.

"Your mother must have so much to do that I wish to save her a little of the trouble of shopping," wrote Aunt Caroline, "and I do hope that these will fit you."

"I can't see that the steamer rug is a very close fit," said Rudolph, laughing, as Irma held up the [6]
warm-looking square of blue and green plaid. "But the Panama hat's all right,—only the rug and the hat will look rather queer together."

Into the steamer trunk during the week Irma put many little things that the girls at school—and indeed some of the boys—gave her as parting gifts.

"I wish I could take them all," she said, as she stood beside the trunk. "But there are so many duplicates. I suppose I could use two pinballs and two brush-holders, but I don't need three needlebooks and half a dozen toothbrush cases. Oh, dear, and all have been so kind that I wish they had compared notes first, so that I needn't have so many things I can't use."

"I WISH I COULD TAKE THEM ALL," SHE SAID.

"It's better to have too many than too few," said Tessie sagely. "Tessie," however, only occasionally, since the ten year old maiden scorned the diminutive of her earlier years, and insisted that now she was old enough to be known as "Theresa."

"It's better for you, Theresa," responded Irma, "for some of these things may find their way to your room. Lucy might let me give you this needlebook, or at least lend it, for perhaps it wouldn't do to give a present away."

"Well, I'll borrow it now, to help me remember you when you are gone," and Tessie, delighted [7]
with her treasure, ran off to her room with it.

During her last days at home Irma realized that Nap was not happy. He followed her from room to room, and, so far as he could, kept her always in sight. When she sat down, he lay at her feet with his nose touching her dress. When she moved she almost stumbled over him; and once, when she went to close the steamer trunk, there he was inside! He might have suffered Ginevra's fate, had not Irma happened to look within.

"He truly knows just what you are going to do, and he meant to hide until the trunk was opened on the ship, so you'd have to take him with you," cried Tessie.

"Yes," added Chris, "perhaps he thinks that's his only chance of finding Katie Grimston again. She's still in Europe, isn't she?"

"Well, Katie Grimston shall never have him."

"But she did not give him to you; she wrote she would claim him on her return."

"Yes, but she isn't here to claim him, and possession is nine points of the law." Then Irma picked [8]
the little creature up and ran away with him.

The boys were very philosophical about their sister's departure.

"If I should stay home they'd be grievously disappointed," Irma confided to Gertrude. "They are calculating so on the stamps and post cards I am to collect for them, that I wouldn't dare change my mind."

Mahala's interest, however, made up for the indifference of the boys to their sister's departure.

"We shall miss you dreadfully," and Mahala sighed heavily, "though it's a great thing for a person to have the advantage of foreign travel; not that I'd cross the ocean myself, for what with the danger of meeting icebergs," she continued cheerfully, "and bursting boilers and all the other perils of the sea—dear me, I'd feel as if I was taking my life in my hands to embark on an ocean liner. But I'm glad you're going, Irma. One of the family ought to have the experience——"

"Of icebergs and bursting boilers," cried Irma. "O Mahala, I am surprised at you." [9]

"Going to Europe has seemed to me like a dream," continued Irma, turning to her mother, "but Mahala would change it to a nightmare," and the help from Aroostook, Maine, withdrew in confusion to the kitchen.

If Irma had thought going to Europe a dream, the dream seemed pretty nearly true one Saturday morning, when from the deck of the great steamship she watched the receding dock, until in the crowd she could barely discern the figure of her father as he stood there waving his handkerchief. At this moment there were real tears in her eyes, though she had fully made up her mind not to cry. For the moment a great many thoughts crowded upon her,—memories of her mother looking from the window as the coach drove off to the station, of the boys and Tessie standing at the gate, and Mahala on the steps with Nap in her arms, held tightly, lest his continued wriggling should at last result in his running after the carriage.

"It's really very selfish in me to go so far when none of the others can go," Irma mused, and as [10]
the ship moved seaward, she was so lost in sad thoughts that she hardly heeded Aunt Caroline's "Come, dear. Here is Marion, whom you haven't met yet."

Turning about, Irma experienced one of the greatest surprises of her life. Instead of the girl in long skirts whom she expected to see, there stood by her aunt's side a tall boy, apparently a little older than John Wall or George Belman. Who could he be? And where was Marian? The boy had pleasant, brown eyes, but a fretful line about his lips interfered with the attractiveness of his face.

There was no time for questions. Before Irma could speak, Aunt Caroline continued, "I do hope you two young people will like each other. Marion, this is Irma, about whom I have told you so much."

The boy and the girl looked at each other for a moment in silence. Irma was the first to speak.

"Why—why I thought from your letter that Marion was a girl," she said awkwardly.

This speech did not better matters. Marion was still silent as he extended his hand to meet the [11]
one that Irma offered him. Then, acknowledging the introduction with a touch of his hat, he turned on his heel and walked off.

"Poor boy!" exclaimed Aunt Caroline, as he passed out of sight. "We must be patient. We must do what we can for him. Had things been different, he could hardly have come with us. But why did you think Marion a girl?"

"I never heard of a boy named Marian."

"Oh—it's after General Marion. Perhaps my wretched writing made the 'o' look an 'a'. I didn't refer to our nephew?"

"No, you only said you hoped I'd like Marian, who was the same relation to Uncle Jim that I am to you," and Irma smiled, remembering that Aunt Caroline was only an aunt by courtesy,—in other words, an intimate friend of her mother's.

"Well, we are very fond of Marion—even if he isn't a real nephew—only we must all make allowances for him," then Aunt Caroline flitted off, while Irma wondered why allowances must be made for a tall, good-looking boy, who seemed well able to take care of himself.

Meanwhile, Marion, leaning against a rail at some distance from Irma, was on the verge of a fit of the blues.

"Thought I was a girl. Oh, yes, I suppose they have told her everything. Aunt Caroline ought to [12]
have had more sense. Anyway, I hate girls, and I'll try not to see much of this one."

Then Marion, to whom New York Harbor was no novelty, went within, while Uncle Jim joined Irma, and pointed out many interesting things. The great city they were leaving looked picturesque to Irma, as she gave its spires and high buildings a backward glance. The mammoth Liberty, standing on its little island, held her attention for a moment. Past the closely built shore of Long Island and the forts on the Westchester side, they were getting into deeper water, and Irma was straining her eyes in the direction of Sandy Hook, toward which Uncle Jim was pointing, when Aunt Caroline hurried up to her: "If you come in now, you can write a short letter to your mother."

"To my mother?"

"Yes, to send back by the pilot. But you must be quick."

Following her aunt, Irma was soon in the small saloon, where twenty or thirty persons were writing at small tables or on improvised lap-tablets. In one corner a ship's officer was tying up bundles of letters and putting them in the large mail bag that lay beside him. [13]

Irma quickly finished her brief home letter. It was only a word to let them know she was thinking of them.

As she approached the mail steward, "No, sir, we 'aven't a stamp left," she heard him say, "heverybody's been writing. The stamps are hall gone—hat least the Hamerican."

"Oh, don't we need English stamps?" Irma turned to her aunt.

"No, dear. I am sorry he has no American stamps. I can enclose your letter with my own to Cousin Fannie, and she'll remail it."

"Oh, but I have stamps. I brought half a dozen with me." An old gentleman who had vainly asked the steward for a stamp stood near Irma. She had heard him express annoyance that he must entrust his letter to the pilot unstamped. "One can seldom trust a friend to put a stamp on a letter—still less a complete stranger—and this is very important."

"Excuse me," interposed Irma, stepping up to him. She wondered afterwards how she had dared. [14] "Will you not take one of my stamps?" she said.

A broad smile brightened the old gentleman's face. "You certainly are long on stamps, and I am obliged to you for letting me share your prosperity." Then, stamping his letter, he dropped it into the mail bag.

"I'll take two," said a lady abruptly, approaching Irma, and without so much as "by your leave," she detached two from Irma's strip of four, and dropping a nickel into her hand, walked off with a murmured "Thank you." A second and younger lady then approached.

"Could you let me have two stamps?" she asked politely. "I overheard you say that you had some."

"Certainly," said Irma, and after thanking her, this applicant, with a pleasant "Fair exchange is no robbery," slipped into Irma's hand two Italian stamps. This seemed a much more gracious payment than the nickel. Later she recalled that the old gentleman had paid her nothing—and this, she decided, was the most courteous way of all.

The steward had fastened the bag when Marion rushed up to him. "Oh, say, steward, give me a stamp."

"'Aven't hany, sir." [15]

"Well, you ought to have some."

"Mine are all gone, too," said Irma. "I had half a dozen a few minutes ago."

"You might have saved some for me," snapped Marion; "why should a girl write so many letters?"

"I wrote only one," began Irma. "You can give your letter to the pilot."

But Marion's only answer was to tear his letter into fragments. Then he followed the steward with the bag, and Irma was almost alone in the deserted saloon.

The letter she had just written was the last word she could send home for a week. It would be twice as long before she could hear from any of the family. She began to wish that she had gone back on the pilot boat. Why, indeed, had she ever left home? She should have waited until they could all visit Europe together. Now all kinds of things might happen to Chris or Rudolph or Tessie—or even to her father and mother—and it might all be over before she could hear a word. She began to be really unhappy, and again her eyes filled in a desperate feeling of homesickness.

After this first attack, Irma was, for a time, able to put the family out of her mind. At the first [16] luncheon on shipboard, which she hardly tasted, her place at table was between Aunt Caroline and Marion. But at dinner when Marion appeared he dropped into the seat next to Uncle Jim, leaving his former place vacant.

"It's only one of Marion's notions," whispered Aunt Caroline. "I fear he is shy, and doesn't know what to say to you."

Irma was not comfortable in learning that Marion regarded her as a person to be avoided. "If only Marion had been a friendly girl how much pleasanter our party would be," she thought.

At first Irma felt she could hardly manage to live in her small stateroom. But when she had fastened to the wall the linen hold-all her mother had made, filled with various little things, and had stowed other small possessions in the drawer under the mirror, she saw the possibility of adapting herself to her cramped quarters. She soon had a regular program. She rose with the first morning bugle, and after her early bath, while Aunt Caroline dozed, dressed quickly.

Then she had a brisk walk on deck before breakfast, which Uncle Jim's party had at the second [17] table.

Sunday morning—her second day at sea—Irma found a letter by her plate at breakfast.

"It's from Lucy," she cried, turning it over and over.

"A steamer letter," explained Uncle Jim. "Are you such a landlubber as not to know that in these days letters follow you regularly on your voyage?"

A moment later she discerned in a corner, "Care the Purser," and then she broke the seal.

"What news?" asked Uncle Jim, as she finished.

"All you'd expect from a letter written before I left home. I wonder how far we are now," she concluded with a sigh.

"Too far for you to swim back," answered Aunt Caroline, reading her thoughts.

Among the letters that Irma received daily after this, Mahala's was especially entertaining.

"To dream of a horse," she began, "is a sign of a letter, so I'm writing because I dreamt of a horse [18] last night, though that isn't the way it's generally meant to work. Tessie's beginning to live up to many of the signs I've taught her, and when I told her I hoped your voyage wouldn't be unlucky because you were leaving Cranston Friday—just after you started she ran out of the room, and when I went on the steps to see if she'd gone over to the Flynns', well, just at that very minute something struck me on the head, and such a mess, all down my face and over my apron. When I got hold of Tessie she explained that she'd heard me say that if any one wished on an egg dropped from a second story window, the wish would come true—if the egg didn't break—but this egg certainly broke, and I hope it won't cause you ill luck. This wouldn't require mentioning, only I thought it might make you laugh if you happen to feel peaked the day you read this letter. We didn't punish Tessie, because she's feeling kind of bad about you, and she got scared enough when the egg broke on my head."

CHAPTER II

THE WESTERN ISLANDS

The first day or so of the voyage seemed long to Irma. She could not lie in a steamer chair, and [19] pretend to read, as Aunt Caroline did. She had more than a suspicion that her aunt seldom turned the leaves of her book, and that left to herself she was apt to doze, although each morning Uncle Jim placed beside her chair a large basket containing books and magazines.

"Lean back, Irma," Uncle Jim would say, "you are not a real bird that you need perch on the arm of your chair. Lean back; I will fix your cushions—as Marion is not here to do this for you," he concluded mischievously.

"I wonder what Marion does with himself," interposed Aunt Caroline. "We see him only at meals, [20] and I thought he would be such company for Irma."

"Irma doesn't need him," responded Uncle Jim. "Come, my dear, let us look at the steerage."

"Don't go below," protested Aunt Caroline. "You don't know what frightful disease you might catch."

"We'll only look over the railing," and Uncle Jim led Irma to a spot where she could look down at the steerage passengers, sitting in the sun on the deck below.

"It's not very crowded," explained Uncle Jim, "on the passage to Europe at this season. Most of those you see have a free passage because the authorities fear they may become public charges."

"How hard!"

"No, my dear. Many of them have better food and quarters here than they ever have on shore."

"Are there many sick among them?"

"The doctor told me of one poor woman who may not live until she reaches the Azores. She has [21] been working in New Bedford, but when the doctors told her she could not live long, she was sure the air of the Western Islands would cure her. So her friends had a raffle, and raised enough for her passage, and a little more for her to live on after her arrival here, at least, that's what Marion told me."

"Marion!"

"Yes, he takes a great interest in the steerage. I dare say he knows those three ferocious-looking desperadoes in the corner."

"Desperadoes!"

"Well, they might be brigands, might they not? at least judging from their appearance. Most men returning at this season—and not a few of the women, too—are sent back by our Government

because undesirable for citizenship."

"Oh!" exclaimed Irma. "That explains why so many wear strange clothes. They are really foreigners."

"Yes. The majority of them have probably never even landed."

As Irma turned away, her interest in the steerage increased rather than lessened. But when she asked Uncle Jim questions, she found he knew little about individuals. She wished that Marion would talk to her. She believed that he could tell her what she wished to know. But as the days passed Marion did not thaw out. It is true he usually reported the day's run to Irma, a little ahead of the time when it was marked on the ship's chart, and if she was not near Aunt Caroline when the steward passed around with his tea and cakes, he would usually hunt her up. But if she began to talk to him, he answered in the briefest words, and did not encourage further conversation. [22]

One day, when he came to the table rather more animated than usual, she could not help overhearing him describe a visit he had made to the lower regions of the ship, where he had seen the inner workings of things. She listened eagerly to his description of the stoking hole with the flames weirdly lighting up the figures of the busy stokers. This interested her more than what he told of the machinery and the huge refrigerating plant.

"The doctor might have asked me, too. It's different from the steerage. Marion is very selfish, never to think of me. If there were more girls of my age, I wouldn't care. There isn't a boy in Cranston who would be so mean."

Soon after this, the day before they reached the Azores, Irma made the acquaintance of the one girl on board, near her own age. Hitherto Muriel had looked at her wistfully, not venturing to leave her governess, who talked French endlessly, as they paced the deck. But now, as Irma was watching a game of shuffleboard, played by older persons, Muriel approached and began a conversation, and soon the two were comparing their present impressions and their future plans. [23]

"I'm awfully tired of Europe," said Muriel. "We go every year, but this time it may not be so bad, as we are to motor through Italy."

The most of this day the two new friends were together, separating only to finish the letters that they wished to mail at St. Michael's.

After dinner, when Irma went back to the dining saloon, the mail steward sat at a table with a scale before him, receiving money for the stamps he was to put on letters at Ponta Delgada.

"Why, here's my little lady of the stamps," cried a voice in Irma's ear, and turning, she recognized the little old gentleman, whom she had not seen since the first day.

Irma returned his greeting, and he went up with her toward the deck.

"It's so mild," she explained, "that my aunt said I might sit outside. I am so anxious to see land." [24]

"Even if we were nearer shore, there's not moon enough to show an outline. Why are you so anxious to see land?"

"Because it will be my first foreign country. Except when we sailed from New York, I had never been out of New England."

"There are worse places to spend one's life in than New England," and the old gentleman sighed, as he added, "yet in the fifty years since I left it, I have been back only half a dozen times."

"I suppose you know the Azores," ventured Irma.

"Oh, yes, the country was very primitive in the old days. The interior, they tell me, has changed little, but the cities are more up to date."

"Cities?"

"Not large cities like ours in America, though Ponta Delgada is the third largest in Portugal. But there, young ladies of your age dislike guidebook information, at least out of school."

"Oh, please go on," begged Irma, and for half an hour her new friend talked delightfully about the Azores and other places. [25]

"Ah, there's Uncle Jim," she exclaimed, as she saw her uncle approaching under one of the electric lights.

"I never thought of finding you out here alone," cried her uncle.

"Not alone," rejoined Irma, turning to introduce her new friend. But he had mysteriously disappeared.

"It is high time to come in, if the night air makes you see double," said Uncle Jim dryly. But Irma gave no explanations. How could she have introduced the old gentleman, when she did not know his name?

"Aunt Caroline says please hurry. They are in sight." Thus Marion's voice and repeated rappings waked Irma the next morning.

"Who are in sight?" she asked sleepily.

"The Azores, of course."

"Oh, dear," cried Irma, forgetting to thank Marion for his trouble. "Why," she wondered, "did I take this particular morning to oversleep?" Dressing at lightning speed, after a hurried repast she was soon on deck. Then, to her disappointment, there was nothing to see. The islands, wherever they might be, were veiled by a soft mist.

"They have been in sight for hours," some one said. Irma wished she had asked her steward to [26] call her at dawn. Not until they were well upon Ponta Delgada did they have their first glimpse of St. Michael's toward noon, and the warmth of the sun was modified by the thin veil of mist. Gradually the mist dissolved, and not far away was the green shore, and behind, a line of low, conical mountains parallel with the coast. Then a white village appeared, and soon the spires and red roofs of Ponta Delgada.

Luncheon had been served early, and towards one o'clock the boat stopped, when still some distance from land. Large rowboats were pushing out from shore, and one or two tugs carrying the Portuguese flag.

"The tugs are bringing health and customs officers. We can't land until they have made their examination," Uncle Jim explained.

"How tedious to wait when we shall have so little time at the best!"

"Are we to go in those dreadful little boats?"

"Oh, it's a smooth sea; we'll get there safely enough."

"The town looks decidedly Spanish." [27]

These and many similar remarks floated to Irma's ears. What impressed her most was the fact that she must descend the steep steps that the sailors were letting down from the side, and go ashore in a boat.

"It's safe enough," said Aunt Caroline. "Any one is foolish who remains on the ship. But I am willing to stay here myself."

So Aunt Caroline remained on the boat, and Irma, with Uncle Jim ahead and Marion behind, went down the long steps cautiously. When she had taken her seat in the large rowboat, she found herself near Muriel and her governess. The two girls were soon deep in conversation, while Marion, some distance away, sat listless and silent.

"Your brother isn't cheerful to-day," said Muriel, as the boat neared shore.

"He isn't my brother,—far from it," responded Irma, and unluckily at that moment Marion, rising to be of assistance to the ladies on landing, was near enough to hear both Muriel's remark and Irma's answer.

"Well, I am very glad not to be her brother," he thought, "and as to that other girl, she's exactly [28] the kind I don't like." And in this mood Marion jumped hastily off when the boat pulled up, and running up the short steps, walked along the quay in solitary sulkiness, with his hands in his pockets.

"Your cavalier seems to have left you," said Uncle Jim mischievously, as he helped Irma ashore. "I wonder if he will condescend to join us on our tour of the town."

When they had pushed their way among the loungers at the wharf, however, they saw Marion standing near an open carriage, drawn by two underfed horses.

"How would this suit?" he asked. "The best carriages have been taken. You know our boat was almost the last."

"Over there are a couple of good automobiles looking for passengers."

For the instant Marion's face clouded. "Oh, of course," added Uncle Jim hastily. "I had forgotten. That wouldn't do. These horses may prove better than they look, and as we have no time to lose, let us start."

Before setting off, Uncle Jim turned about to see whether Muriel and Mademoiselle Potin had [29] found a vehicle. Already they were seated in a carriage much like the one he had chosen, with horses that looked equally meek and hungry.

Then Uncle Jim's driver flourished and snapped his whip, and the horses went off at a lively pace. Irma, indeed, wished they would go more slowly, that she could get a better idea of the narrow streets. Yet even as they drove rapidly along she had a definite impression of clean pavements and small houses, many of them painted in bright colors. After they had left the little crowd near the wharf, the streets seemed deserted. Here and there an old man hobbled along, or a woman with a shawl over her head, or a girl with a large basket of fruit. They met oddly constructed carts, drawn by donkeys, and once they stopped to buy fruit from a man who bore a long pole on his shoulders, from one end of which hung a string of bananas, while from the other dangled a dozen pineapples.

"Fortunately," said Uncle Jim, "as our time is limited, there are not many important things to see in Ponta Delgada. We shall be obliged to look at so many churches in Italy that we can neglect those here."

"I'd like to see the church where Columbus and his sailors gave thanks, when they landed there after the storm."

"Santa Maria! Miles away!" cried Marion. [30]

"Well," said Irma, slightly snubbed, "even if this isn't the place, it is interesting to remember that some of these islands had been settled years and years before America was discovered."

Soon they reached the famous garden, one of the two or three things best worth seeing in the town. When they walked through the great iron gates opened by a respectful servitor, at once Irma felt she was in a region of mystery. The three went along in silence under tall trees whose branches arched over the broad path.

Turning aside an instant, they gazed down a deep ravine, with banks moss-grown and covered with ferns. Far below was a little stream, and here and there the ravine was spanned by rustic bridges. Irma caught a glimpse of a dark grotto and a carved stone seat.

"It is rather musty here; let us hurry on," suggested Uncle Jim.

"Musty!" protested Irma. "It is like poetry."

"Well, poetry is rather musty sometimes."

Irma could not tell whether or not Marion was in earnest.

Farther in the garden they saw more flowers—waxlike camellias and some brilliant blossoms that [31] neither she nor her companions could name. But there were other favorites—fuschias, geraniums, roses, in size and beauty surpassing anything Irma had ever seen.

"It reminds me of California," said Marion.

"Yes, there is the same soft air combined with the moisture that plants love. Europe has no finer gardens than one or two of these on St. Michael's. We'll have no time for another that belonged to José de Cantos. The owner died a few years ago and left it to the public, with enough money to keep it up. It has bamboo trees and palm trees and mammoth ferns and the greenhouses are filled with orchids. But we'll have to leave that for another visit. It is better now to go where we can get a general view of this part of the island."

In the course of their walk they had met groups of sightseers from the ship. But when they were ready to go back they had to turn to a group of old men and women at work on a garden bed, who, with gesticulations, directed them to the right path.

"Every one seems old here," said Irma, "even the men sweeping leaves from the paths with their [32] twig brooms look nearly a hundred."

"The young and strong probably emigrate," said Uncle Jim.

On leaving the garden the coachman took them to the "buena vista," a hill where they had a lovely view of land and water. Far, far as they could see, stretched fertile farms with comfortable houses and outbuildings.

"Small farms," explained Uncle Jim, "ought to mean that a good many people are very well off, and yet it is said that most of the people here are poor."

When they were in the center of the town again, they sent their carriage away, and then Irma and [33] Marion hastened to one of the little shops on the square, where the former bought post cards and the latter some small silver souvenirs. They rejoined Uncle Jim at the Cathedral door, but a glance at its tawdry interior contented them. Uncle Jim filled Irma's arms with flowers bought from one of the young flower sellers, and when at last they reached the wharf, they were among the last to embark for the ship. Muriel and Mademoiselle Potin were waiting for the same boat, and when they compared notes, the two girls found that they had seen practically the same things, though in a different order.

During their two or three hours on shore a fresh breeze had sprung up, and the waves were high. The boat, making her way with difficulty, sometimes did not seem perfectly under the control of the stalwart oarsmen. This at least was Irma's opinion, as she sat there trembling. Even Muriel, the experienced traveller, looked pale, and Irma wondered how Marion felt, seated near the bow with his face turned resolutely away from his friends.

"How huge the ship is," exclaimed Muriel, as they drew near the *Ariadne*, a great black hulk whose keel seemed to touch bottom.

For a moment Irma had a spasm of fear. What if this great, black thing should tip over some night! How could she make up her mind to live in it for another week!

Their rowers rested on their oars a few minutes, while other boats just ahead were putting [34] passengers aboard. Looking to the decks so far above, Irma recognized Aunt Caroline waving her handkerchief. If only she could fly up there without any further battling with the waves!

"Come, Irma," said Uncle Jim. "There isn't the least danger. I will stay on the boat until the last, and you can step just ahead of me."

All the others, even Muriel and Mademoiselle, had gone up the stairs before Marion. He was just ahead of Irma, and when he had his footing, he stood a step or two from the bottom, to help Irma. The men had difficulty in steadying the boat. But one of them held Irma firmly, until her feet were on a dry step. Then, as Marion extended his hand to her, she put out hers when, it was hard to tell how it really happened, Marion's foot slipped, and instead of helping Irma he fell against her, almost throwing her into the tossing waves.

Irma, however, fortunately kept her presence of mind. Not only did she grasp the guard rope [35] quickly, but with her other arm she held Marion firmly. Their feet were wet by the dashing waves, but there was no further damage. They had had a great fright, though Marion seemed to suffer the most. When Irma relaxed her hold, she could walk up to the deck unaided, but Marion had to be supported by a boatman, until Uncle Jim, closely following, drew his arm through his, and so helped him to the deck.

Not even Aunt Caroline realized what had happened, when Irma said she must go to her room to change her wet shoes. This she did quickly, as she wished to see all she could of the coast of beautiful St. Michael's.

"Tell me now," said Aunt Caroline, from the depths of her chair, "was going ashore really worth while?"

"Yes, indeed, you shouldn't have missed it."

"Ah, well, I was there years ago, visiting cousins who lived there. But they are now dead, and everything would be so changed. I am told they have electric lights, not only in Ponta Delgada, but in the villages near by, and I don't suppose you met a single woman in the long capote, with its queer hood, nor even one man in a dark carpuccia."

"Why, yes," responded Irma, smiling, "I met them on some post cards, but nowhere else."

Irma hastened through her dinner that evening. Marion did not appear, but the old gentleman [36] came to her, and placed himself in Aunt Caroline's vacant chair. He entered into a long conversation—or rather a monologue, since in answer to Irma's brief questions he did most of the talking.

He told Irma how isolated the islanders were from one another, so that on Corvo, and one or two of the others, if the crops fail, or there is any disaster, they signal for help by means of bonfires. Some of them have mails to Portugal only once in two or three months. Ponta Delgada is much better off, with boats at least twice a month to Lisbon, and fairly good communication with other places. "But if I had time," continued the old gentleman, "I could find nothing more healthful and pleasant than a cruise around these nine Western Islands."

"How large are they?" asked Irma abruptly.

"Well, they cover more water than land. St. Mary, St. Michael's nearest neighbor, is fifty miles [37] away, and Terceira, the next neighbor, is ninety miles off. But St. Michael's, the largest of them all, is only thirty-seven miles long by nine broad, and Corvo, the smallest, you could almost put in your pocket with its four and a half miles of length and three of breadth. But what they lack in size they make up in climate."

"Then I don't see why the men are so ready to leave the islands."

"To make money, my child. If Portugal were better off, the islands would share her prosperity. But they share the political troubles of the mother country. Many farms produce barely enough for the tenants, who have to deal with exacting landlords. But some of the large landowners, especially those who raise pineapples, grow rich. The oranges and bananas that they send to Lisbon, and their butter and cheese, too, make money for the producers. But the islands won't be really prosperous until they have more manufactures."

In his soliloquy, the old gentleman seemed to have forgotten Irma, and she was on the point of calling his attention to the particularly high and rugged aspect of the coast they were then passing, when he continued, "St. Michael's, I believe, has made a good beginning with carriages and furniture for its own use, and soap and potato alcohol for export, and in time—but, my dear child, I am boring you to death——"

"Oh, no, but isn't the coast beautiful, with that veil of mist around the tops of those mountains; [38] what a pity it grows dark."

"What a pity it has grown so damp that I must order you in," said the old gentleman kindly, and [39] though he was neither uncle nor aunt, and no real authority, Irma found herself following him within, as she turned her back to the Western Islands.

CHAPTER III

TOWARD THE CONTINENT

"Aren't you tired of hearing people wonder when we shall arrive at Gibraltar?"

"They needn't wonder. This is a slow boat, but we have averaged about three hundred and twenty-five miles every day, so we must get in early Tuesday unless something unusual happens. A high wind may spring up, but even then we are pretty certain to come in sight of Gibraltar before night."

"Oh, I can hardly wait until then," began Irma. "I hope we can go up on top of the Rock, and down in the dungeons, and everywhere." Muriel, who was walking with Irma and Marion, looked surprised at her friend's enthusiasm, and even a trifle bored.

"Don't talk like a school book," she whispered, and Irma, reddening, glanced up at Marion, to see [40] if he shared Muriel's strange distaste for history. But he gave no sign.

Since leaving the Azores, Muriel's frank friendliness for Irma had added much to the pleasure of the two girls. Though they had been brought up so differently, they had much in common. Muriel's winters were usually spent there, but she had also travelled widely. She had been educated by governesses, and yet Irma could but notice that she was less well informed in history and had less interest in books than many of her own friends at home. Irma did not compare her own knowledge with Muriel's, but an impartial critic would probably have decided that, whatever might be the real merits of the two systems, Irma had profited the more from the education given her. In modern French and German, however, Muriel certainly was proficient, and when she complained of Mademoiselle Potin, Irma would tell her to be thankful that she had so good a chance to practice French.

Since the day at St. Michael's, Marion had ceased to avoid Irma, and though he spent little time [41] with her, he was evidently trying to be friendly. He never referred to his misadventure coming on board. Aunt Caroline had brought Irma his thanks.

"He is very nervous, as you must have noticed," she said, "and he may be unable to talk to you about this. For he feels that he has disgraced himself again; and though he is incorrect in this, still I appreciate his feelings, and hope you will accept his thanks."

"Why, there's really nothing to thank me for," began Irma.

"Oh, yes, my dear, we all think differently. You certainly have great presence of mind. Poor Marion."

In spite of Aunt Caroline's sympathetic tones, Irma did not pity Marion. He was a fine, manly-looking boy, and the sea air had brought color to his face, while his fretful expression had almost gone.

After the first day or two at sea Irma had begun to make new acquaintances. Among them was a little girl who greatly reminded her of Tessie as she had been a few years earlier. So one day she called her to listen to the steamer letter from Tessie, that she had found under her plate that morning.

"Dear Irma, when you read this—for I hope Uncle Jim will give my letter to you—you will be far [42] out on the ocean, where it is very deep, with no islands or peninsulas in sight, and I hope you will be careful not to fall overboard. But please look over the edge of the boat once in a while to see if there are any whales about. Of course, I hope they won't be large enough to upset your steamboat, but if you see one, please take a photograph and send it to me, for I never saw a photograph of a truly, live whale.

"I can't tell you any news, because I am writing this before you leave home, so you'll be sure to get it. I would feel too badly to write after you get started.

"From your loving Tessie."

The letter interested little Jean very much. She had already heard about Tessie and Nap, and now she rushed to the edge of the deck, and when Irma followed her, the child upturned to her a disappointed face.

"I can't see one."

"One what?"

"A whale—and Tessie will be so disappointed. I know she wants that photograph."

"No matter, I can take your photograph, only you must smile."

So Jean smiled, and the photograph was taken with the camera that Uncle Jim had given Irma. [43]

"It will be more fun to look for Gibraltar than for whales. To-morrow we must all have our eyes open."

"What's Gibraltar?"

"The great big rock where we are going to land."

"I don't want to land on a rock," pouted Jean. "I want to go ashore."

"Oh, we'll go ashore, too."

That evening there was a dance on the ship. The upper deck was covered with canvas, and canvas enclosed the sides. Gay bunting and English and American flags brightened the improvised ballroom, and most of the younger passengers, as well as not a few of the elder, spent at least part of the evening there.

"Hasn't Marion been here?" asked Aunt Caroline, when she and Uncle Jim appeared on the scene.

"I haven't seen him," responded Irma.

"What a goose he is!" exclaimed Uncle Jim.

"He's very grumpy, isn't he?" commented Muriel, but Irma made no reply.

On Tuesday Irma was on deck early. In the distance a thin dark line after a time took on height and breadth. [44]

"Cape Trafalgar!" some one exclaimed.

"Europe at last!" thought Irma.

"What do you think of Spain?" asked Uncle Jim, standing beside her.

"It seems to be chiefly brown cliffs. And so few villages! Where are the cities?"

"You'll find seaports only where there are harbors. They are not generally found on rocky promontories."

Irma turned about. Yes, the speaker was indeed Marion, whose approach she had not observed.

"Oh, Cadiz is not so very far to the north there," interposed Uncle Jim, in an effort to throw oil on the troubled waters, "and we cannot tell just what lies behind those heights. What is there, Marion? You've been in Spain."

But Marion had disappeared.

After passing Trafalgar, the *Ariadne* kept nearer shore. Now there was a house in sight, again a little white hamlet lying low at the base of the brown, bare cliffs.

Far ahead the clouds took on new shapes, and did not change. Could that be the huge bulk of Gibraltar, seen through a mist?

Uncle Jim laughed when Irma put the question to him. [45]

"You are looking in the wrong direction."

"Then it must be Africa. Oh, I wish we might go nearer."

"In that case you might miss the Rock altogether, and take the chance, too, of being wrecked on a savage coast."

But the Spanish shore gained in interest. Here and there small fishing boats pushed out. Sometimes steamboats were in sight, smaller than the *Ariadne* yet of good size, traders along the coast from London, perhaps, to Spanish or French ports. Muriel and Irma amused themselves guessing their nationality, with Uncle Jim as referee. Strange birds flew overhead. Then a town, grayish rather than white, and a lighthouse on the height above.

"Tarifa," some one explained, and those who knew said that Gibraltar could not be far away. Soon Irma, who had kept her face toward the African shore, was startled by a voice in her ear. "The Pillars of Hercules are near; people are so busy gathering up their things to go ashore that I was afraid you might go to your stateroom for something, and so miss them."

"You are very kind to think of me," said Irma, turning toward Marion, for it was he who had spoken. "How I wish we were to land at some of those strange African places." [46]

"Tangiers might be worth while, but I love this distant view of the mountains."

"Do you know the name of the African pillar?"

"Yes—Abyla! and Gibraltar, formerly known as Calpé, was the other. It's a pity we won't have time to go to the top of the Rock. The Carthaginians used to go up there to watch for the Roman ships. The British officer on guard at the top of the Rock must have a wonderful view. Some one told me you can see from the Sierra Nevadas in Spain to the Atlas in Africa. Just think of being perched up there, fourteen hundred feet above the sea. If only we could have a whole day at Gibraltar, we might see something, but now——" and the old expression of discontent settled on Marion's lips.

"Oh, well, we can probably go around the fortifications," responded Irma, trying to console him.

"The fortifications! Oh, no, there are miles of them, and the galleries are closed at sundown, so that we couldn't get into them, even if we had a pass,—I suppose that's what they call it." [47]

"Well, at least we'll see the town itself, and we can't help running upon some of the garrison, for there are several thousand soldiers and officers."

"Oh, I dare say, but it isn't the same thing as visiting Gibraltar decently. Uncle Jim ought to have planned a trip through Spain. It would be three times more interesting than Italy."

Irma, who had visited neither country, did not contradict Marion. Enough for her even a short stay at one of the most famous places in the world, the wonderful fortress that the British had defended and held so bravely during a four years' siege more than a century ago.

"Marion is a strange boy," thought Irma. "I wonder why he tries to make himself miserable."

After passing the jagged and mysterious Pillars of Hercules, Irma soon saw the huge bulk of [48] Gibraltar not far off, and then it seemed but a short run until they had gained the harbor. Her heart sank when she found they were to anchor some distance from shore, for though the water was still and calm, she did not like the small boats. But Uncle Jim laughed at her fears, assuring her that they would be taken off in a comfortable tender.

The tender was slow in coming, and during the time of waiting some passengers fretted and fumed. "If they don't get us in by sunset they may not let us land at all. There is such a rule."

When others asserted that there was no such rule, some still fretted, because after five there would be no chance to visit the fortifications.

"Come, Irma," said Uncle Jim, "these lamentations have some foundation in fact. But Gibraltar's a small town, and we'll improve our two shining hours, which surely shine with much heat, by getting our bearings here."

"There's plenty to see," responded Irma. "I suppose those are English warships in their gray coats, and there's a German flag on that great ocean liner. It seems to be crowded with men, immigrants, I suppose, for they are packed on the decks like—like——"

"Yes, like flies on flypaper." And Irma smiled at the comparison.

Not far from a great mole that stretched out, hot and bare in the sun, two clumsy colliers were [49] anchored; here and there little sailboats darted in and out, and the small steam ferries plied backward and forward to the distant wooded shore, which Uncle Jim said was Algeciras. But it was the gray mass of Gibraltar itself that held Irma's attention. The town side, seen from the harbor, though less steep than the outline usually seen in pictures, was yet most imposing. Along its great breadth, lines of fortifications could be discerned, and barracks, grayish in color, like the rock itself. There were lines of pale brown houses that some one said were officers' quarters, and an old ruin, the remains of an ancient Moorish castle.

A number of passengers were to land at Gibraltar to make a tour of Spain, among them little Jean. Irma had turned for a last good-by to them, when Aunt Caroline, joining her, told her that people were already going on board the tender.

"What are your exact sensations, Irma?" whispered Uncle Jim, mischievously, "on touching your [50] foot to the soil of Europe? You know you'll wish to be accurate when you record this in your diary. Excuse me for reminding you."

"Come, come," remonstrated Aunt Caroline. "Irma may have to record her feelings on finding that every conveyance into the town has been secured by other passengers, while a frivolous uncle had forgotten his duty."

But even as she spoke, Marion approached them, walking beside a carriage, to whose driver he was talking.

"Well done, Marion; so you jumped off ahead, and though it's a queer-looking outfit, it will probably have to suit your critical aunt."

"It's much better than most carriages here," replied Marion, a trifle indignantly; "some of them have only one horse."

"You are very thoughtful, Marion," said Aunt Caroline, as they took their places in the brown, canopied phaeton. "No, not now, not now," she cried, as a tall, dignified Spaniard thrust a basket of flowers toward her. "Orange blossoms and pansies are almost irresistible, but it is wiser to wait until we are on our way back to the boat."

Marion's face had brightened at Aunt Caroline's praise, and thus, in good humor, he chatted [51] pleasantly with Irma as they drove on. So long was the procession of vehicles ahead of them that their own carriage went slowly through the narrow street. A Moor in flowing white robes and huge turban attracted Irma's attention, as she observed him seated in the doorway of a warehouse on the dock. Farther on they saw a boy of perhaps seventeen, similarly arrayed, pushing a baby carriage.

"The servant of an English officer," Uncle Jim explained. "Look your hardest at him, for we shall not see many of his kind after this. It is now past the hour when the Moorish market closes. After that all Moors must be out of the town in their homes outside the gates, except those employed in private families."

As the carriage turned into the long, crooked thoroughfare that is the chief business street of Gibraltar, the driver pulled up before a small shop that had a sign "New York Newspapers."

"He knows what we need; run, Marion, and get us the latest news."

"Yes, Aunt Caroline." But there was disappointment on Marion's face when he returned a few moments later.

"There was another liner in early this morning, and all the latest papers are gone. They have only [52] the European editions of New York papers, and the two I could get are a week old."

"No matter, son, you did the best you could."

"These are two or three days later than the last we saw in New York, and as they have no bad news, or I might say no news at all, we may be thankful. But we must move on. In this bustling town there's no time to stand still."

"What interesting shops!" began Irma.

"Oh, they're ugly and dingy," said Marion.

"In Europe we're almost bound to admire the dingy, if not the ugly," returned Uncle Jim.

"Where are we going?" asked Aunt Caroline.

"Out to the jumping-off place," said Marion. "That won't take long. After that we can go shopping, or at least you can."

"There's a great deal I can enjoy," said Irma pleasantly.

Then they drove on past a park where boys were romping on a gravelled playground, while in [53] another portion officers played cricket. They passed many soldiers in khaki, and here and there a red coat. A sloping road led up to a set of officers' quarters, detached houses, shaded by tropical trees. Here they noticed a girl on horseback, a young girl of about Irma's age, with her hair hanging in a long braid beneath her broad, felt hat, and not far from her two or three girls driving.

At the little Trafalgar burying-ground their driver paused a moment that they might read the inscriptions on some of the monuments, marking the burial places of many brave English patriots. They had time for a bare glance at the old Moorish garden across the road.

"This is the jumping-off place," cried Marion, as they came in sight of the water. At one side was a pool where the soldiers bathed, and near by the officers' bathing-houses.

"I know that I should be turning back," said Aunt Caroline. "My special shop is up Gunners' Lane, and when I have been left there, you others may inspect the town. At the most there isn't much time."

Marion, however, insisted on staying with Aunt Caroline.

"Very well, then. After we have spent all our money on antiques, we'll meet you in front of the [54] post office. I noticed it as we came along; and you must surely be there at half past seven."

"Yes, yes," promised Uncle Jim. "Now, my dear," he said, as he and Irma returned to the main street, "we can let the carriage go, as we shall probably spend our time passing in and out of these shops."

It was now after six, and the street was thronged. Many were evidently working people on their way home from their day's labors, but some were shoppers with baskets on their arms, and others were evidently tourists, loitering or running in and out of the shops. It was a good-natured crowd that pushed and jostled and overflowed into the middle of the street. Among the throng were many sailors from the ships of war.

For some time Uncle Jim with Irma gazed in the windows, and wandered in and out of the most promising shops. In his shopping he had one invariable method. No matter what the object, or its cost, he always offered half the price asked.

"Is it fair," asked Irma timidly, "to beat them down?"

"It's fair to me," he replied. "In this way I stand a chance of getting things at something near [55] their value."

"How much is that?"

"Usually one half the asking price. Listen."

So Irma listened while a lady near by was bargaining with the Hindu salesman.

"Never in my life has such a price been known," he protested, as the lady held up for inspection a spangled Egyptian scarf. The lady advanced reasons for her price.

"I cannot make my bread," cried the man, "if I throw my goods away." Yet he thrust the scarf into the lady's hand, and then sold her a second at the same price, without a word of argument.

"These men are Orientals," explained Uncle Jim, "and this is their way of doing business. They mark a thing double or treble what they expect to get, and would be surprised if you should buy without bargaining. This man probably goes through this process a dozen times a day after an ocean liner has come into port, and doubtless congratulates himself on the extent of his trade."

Uncle Jim further explained that things made in India and Egypt were brought to Gibraltar at [56]

small expense, and could be sold for much less than in America or France or even Spain. So he bought spangled scarfs and silver belt buckles, and a number of other little things that he said would exactly suit Aunt Caroline. But Irma bought nothing, tempting though many things were. Realizing that all Italy lay before her, she did not care to draw yet on the little hoard that she was saving for presents for those at home. After they had visited a number of shops, Irma remembered that she had several letters to post.

"You can't buy stamps at the post office," said Uncle Jim. "That's one of the peculiarities of Europe. Stamps are sold where you least expect to find them, usually in a tobacconist's. I will go to the shop over there and get some."

A moment later, when Uncle Jim returned with the stamps, a gentleman whom Irma did not know was with him.

"This is my old friend, Gregory," he said, presenting him to Irma. "If we had not that appointment [57] to meet your aunt and Marion here, I would take you to the hotel to see Mrs. Gregory. It is impossible for her to come out, and I am sorry to miss her."

"Yes, and she will be disappointed at not seeing you. But she is extremely tired, as we arrived on the German liner this morning, and to-morrow we start on a fatiguing trip through Spain."

"If it would not take more than a quarter of an hour, there is no reason why you should not go back to the hotel, Uncle Jim. I can wait here, for Aunt Caroline and Marion may come along at any minute."

After a little thought, Uncle Jim decided that Irma's plan was practicable. But he wished her to wait in a phaeton, to whose driver he gave explicit directions not to go more than a block from the post-office door.

But when after a quarter of an hour neither Uncle Jim nor Aunt Caroline had appeared, Irma was greatly disturbed.

"I wouldn't make a good Casabianca," she thought.

Some of her friends from the *Ariadne* passed her, and one or two stopped to advise her. "They [58] would have been here ten minutes ago, had they expected to meet you here." "No, they are probably waiting for you at the landing." Even the driver shared this view, and at a quarter of eight Irma drove down to the boat escorted by the carriage in which sat Muriel and her mother and governess.

"You must stay with us," said Muriel, "until you find your aunt. She's probably on the tender."

But just at this moment a hand was laid on Irma's arm. Turning about, she saw that the little old gentleman was beside her.

"Excuse me," he said, "but your aunt is over there. She has not yet gone aboard the tender." As he pointed to the left, Irma saw Aunt Caroline and Marion under the electric light near the waiting-room. When she had reached them the old gentleman was nowhere in sight.

"We forgot that we had agreed on the post office," explained Aunt Caroline, "at least I thought it was the landing. Then we were afraid to go back, for fear of making matters worse. But what has become of your uncle?"

Irma's explanation was not particularly soothing to her aunt.

"If he isn't here soon, he will lose his passage on the *Ariadne*. We must go on, even without him. [59] Some other boat for Naples will come soon. We can better spend extra time at Naples than wait here."

"But suppose something has happened to him!" suggested Marion.

"I am not afraid. This isn't the first time he has missed boats—but still——" Aunt Caroline seemed [60] to waver. The last whistle had been blown when a figure was seen making flying leaps towards the boat. It was Uncle Jim, who later explained that he had forgotten to look at his watch until his friend suddenly reminded him that he had but five minutes in which to reach the boat. Thereupon he had decided that his only way was to run as if for his life. Almost exhausted, he was evidently not a fit subject for reproof, and Aunt Caroline merely expressed her thankfulness that he had not been detained at Gibraltar.

CHAPTER IV

AWAY FROM GIBRALTAR

As the *Ariadne* steamed away from Gibraltar, the harbor looked very unlike that of the afternoon. It was now cool, and dark except when lit by flashes from the searchlights. The warships that had looked so sombre in the afternoon were now outlined by rows of tiny electric lights, and myriads of lights twinkled from the town lying along the face of the Rock.

With so much beauty outside, Irma could not leave the deck of the *Ariadne*. As she stood there alone, the little old gentleman approached. "There is to be a sham fight in the harbor to-night. That accounts for the unusual illumination."

"It is too beautiful for words. I must stay until we see the other face of the Rock—the picture side."

"I wish I could stay, but I came only to bring you this. It may be of use to you, as you can have no dinner." [61]

"No dinner! But I wish none."

"Some of your friends, however, may need something more substantial than the view. The company is saving an honest penny by allowing those who went ashore to abstain from dinner. It would have been served as usual, it was ready, the stewards say, if there had been passengers here to eat it."

"But they were all ashore."

"The passengers coming on at Gibraltar were here. Others could have been, but they preferred sightseeing at Gibraltar. Consequently they were punished."

The company's meanness seemed absurd, but as the old gentleman departed, Irma thanked him warmly for his gift,—a good-sized basket filled with fruit and cakes.

For some time Irma strained her eyes for a glimpse of the other side of the Rock. At length, against the sky rose a huge bulk that might have escaped a less keen vision. Almost instantly a passing cloud darkened the sky, and the giant became invisible.

When Irma went inside she found a discontented crowd gathered in passageways and in the library. Loud were the complaints that greeted her of the company's cruelty in omitting dinner. [62]

"We went ashore without even our usual afternoon tea, and no one had time to think of food at Gibraltar."

Irma held out her basket. "A fairy godfather visited me," she said, "but I really do not know just what he gave me. Come, share it with me."

Aunt Caroline looked surprised; Uncle Jim gave an expressive whistle, while even on Marion's face was an expression of curiosity.

"I do not even know what is in the basket," repeated Irma, "though the fairy godfather said it held fruit and cakes."

"I should say so," exclaimed Uncle Jim lifting the cover. "What fruit! And that cake looks as if it had been made in Paris. Just now these are much more attractive than those spangled scarfs I wrestled for with that Hindu. By the way, Irma, are these for show or use? They look too good to eat."

"Try them and see," answered Irma.

"I'd be more eager to eat if I knew the name of the fairy godfather."

"I don't know it myself," said Irma.

"This feast will dull our appetites for the nine o'clock rarebit," interposed Uncle Jim, who had made a test of the basket's contents. [63]

"I am sure a fairy godfather wouldn't use poison," and Aunt Caroline followed Uncle Jim's example.

When Irma turned to offer the basket to Marion, he had left the group.

"Poor boy," exclaimed Aunt Caroline. "He told me he felt very faint. It seems he had little luncheon. Perhaps we shall find him in the dining saloon."

But when they descended to the dining saloon, Marion was not there, nor did they see him again that night. Yet, if she could not share the old gentleman's gift with Marion, Irma found Muriel most grateful for a portion. For some time the two girls sat together at one end of the long table, comparing notes about Gibraltar. They stayed together so late, indeed, that just before the lights were put out Aunt Caroline appeared.

"Why, Irma, my dear, after this exciting day I should think you would need rest earlier than usual."

"Perhaps so, Aunt Caroline. But the day has been so exciting that I cannot feel sleepy."

"It has grown foggy," said Aunt Caroline, as they went to their room. "I do not like fog, and I am glad that we have but two or three more nights at sea." [64]

Once in her berth Irma soon slept. She thought indeed that she had been asleep for hours, when suddenly she woke. It must be morning! But as she opened her eyes, not a glimmer of light came through the porthole. What had wakened her? Then she realized that the boat was still. What had happened? She was conscious of persons walking on the decks above, of voices far away, even of

an occasional shout. Ought she to waken Aunt Caroline? While her thoughts were running thus, she had jumped from her berth, and a moment later, in wrapper and moccasins, had made her way to the deck. A few other passengers were moving about, and a group of stewards and stewardesses stood at the head of the stairs, as if awaiting orders.

"What is it?" she cried anxiously. Before her question had been answered, some one shoved her arm rather roughly. Looking up she saw that Marion had come up behind her.

"What are you doing here?" he said brusquely. "You will get your death. It is very cold."

Irma shivered. In spite of her long cape she was half frozen. The night air was chilly, and it was [65]
on this account that Marion pulled her from the open door.

"Are we in danger? I thought I wouldn't wake Aunt Caroline until I knew."

At this moment Marion, unfortunately, smiled. He was fully dressed and wore a long overcoat. With his well-brushed hair he presented a strong contrast to poor, dishevelled Irma. Naturally, then, she resented his smile, occasioned, she thought, by her untidy appearance.

"You are a very disagreeable boy," she cried angrily. "I wish I had told you so long ago." Thereupon Irma turned toward the stewards, among whom she recognized the man who took care of her stateroom.

"No, Miss, we're not in danger," he answered. "It's foggy, and there was something wrong about signals, but we stopped just in time to get clear of a man-of-war. It would have been pretty bad if she had run into us. So go back to your bed, Miss; it's all right now, and we're starting up again."

Marion was unhappy as he watched Irma walking downstairs. Evidently he had in some way [66]
offended her; but how? She was an amiable girl; he was sure of this. Therefore his own offence must have been very serious. "It is no use," said Marion bitterly, "I cannot expect people to like me. Of course, she started with a prejudice, and she will never get over it."

Now Irma, when she returned to her berth, though reassured by what the steward had said, did not at once fall asleep. For a long time she lay with eyes wide open listening to many strange sounds, some real, some imaginary. But at last, when a metallic hammering had continued for hours, as it seemed to her, she was quite sure something had happened to the boilers, and she drowsily hoped the *Ariadne* would keep afloat until morning. It would be so much easier to get off in the lifeboats by daylight. Then she must have fallen asleep. At least the next thing of which she was aware was Aunt Caroline's loud whisper to the stewardess. "We won't disturb her. She can sleep until luncheon."

Aunt Caroline laughed, when Irma, looking through the curtains of her berth, asked the time.

"Past breakfast time, my dear, but the stewardess will bring you hot coffee and toast. You will [67]
have only a short hour to wait for luncheon."

Thus Irma broke her record of never missing a meal in the dining-room, and shortened a day that otherwise would have seemed very long, as the fog did not clear until late afternoon.

All this day Marion spent in a corner of the library. The ship's collection of books contained nothing very recent, but in it were one or two old favorites, whom for the time he preferred as companions to any of his fellow passengers. As to Irma, he tried to put her out of his mind. The world for him again became a dull, stupid place, and most of its inhabitants were his enemies.

Strange as it may seem, Irma had soon forgotten her pettishness of the night before. Her fright, the noises from the boiler room, all had seemed a kind of nightmare. So on Thursday, which might be their last full day at sea, she wondered that Marion, who had seemed so friendly at Gibraltar, should now be so unsocial.

She and Muriel spent much time together. Though they had not been fortunate enough to see any [68]
whales, they did catch sight of a few porpoises, spouting in the water not far away, and as the day was particularly sunny, Irma used her camera to advantage. Not only had she photographed little Jean and her black nurse earlier, and several passengers whom she best knew, but she caught the captain and several of the officers going the rounds at morning inspection, and some of the crew at fire drill.

She even leaned over the railing and turned her camera toward the steerage. As she steadied her camera, many turned their eyes toward her. Two or three smiled and waved their hands in a friendly manner. Altogether there was not a large number. In the spring, the captain had told her, not many immigrants returned to Europe. Those now going back to Italy were chiefly those whom the Government had forbidden to land. Some others, who had been in America a short time, were also sent back at the public expense, because likely to become public charges.

Muriel and Irma had frequently speculated about the character of several whom they had seen on [69]
the third cabin deck from day to day. One group of rough men with bright handkerchiefs twisted about their necks, and caps pulled over their eyes, they called anarchists, and they had theories about most of the others. Both girls had a strong desire to make a tour of the steerage quarters, under the guidance of the ship's doctor. He assured Aunt Caroline that there was no contagious disease. One poor woman had consumption, and might not live to reach Italy, and two or three others were in a decline, but there would be no danger for the young ladies.

But neither Muriel's mother nor Aunt Caroline would consent to let the girls see more of the third cabin than they could observe from their own deck.

"I really believe," said Irma, "that Aunt Caroline thinks I will catch something from these negatives of the steerage. She is so nervous about it."

"Then I should think she would be unwilling to have Marion spend so much time there."

"Marion! oh, she doesn't care to have him down there. I remember what she said when he asked her one day."

"Well, he goes just the same. I heard my mother and Mademoiselle talking about it only yesterday."

This so surprised Irma that she closed her camera and took no more pictures.

"I wonder," she said, as if to change the subject, "why that old woman sits there in the corner [70] with her hands over her face. Those little girls, I think, must be her grandchildren. Generally she has the baby in her arms, but the two older girls seem to be taking care of it to-day, and the oldest isn't here at all. She's about my age. Why, there she is, sitting by herself, and her eyes are very red, as if she had been crying."

Later in the day, after Muriel had left her, Irma sat down on a settee at the uncovered end of the deck where a number of people, old and young, were playing shuffleboard. Just then the ship's doctor passed, and she thought it a good time to ask him about the old woman in the steerage.

"The old woman is downhearted. Her daughter, the mother of the four girls, died a couple of days ago. She was longing to live until she reached Italy, was sure, in fact, that once there she would recover. But from the first I knew her case was hopeless, and we buried her at sea the night before we touched at Gibraltar."

"Oh," sighed Irma, "it must be hard for the children."

"Yes, very hard. You see it's only a short time since they went out from Italy. The father had a [71] trade, but a week or two after landing he was taken ill, and in another week or two had died. Charitable societies looked after them for a while. They came under the law that requires those likely to become a public charge to be sent back. They have no friends in America."

"I suppose they have in Italy."

"Yes, and though probably they, too, are poor, still the family will be better off there. With no real wage-earner I do not see what they could do in your country."

"I can't see what they will do in Italy, if they have no money."

"Oh, they have enough to take them up to Fiesole. That is where they live. But there, you must know something about it; some of the passengers are taking up a collection for them."

"Why, no! I have heard nothing of it."

"That's strange, for that young man in your party, Marion Horton, is interested. He's been very good, too, to another steerage passenger, a young fellow from Bologna, who is paying his own way back. He has taken Italian lessons from him, I believe."

"You surprise me," said Irma, as the doctor moved away. Could it be that Aunt Caroline and [72] Uncle Jim knew nothing of Marion's doings? Later others spoke to her about the death of the Italian woman and the needs of her family, and then Muriel came to say that she had given five dollars to the fund a Mrs. Brown was gathering, "and do you know that Marion Horton has charge of it? Isn't it funny he never told you?"

The more Irma thought about it the more certain she became that Marion hesitated about letting [73] Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim know that he was in the habit of visiting the steerage. While they had no right, perhaps, to dictate to a boy of seventeen, still Aunt Caroline had expressed herself strongly against his going to the third cabin. Evidently he did not wish her to know that he had disregarded her wishes. What he was unwilling to tell Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim, he would hardly confide to Irma. It happened, however, that at dinner that evening Marion himself told the story of the old grandmother and her young charges. But though he spoke of the little fund that had been raised, he did not mention his own interest in it.

"Some one came to me yesterday," said Uncle Jim, when Marion had finished, "and I made a contribution. I did not know the exact need, but you have made it now quite clear."

She approached him as he was starting out on deck.

"Here is a dollar; please add it to the fund," said Irma to Marion after dinner. Marion glanced at her in astonishment. But he did not take her money. Instead he waved his hand as if to push it away.

"No, no," he replied. "No, we do not need it. We have enough."

Then, without another glance at Irma, he walked away.

"Does he think I offer too little, or does he dislike me so much that he won't take my money?" But

there was no one to answer her question.

It was now Irma's turn to feel hurt. Small as her offering was, the dollar meant some sacrifice. At least she had taken it from the little sum she had set aside for presents for the family and Lucy and Gertrude and other friends. From her it was a larger sum than twenty dollars from Muriel. So it was trying to have her intended gift treated disdainfully. [74]

That evening, as she sat on deck, wondering if this would really be her last night at sea, some one dropped into the empty chair beside hers.

"Why so quiet, god-daughter?" It was the voice of the old gentleman, but how had he learned that she sometimes called him the "fairy godfather?" She was glad now to see him. She might not have many more of those pleasant talks with him, unless, perhaps, their paths should cross in Italy. But she had never ventured to ask him just where he was going. Now, contrary to his habit, the old gentleman talked less of the countries he had visited in the past. In some way, before she realized it, he had turned the conversation in the direction of Marion, and after he had left her, Irma was conscious that she had given him much more information than she ought to have given a stranger.

"Yes, yes," he had exclaimed, "I can see just what he is like. Willful as ever," and with an abrupt "good night" he had hurried away.

"It isn't quite fair that we should all be so pleased at the prospect of landing," said Uncle Jim Friday morning. "Every one seems to think the sooner we are in Naples the better. But we've had a fine trip, no accidents, few seasick, few homesick. Yet here we are with our steamer trunks packed, almost ready to swim ashore, rather than stay longer on the *Ariadne*." [75]

"It's human nature, always longing for change. But we might as well possess our souls in patience. Those who know say it will be late afternoon before we even catch a glimpse of the Bay of Naples."

"Oh, Aunt Caroline!"

"There, Irma, you are as impatient as the rest of us. It is really true that we may not land until evening."

Evidently Aunt Caroline spoke with good authority. It was late afternoon before they saw the rugged heights of Ischia in the distance. They were at dinner when they actually passed it, and when they entered the lovely Bay of Naples, the sun had set, and it was too dark to see its actual beauties clearly. When at last they were anchored, it was as if they were in fairyland. The city was a semicircle of brilliant lights curving in front of them. They were surrounded by boats of every size, all of them carrying lights.

"Must we land again in tenders?" sighed Irma. "Are there no wharves in Europe?" [76]

A fine mist was falling.

"Before we go ashore it may be a heavy rain," said Uncle Jim. "If you agree, we can do as the larger number here intend to do. We can sleep on shipboard, and in the morning make a fresh start."

The others agreed with Uncle Jim, and remained out on deck to watch the embarkation of those who were going ashore. While they waited, many little boats pushed near the *Ariadne*. In one a quartette sang the sweet Neapolitan songs. In another some stringed instruments played a soft melody. Sometimes the music stopped, while players or singers scrambled for the coppers thrown to the boats by passengers on deck. Then, when the music was resumed, the sound of laughter was mingled with it.

Presently a procession of immigrants passed along the deck, carrying bundles and baskets. They made their way slowly to the gangway to descend to the tender.

"I wonder if they are glad to be coming home," whispered Irma to Uncle Jim.

"No, I fancy most of them prefer America."

Just then, at the sound of laughter behind them, Irma and her uncle turned about to see a tall Italian stooping to pick some bananas from the deck. Over his shoulder was a long string of bananas, bought probably in the Azores. Some that were overripe had fallen to the deck. Hardly had he picked these up, when two or three others fell—then others. The poor fellow was in despair. He did not wish to leave them. But he had no way of carrying them. For besides the string of bananas he had to take care of his bundle of clothing carried clumsily under the other arm. While he stood there half dazed, as a companion stooped to help him, suddenly there was a movement in the group of bystanders. A brown linen bag was thrown down at his feet, and a voice cried in Italian, "There, put your bananas in the bag, put them all in and take the bag home with you." [77]

"Well done, Marion," cried Uncle Jim, for he and Irma had instantly recognized Marion's voice. "Come here and tell us how you happened to think of it."

"Oh, it was easy enough to think of the bag. It was the last thing I put in the tray of my trunk. I was only afraid I couldn't get back with it in time. I dare say the poor wretch meant to sell those bananas at a profit when he lands, and I didn't wish to have his trade spoiled." [78]

"But where in the world did you learn the Italian you hurled at him? He seemed to understand it, too."

"Oh, I knew a few words before I left home, and here on shipboard I have managed to pick up a few more."

Did Marion speak with embarrassment, or did Irma imagine this because she had heard of his going to the steerage for lessons?

"*Addio, addio*," cried the owner of the bananas, who had completed his task of packing the fruit in Marion's bag.

"*Addio, addio*," responded Marion, while the man, as he passed on to the gangway, poured forth a flood of thanks.

When the tender had steamed off, Irma went below. She needed a good night's rest, for breakfast was to be at half past seven.

In the misty morning the tender made a quick run to the dock. Just as they pushed away from the *Ariadne* Irma heard a voice crying, "Good-by, god-daughter." It was the little old gentleman. Since evening she had not seen him, and now she was ashamed that she had not tried to find him for a word of farewell. [79]

"Good-by, good-by," she cried, waving her handkerchief. But already he had slipped back out of sight.

"To whom were you calling?" asked Aunt Caroline.

"To the fairy godfather."

"If you were not generally so sensible, sometimes I should think you quite out of your mind," rejoined Aunt Caroline. "Except for that fruit at Gibraltar, your fairy godfather would seem a myth. For neither your uncle nor I ever saw such a person on the *Ariadne*. Did you, Marion?"

"Of course not," replied Marion shortly.

But Irma only smiled. She knew there was such a person. [80]

CHAPTER V

ON SHORE

The arrival at Naples was much less terrible than many persons had pictured it to Irma and Aunt Caroline. No one attempted to tear their chatelaine bags from them; the officers of the *dogana* were perfectly civil; no one tried to abstract their trunks. It is true there was a long and apparently needless delay before their trunks were examined and marked, but they made light of this when once they were in the carriage on their way to the hotel.

The busy streets through which they first passed were broad and clean. Electric cars, hardly different from the American type, ran through them. The men and women on the sidewalks stepped along briskly. Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim made constant contrasts between the Naples of the present and the past. [81]

"The cholera of '84 had one good result; it enabled the city fathers here to do away with many old slums, and put these new streets in their place."

Their way eventually led up a broad avenue that mounted to the heights above the old city. Once or twice, at a turn of the road, they had a view of the bay, and of Vesuvius in the distance.

"There, there, Irma," cried Uncle Jim, when they first saw the mountain. "Let your heart beat as rapidly as it will; you now look on one of the wonders of the world."

Their hotel was on ground so high that they entered it by a subway, and thence by elevator to the summit of a rock whereon stood the hotel. While Uncle Jim was securing rooms, the others, by a common impulse, rushed out on a balcony, of which they had caught a glimpse.

"Yes, this is Naples!" exclaimed Aunt Caroline, looking down on the lovely bay, clear and blue. "But," she continued, "Vesuvius is certainly changed—I did not realize that losing the top would so alter him, or her. What do you call volcanoes, Irma?"

"Them," responded Irma, and even Marion smiled at her promptness. [82]

While they were still looking at the bay and the distant shores of Sorrento and Amalfi, Irma suddenly felt two hands clasp themselves over her eyes.

"Don't forget your friends just because you have a volcano to look at," and then, unclasping her hands from Irma's eyes, Muriel stepped in front, where Irma could see her.

Muriel was one of those who had left the *Ariadne* the night before, and as she had not mentioned

where she should stay in Naples, Irma and her party were surprised to see her.

"Isn't it great that we should be here together?" continued Muriel, after the others had said a word or two of greeting. "The only disagreeable thing is that I am going on to-morrow, for our motor is here, and mamma does not wish to wait longer in Naples."

So it happened that though they planned to spend part of the next morning together, this was the last time that Muriel and Irma saw each other for several weeks.

"It's well we didn't make plans over night," said Irma, when she joined the others at *déjeuner* on [83] the morning of her arrival in Naples. "There seems to be a fine mist in the air; and probably that means rain."

"Then we won't plan a long drive. You can come shopping with me, Irma," said Aunt Caroline. "I wish to look for coral."

"I did not know there was so much coral in the world," said Irma, after they had been out some time. "Where do they get it?"

"From Japan and Sardinia and—oh—several other places."

"But why should it all come here?"

"Because in Naples they know how to cut coral and cameos better than elsewhere in the world."

"It is beautiful, of course, and there are so many shades of pink, I shall never know what is meant when any one calls a thing coral colored."

"You must choose something for yourself," urged Aunt Caroline, "a little souvenir of Naples;" and when Irma hesitated she selected for her a string of pale red beads.

"The very light pink are the most valuable," said Aunt Caroline, "but I will not suggest a change."

From the shops near the water front they drove over to the Galleria Umberto I, a huge structure [84] with a glass dome that gave plenty of light to the shops in the arcades on the street level. Here Irma bought two or three little gifts for some of her friends at home,—just whom does not matter now.

The afternoon passed quickly, and Irma was pleased when Aunt Caroline said it would be wiser to get afternoon tea in a restaurant down town. Irma herself would have enjoyed the open-air restaurants which she had noted as they drove around, but in the more conventional place that her aunt chose, they managed to find a few novelties on the menu.

NAPLES. A STREET VIEW.

Later, they took a drive through some narrow streets, where Irma saw many of the peculiarities of Neapolitan street life, of which she had read a little. There were whole families sitting in front of their dwellings. In some cases mothers were combing the hair of little children, or changing their clothes, or bending over what Irma called "cooking-stands," for they certainly could hardly be considered stoves.

"I wonder what they are cooking," she said, "in those queer copper kettles or pans. I should not know what to call them."

"Snail soup, perhaps," replied Aunt Caroline, "or more probably macaroni."

The word "macaroni" seemed to catch their coachman's ear, and turning toward them, he said some words in Italian so rapidly that Aunt Caroline hardly understood, and then, urging his horse, drove straight on.

"He said something about 'old men,' and 'eating macaroni,' but I have no idea what he really [85]

means, and I do not like the region where he is taking us."

Finally, after many windings, they passed up a street on which the houses were poor, but of a rather better type than those they had seen a short time earlier.

"There must be an institution near by," said Aunt Caroline, after they had met, one after the other, several old men wearing a blue uniform.

This conjecture proved correct, for at the end of the street they came upon a large building, evidently a home for old men.

"Why is the driver so anxious to have us go inside? We really must make him understand. No, no. [86] No, no!" continued Aunt Caroline, and finally, by repeating "No, no," and using gesticulations more emphatic than his own, she made him turn about. But he still continued his pantomime of carrying his hand to his mouth, as if in the act of eating. This he varied by occasionally pointing toward the windows of the houses he was passing, where, as their eyes followed the direction of his finger, Irma and Aunt Caroline saw other blue-coated old men eating at tables close to the window.

"I begin to understand," said Aunt Caroline, "he wished us to give these old men money that they could eat macaroni for us. Now we will let him do what he will. He has some plan."

A moment later he had driven them to an open space at the junction of two streets, where a man was cooking macaroni in a large copper vessel. Two or three little boys who had been following the carriage now stepped up beside the horses, and they, too, made the gesture in imitation of eating, at the same time crying, "*Soldi, soldi*."

"Oh, yes, I recall it all now," said Aunt Caroline, laughing. "It was the same when we were here before." Then she threw some coppers to the little boys, who immediately handed them over to the man at the cooking stall. He, in his turn, gave each a heaped-up plate of macaroni cooked with tomato.

"It would be worth three times the price, though I don't know just what you gave them, Aunt [87] Caroline, to see those boys eat such a quantity, and it all disappeared in an instant."

"It is one of the accomplishments of the Neapolitan street boy to devour at lightning speed great plates of macaroni, in return for the *soldi* of the stranger. Their manner of conveying the macaroni to their mouths with the sole use of their fingers is indeed a regular circus trick."

"If the same boys repeat the trick many times a day, I should think they might have indigestion."

"They are willing to suffer, for they love macaroni. The poorest Neapolitans eat much uncooked food, not only fruits, but fish and raw vegetables. But the macaroni with *pomo d'oro* is a real delicacy. Some of those old men would probably have done the trick as adroitly as the boys."

The driver, smiling broadly on account of his success, as he turned about drove again through squalid narrow streets. Those in the carriage could here look through open doors into the one untidy room, the *basso* that formed the abiding place often for a large family.

"In warm weather the men of the family usually sleep in the street," said Aunt Caroline, "and [88] when you see the dark, windowless room that is the only home that many thousands can call their own, you cannot wonder that day and night so many Neapolitans prefer the streets."

Sometimes a wretched beggar would run after the carriage. "We must make it a rule in Italy to take no notice of these poor creatures. Fortunately, I am told, they are far less numerous than they used to be, and the only way to stop begging is for each to refuse alms. Gradually they are finding other ways of helping the poor here."

"I feel sorrier for the horses here than for the people," responded Irma. "There are so many of them, and most look half starved, as well as ill treated."

"The cruelty of the cab men of Naples is known the world over. Cabs are cheap, and every one drives, and the cabmen not only snap their long whips freely, but use them viciously, if so inclined. But some one I was talking with says that a S. P. C. A. has been started here, and already has accomplished much good."

"But the donkeys here seem much better cared for. I have noticed several that look almost fat, [89] and they have pompons of bright wool, and some metal decorations shining on their harness, and altogether they are quite gay."

"Those queer-shaped bits of metal," said her aunt, "are devices, sometimes pagan, and sometimes Christian, that the superstitious Italian wishes his animals to wear to guard against the evil eye or other ills. But here we are at the hotel."

"Where do you suppose we have been?" asked Uncle Jim, greeting Irma and her aunt, as they entered their sitting-room. "And what will you give for what I have for you?"

"Letters, letters! Give them to us quickly."

"Yes, letters. I found them at our bankers, and also obliged him to honor my letter of credit, but just now I dare say you would rather have the letters than the money."

The letters, written so soon after their departure, contained little news. Yet Irma found hers

particularly cheering, because they brought her so closely in touch with the family at home.

"Napoleon," her mother wrote, "was very low spirited the day you left home, but with the fickleness of his kind, he now wags his tail hopefully as if he expected you to-morrow. Mahala's grief is mitigated by her expectation of post cards from strange places, and Tessie is wondering about presents. The boys, I am sorry to say, do not let your absence weigh upon them. Baseball is now the one important thing." [90]

Then followed some directions about taking care of herself, and making the most of her opportunities.

A short letter from Lucy gave her school news, but Irma sighed, because there was no word from Gertrude.

That evening, as Irma sat on the balcony after dinner, Marion came near her.

"You were very good to go with Uncle Jim for our letters. It makes home seem so much nearer, to know that letters can reach me."

"Yes," said Marion, "I suppose so."

"Was there good news in yours, too?" continued Irma, after a moment of silence.

Without answering, Marion walked forward to the edge of the balcony.

"Shall I ever learn to practice what mother always preaches," thought Irma, conscience-stricken lest she had disturbed Marion, "not to ask direct personal questions?" [91]

Marion continued to walk up and down with his hands in his pockets. Then he stopped directly in front of Irma. "Tell me what was in your letters," he said abruptly. "I had none."

So surprised was Irma by Marion's interest, that at first she could hardly reply.

"Yes," he continued, dropping into a chair beside her, "I should like to hear about some one else's relations."

Then Irma found her voice, and prefacing her remarks with, "There really was not much news in the letters I had to-day," she soon found herself telling Marion all about home, about her father and mother, about Tessie and the boys and Mahala, and last, but not least, about Nap.

Marion listened attentively, occasionally making some comment that showed he was really interested in what Irma said.

Then, after perhaps half an hour, he rose as abruptly as he had sat down, and with a hasty "good night," went indoors.

"Yet after all I have told him, he didn't say a word about his own family. How queer he is!" thought Irma.

"As we have been better than most travellers in going to morning service," said Uncle Jim, on Sunday, "we will do as they do by driving this afternoon. I, for one, wish to see the Cathedral, and there are other churches worth visiting." [92]

Toward the middle of the afternoon, therefore, the four travellers set forth for the Cathedral dedicated to San Gennaro (St. Januarius), the patron saint of Naples. In a cross street, on their way, their carriage drew up to let a funeral procession pass.

It was a typically Neapolitan procession, yet uncommonly gorgeous, with its white, open-sided hearse, showing a coffin covered with beautiful flowers. The hearse was drawn by eight horses, their heads decorated with yellow, and saddlecloths trimmed with gilt. Close to the horses were a number of priests carrying lighted candles, and after them two or three carriages heaped with wreaths.

Irma's attention, however, was most attracted by a dozen weird-looking men in long, loose garments, with dominoes over their faces, with holes cut out for eyes, that made them almost ghostly.

"Who are they?" she whispered to Aunt Caroline.

"Professional mourners, my dear, and those men in uniform in the last carriages are probably family servants." [93]

"Oh, yes," interposed Marion, "that is the way the Romans did. It's one of their old customs handed down—to have a whole retinue of retainers in the funeral procession."

As they turned into the broad street toward the Cathedral, the sidewalks were thronged, and in the distance they heard the music of a band.

Aunt Caroline translated briefly the succession of rapid sentences with which the driver answered her.

"He says there was a special service in the Cathedral to-day. But the music goes the other way, and we cannot see the procession."

Inside the church, persons of all ages and conditions were walking about, boys and girls, young

men and women, some of whom carried a baby in arms, bent old men and women, too, and as there was no service then, when acquaintances met, they stopped for a chat, as if on a street corner.

"The Cathedral," explained Aunt Caroline, "is dedicated to St. Januarius, Naples's patron saint, [94] Bishop of Beneventum, whom Diocletian put to death. Some of his blood, gathered up by a Christian woman, is preserved in a vessel in his chapel here. The precious relic is locked up in boxes within boxes, but twice a year it is brought out with great ceremony. If the blood liquefies quickly, the superstitious people believe it a favorable omen for the city; if it does not, they are downcast at the prospect of great misfortunes for the next six months."

At this moment a sacristan swinging his keys offered to lead them to the Chapel of St. Januarius, and there they saw the tabernacle with the relics, and the silver bust of the saint and of thirty other saints. Though the Chapel contained some fine paintings by Domenichino, its decorations were rather more florid than beautiful.

The crypt under the church was much more interesting, with its great bronze doors, and marble columns from a Temple of Apollo that once stood near the site.

But neither Marion nor Irma cared to linger long in the Cathedral.

"Don't sigh," protested Uncle Jim, as Irma took her place in the carriage. "This is but the first of [95] scores of churches you'll have to visit in Italy. Luckily Naples has fewer noteworthy pictures than Rome or Florence, and your aunt cannot help dealing leniently with us here."

"The only church I wish to see in Naples," said Irma, "is the one where Conradin is buried."

Marion looked up quickly. "Is Conradin one of your heroes, too?"

"His whole story is so sad," replied Irma, "that I have always been interested in it. Though he was only seventeen when he died, if he had lived to be old enough, he would probably have become a real hero."

"Can't a boy of seventeen be a real hero?" asked Marion anxiously.

"I did not mean that he couldn't."

"But you said——" began Marion.

"Stop, children. You'll find yourselves quarrelling," interposed Aunt Caroline. Then she spoke a word or two to the coachman.

"I have asked him," she said, "to drive us to the Conradin monument."

Within the church all admired the beautiful reliefs from Thorwaldsen's designs, and the statue itself realized all Irma's ideals of a hero. In the Piazza del Mercato, they saw two fountains marking the spot where Conradin and Frederic of Baden were beheaded, by order of Charles of Anjou.

On their way home, as their carriage skirted the poorer section, where goats and fowls wandered [96] about as freely as the children who were playing with them, Uncle Jim told amusing stories of goats he had seen going intelligently from door to door to be milked by regular customers, in some cases even walking up several pairs of stairs to the right apartment.

"I have read those very stories myself," said Irma, "so if you wish to astonish me, please think of something new."

That evening as she sat on the balcony, Marion approached Irma with an expression even more serious than usual.

"What is your idea of a hero?" he asked abruptly, as he slipped into the chair beside her.

"Why, the same as everybody's," responded Irma, after a moment's hesitation. "A man who does a brave thing, without fear of danger, and without thinking what he will gain from it."

"Can't a boy be a hero?"

"Yes, indeed—and a girl also," she replied.

"But I noticed to-day that you said Conradin, if he had lived, might have been a hero, but he was [97] seventeen—just my age."

"I was not thinking especially of his age," said Irma. "I only meant that thus far Conradin had had no chance to show what great things he could do. But he might have had chances had he lived longer."

"Oh! Then a hero must do great things."

For the moment Irma was puzzled, not understanding the drift of Marion's questions. Fortunately she was saved the need of replying by the appearance of Aunt Caroline, and at the same moment Marion, rising from his chair, walked off without another word.

Together Aunt Caroline and Irma stood for a few minutes, looking from the bay, where almost [98] opposite them Vesuvius loomed up against the dull sky, toward the city at their feet, with its

square roofs and occasional towers, with here and there a few palm trees giving a tropical touch. The long white road wound like a thread up the hill, and for a moment Irma felt a returning throb of homesickness. She realized how far she was from home.

CHAPTER VI

NAPLES AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

At Naples Irma saw that if she attempted to record half that interested her, no diary would be large enough, and if she tried to describe things at length, there would be time for little else. So she made rather brief notes, which, when she reached home would recall what she had seen, so that she could then describe at greater length to the family.

A more experienced traveller might have been less interested in the Royal Palace, but, since it [99] was her first palace, Irma found in it an air of romance that Uncle Jim was inclined to scoff at. It was a long, imposing building, with eight statues on the façade, representing the different dynasties that had governed Naples: Roger the Norman, Frederic II of Hohenstaufen, Charles I of Anjou, Alphonse I, Charles V, Charles III of Bourbon, Joachim Murat, and Victor Emanuel.

"Poor Neapolitans!" exclaimed Uncle Jim. "No wonder they are restless, so often changing rulers, and until now seldom having kings who cared a farthing for them. Even before these Normans there were Greeks, Oscans, Romans, Goths, and Byzantines, all to take their turn here in Southern Italy. Neapolitans are naturally turbulent and troublesome in America. It will take them some time to learn to govern themselves."

"We are not out to listen to history lectures. We simply wish to see things," said Aunt Caroline.

"But this palace is in such bad taste. I am trying to divert your minds from its hideous furnishings."

Though in her secret heart Irma admired the throne room, with its gold embroidered, crimson velvet furniture, enormous Sèvres and Dresden vases, and its more artistic bronze busts, later, perhaps, what she remembered best of this visit was the magnificent terrace view of the harbor and the Arsenal.

"Do the Neapolitans get their love of noise from all those ancestors you were talking about, Uncle [100] Jim?" she asked, as they drove along the broad Toledo, where the crack of whips, the braying of donkeys, and the shouts of hawkers prevented conversation. Uncle Jim raised his hand deprecatingly, as if an adequate reply were then impossible.

"There," cried Aunt Caroline. "I understand why the people of Naples use gestures so largely. You know they can carry on long conversations without a word. By use of their hands they can make themselves understood above the din of the streets."

"A good theory, if gesture were not as common in the country districts as in Naples."

Here Marion interrupted. "We might stop at the Catacombs to-day, if you wish."

"I don't wish," cried Irma decidedly.

Marion looked at her with surprise.

"No Catacombs to-day, only Capo di Monte," returned Aunt Caroline.

Then they drove swiftly past one or two squares containing statues, one a monument to Dante, [101] and at last, at the Bosco, they showed their permits. They felt the charm of the gardens around Capo di Monte, laid out in English style, but they did not linger in the Palace itself; Marion said the Sword of Scandberg was the one thing he had come to see, and though he spent a few minutes in the armory, he gave but a passing glance at the high colored Capo di Monte ware.

"My mother has some of that," he said, as Aunt Caroline called his attention to a particularly beautiful piece.

"Isn't it very valuable?" asked Irma.

He made no reply. Perhaps he did not hear her. But Irma remembered that she had never before heard Marion refer to his mother.

That very afternoon, while the others rested, Marion explored the city by himself, and came back in great spirits. He had been up in the *lanterna*, or lighthouse, where he had had a magnificent view of the town, and in the Villa del Popolo, a great open square, he had come upon one of the public readers who daily gather there at a certain hour, and read aloud from some of the great poets to a circle of auditors; each of whom had paid a small price for the privilege of listening. He had glanced also at the University, which has four thousand students and one hundred professors.

Of the whole party, Marion, indeed, saw the most of Naples. He went among the fishermen at the [102] wharves; he inspected the old mediæval forts, Castello St. Elmo, so magnificently situated on the

heights, Castello dell' Ovo by the water, and the others. He brought home many little bits of amusing folklore, gathered from the boatmen, especially regarding their belief in the evil eye. In his new, friendly mood, he shared the results of his wanderings, until Irma began to think him a decidedly entertaining boy.

The visit to the Museum took a whole day, and tired though she was at the end, Irma declared she would gladly spend another day there. For now, for the first time, she saw many a fine statue that she had seen before only in pictures, and she was surprised to learn that many of these had been dug up from the ruins of Pompeii; the boy with the dolphin, the boy with the goose, and the charming Narcissus pleased her more than the colossal Farnese Hercules and the group of the Farnese bull.

"Our sculptors cannot get ahead of those old fellows," said Uncle Jim, "though I can't give the same praise to their painters." And Irma agreed with him, as she looked at the Pompeian frescoes. [103]

But neither paintings nor sculptures interested her as did the household utensils, the ornaments, and the jewels from Pompeii and Herculaneum.

"Designers of jewelry and other beautiful things to-day get some of their best ideas from these treasures of Pompeii," explained Uncle Jim, after Irma had told him that she had seen Gertrude's mother wear a bracelet the counterpart of one they were looking at.

Yet as they passed from case to case, and from room to room, Irma thought less of the beauty, or even of the usefulness of these things, than of the unhappy people to whom they had belonged who had been buried under the hot ashes of Vesuvius. In glass vessels she saw grains and fruits that the lava had preserved from decay, and in the cases there were loaves of much the same appearance as when the baker took them from the oven. These homely things brought the sufferings of the Pompeians much nearer than did the great treasure chests, or some of the more valuable objects in the collection.

"I feel as if I had been at a funeral," she murmured to Aunt Caroline, and she was not sorry that the closing hour had come.

"I'll show you something more cheerful to-morrow," suggested Marion. "They have the most wonderful Aquarium here. It can't be better than ours in New York, even if it is more famous. So I wish you would come with me to-morrow and tell me what you think." [104]

"But I have never seen the New York Aquarium," ventured Irma.

"Then you must believe what I tell you about it."

The next morning Irma set off with Marion. She had learned from Uncle Jim that this Aquarium in Naples, founded by Dr. Dohrn, a German, was really a scientific institution where students from all parts of the world could study the lowest forms of marine life, the finest examples of which are found in the Bay of Naples.

Marion and Irma found that the larger part of the white Aquarium building was given to rooms for students and to the library. The fish were in the lower part, underground it seemed to her. As she walked about from cave to cave, for so she called the glass-fronted caverns where the fish were swimming about, she began to shiver.

"Are you cold?" asked Marion, anxiously. [105]

"No, but these fish seem more disagreeable than the things from Pompeii."

"They are certainly different," responded Marion, successfully resisting a desire to smile.

"I rather like the living coral," continued Irma, "though it seems queer to see coral branches waving to and fro as if they were getting ready to swim, and some of the fish are funny, but some are really gruesome. I shall be haunted for a long time by this horrible thing," pointing to a jellylike mass that suddenly hurled itself through the water, and sent out innumerable legs, or arms, ready to grasp and destroy everything within reach.

After inspecting all the cases, Marion and Irma went out the door behind two girls who were talking rather loudly.

"How foolish you are, Katie Grimston," cried one of them, and at the sound of this name Irma looked toward Marion as if expecting some word from him.

Though he made no comment, he, too, looked with some interest at the girls, as they stood outside awaiting their carriage.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Irma, as the two drove away, "I wish I had spoken to them." [106]

"Do you know them?"

"No, but still I might have spoken, for one called the other 'Katie Grimston,' and that is the name of the girl that Nap used to belong to. I wish I had spoken to her."

"One thing may console you: when you once run across people in Europe, you are sure to meet them again. You know we've been meeting some one from the ship every day since we landed. But I'll keep my eye open for your friend, Katie Grimston."

"I shouldn't exactly call her a friend."

"She's a friend until she proves an enemy. But in any case I'll watch for her. Perhaps she's a friend of mine. I'm sure I know one of those girls, and, by the way, wouldn't you prefer the New York Aquarium?"

"Yes," responded Irma, "as I have seen only this one, I am sure I'd prefer the other."

When they returned to the hotel, Marion and Irma found Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim enthusiastic over their excursion to Posilipo, declined by the young people in favor of the Aquarium.

"You missed it, Marion," said Uncle Jim, "the region where we have been is just filled with [107] classical memories. The Posilipo was a favorite stamping ground of Virgil's. He wrote the Georgics and the Æneid there, and you can have as long an argument as you wish with the guides as to whether the tomb they show is really his or some other fellow's. If you say it is, Petrarch and Bocaccio, who used to go there, are on your side. Not far off, between Puteoli and Baiae, Caligula performed some foolish stunt of his on a bridge of boats. Or, if that doesn't content you, you can remember that Augustus was fond of the Posilipo. You can also hunt for the ruins of the villa of Lucullus. Our friends, the Roman patricians, loved this region. Instead of digging up ruins, your aunt and I just sat in front of one of the little cafés and incidentally had a magnificent view."

"Yes, we didn't try to go on to Solfaterra," continued Aunt Caroline, "though some one who had been there told a tale of fissures from which gas was exuding, and of remarkable sounds of water boiling violently not far beneath the surface when you put your ear to the ground."

"Isn't Puteoli the place where St. Paul landed?" asked Irma timidly.

"Yes, my dear, and he found a number of Christians there to welcome him. Indeed, all the region [108] of the Posilipo and beyond, has so many associations that we ought to spend a week here."

"Come," said Uncle Jim, "we must all agree to be true philosophers. The rapid flight of time and the shortness of human life in general compel us to let many delightful places go unvisited. Like everything in life, it's a question of choices. While we try to see the most important things along our route, we must still neglect other things and places that are not unimportant."

"Capri, for example," murmured Marion.

"Nothing could induce me to repeat that odious trip," and Aunt Caroline shuddered at the remembrance. "Bad landings, and boats so overcrowded, combined with rough water, make it positively dangerous, at least to one's nerves. If I could fly, I'd go there gladly."

"But isn't Capri very beautiful?" queried Irma.

"And the blue grotto something no one should miss?" added Marion.

"You children can go there, if you prefer it to Paestum."

"What is Paestum?" asked Irma.

"Not to know Paestum—and you a school girl fitting for college. Now I shall insist on your going [109] with me. For certainly, you have one thing to learn, 'What is Paestum!'" and Uncle Jim walked away, as if quite in despair at Irma's ignorance.

"Capri really is beautiful," continued Aunt Caroline, turning to Marion and Irma. "Its men and women are fine types. As I remember there were quantities of flowers around the pretty little white cottages, and charming scenery at every turn. I don't know whether the people still wear their picturesque costumes, and make soft, high-colored ribbons and weave beautiful white woolen materials. But I imagine it is less changed than some other parts of Italy, and if you should go there five years from now, you would probably find it just the same. They still give a wonderful fête in July or August to ward off the grape disease. They have celebrated it for centuries with dancing and sports, but, as they carry a cross at the head of the procession, they fancy it's religious."

"It sounds great," said Marion, "but we can't wait until midsummer. If I should go, I'd hunt up the [110] ruins of Tiberius's villas. This was his favorite resort, and so terribly cruel was he that mothers still threaten bad children that 'Timberio' will get them. I believe a steep rock is shown from which he used to throw his victims into the sea below."

"Well done, Marion. If we have time perhaps we'll go to Capri in spite of the wretched boats. But [111] failing that we'll visit Vedder's studio in Rome. He has a summer villa at Capri, and if he has not used Capri types in his pictures, he can tell us about the people."

CHAPTER VII

CAVA AND BEYOND

Uncle Jim had volunteered no explanation about Paestum, neither Aunt Caroline nor Marion had

spoken on the subject, and Irma had been too busy packing to study her guidebook. So as they left Naples, as she looked from the railway carriage, she could but wonder what was before her. Soon passing the thickly settled environs of Naples they were in a region of small farms. The season had been late, and the vines were not far advanced, but there were many workers in the fields and some of the vines trained on poles showed a certain amount of leafage. After a while, they had passed the slopes of Vesuvius, and then began to realize, by the panting of their engine, that they were going up hill.

"We stay at Cava for the night, and to-morrow go to Paestum. Of course you know about Paestum," said Uncle Jim teasingly. [112]

"I am contented with Cava," replied Irma.

At dusk the little Cava station gave no hint of what the place was. A group of *facchini* fell upon their baggage, the four were hurried into a carriage, and after driving through a long, quiet street, they reached the outskirts. Here, at the entrance of a house in a garden, a fat landlady welcomed them with many bows. A *facchino* with a green apron took some bags, a diminutive *cameriera*, in scarlet skirt and pink blouse, seized others, and soon Irma found herself in a small room filled with massive inlaid furniture. Curtesying low, the little *cameriera* quickly returned with a can of hot water. Left to herself, Irma was a trifle lonely, and she was glad when the little maid returned to guide her to the dining-room. There she heard a strange mixture of accents, as she entered the room. Her uncle came forward and led her to a seat. As she watched and listened, she found that her opposite neighbors were Germans, while beside her was an Italian lady. Now indeed she was in a foreign country. The dinner, too, was different from the conventional table d'hôte of their Naples hotel. Irma refused an elaborate dish of macaroni, remembering the curtains of yellow macaroni drying in untidy places, that she had noticed from the train. [113]

"If you don't eat macaroni," said Uncle Jim, understanding her reluctance, "you will often have to go hungry."

In the morning Irma woke to the depressing sound of rain.

"No Paestum, to-day!" exclaimed Uncle Jim, as she took her seat at breakfast.

"Paestum! What is Paestum?" she asked, and after that he permitted her to eat in peace.

All the morning the rain poured in torrents, to the discouragement of two or three parties of automobilists, who had planned a trip to Paestum, and a return to Naples by the Amalfi road. Most of the men wandered about the huge house aimlessly, dropping occasionally into a chair in the sitting-room, trying vainly to help time pass more quickly by reading the month-old newspapers and magazines on the little center table. A few wrote letters, and a number of men and women gathered in little groups to compare notes about past or future travels.

Marion held himself aloof from the three or four other young people in the house. He sat in the furthest corner of the long drawing-room, buried in a book, and he said not a word to Irma during the whole morning. As for Irma, she spent perhaps an hour on her diary that she had neglected for a day or two. Opposite her, at the center table, was a girl of about her own age. Often the two paused from their labors—for the girl was also writing—at about the same moment. Finally the other girl broke the rather oppressive silence by asking Irma if she was on her way to or from Naples. Learning that Irma had been in Italy hardly a week, she informed her that she had been there all winter, and with her parents was now on her way to Naples. She questioned Irma about the best shops in Naples, and Irma was able to give her some addresses she wished. She in turn told Irma of many shops and other things of interest in Rome and Florence. Those Irma entered carefully in her notebook. While the two were thus occupied, Marion rose and passed them on his way to the door. When he had left the room the other girl leaned toward Irma. [114]

"Isn't that Marion Horton?"

"Why, yes; do you know him?" [115]

"No. But I have heard a great deal about him, as he visits cousins of mine. It is strange to see him in Europe. I should think he would be at home now."

"Why shouldn't he be in Europe?"

"Surely you must have heard the story if you left New York only a few weeks ago."

"I don't know what story you refer to," responded Irma with dignity. "Marion is travelling with my uncle and aunt. He is a relation of theirs."

"He is in your party? Then you must have heard——"

But at that moment the porter brought a message summoning Madge Gregg to get ready at once for a train that would start in half an hour for Naples. This unexpected departure put all thoughts of Marion Horton out of Madge's mind. She gathered up her writing materials, bade Irma good-by, expressing the hope that they might meet again.

"What can the story be?" thought Irma. "Marion is sometimes queer, and yet—I do not believe he has done anything wrong." Still she felt that for the present it would be wiser not to question her uncle and aunt about Marion. Sometime they would tell her what they wished her to know. [116]

After *déjeuner* the rain ceased, and by three o'clock the sun was shining.

"This was a fortunate storm that kept us here, for they say that up there on the hills there's an interesting old monastery, such as we may not see again. The carriage will be here in ten minutes, so run and get your bonnet and shawl, as they used to say in old novels," said Uncle Jim.

Soon they were on their way to the monastery, Uncle Jim, Aunt Caroline, and Irma.

"Aren't you coming with us?" Aunt Caroline had asked Marion, as they started.

"Oh, I'll follow; I have arranged with a donkey boy to take me."

"Is it possible that he's going to ride?" asked Aunt Caroline.

"I'm sure I don't know. There are times when it's best not to question Marion. Haven't you found that out, Irma?" said Uncle Jim.

"I do not know Marion very well," replied Irma.

"But you ought to be great friends, you are so near of an age, and almost cousins."

[117] The country through which they drove for a quarter of an hour was very pretty, with many trees and shrubs that looked particularly green and fresh after the recent rain, and the hilly roads were far less muddy than they had expected. From one high point they had a delightful view of the village they had just left, circled by hills. On one was a ruined castle, on another the remains of an old monastery where a hermit monk was said to live. Irma felt that now she was indeed in the old world. On two or three hills she noted slender, gray stone towers, and through Aunt Caroline the driver explained that they were used for snaring pigeons.

"From those little openings, like portholes, small white stones are thrown out, which the pigeons mistake for food, and as they swoop down upon it they are snared in nets cleverly contrived for their capture."

"That seems cruel," cried Irma.

"But it would be still more cruel to deprive a lot of hungry people of their pigeon pie," said Uncle Jim.

[118] Now turning their backs on the lovely view, the carriage went up a higher hill. It passed an occasional simple cottage, and they met two or three groups of people evidently returning from a visit to the monastery. They stopped for a moment at a church in front of which was a stone on which the driver said Pope Urban II had dismounted more than nine hundred years ago. A few minutes later they were at their goal, the old Benedictine Monastery, La Trinità della Cava.

"Ought we to go in before Marion arrives?" Aunt Caroline's tone implied that she thought they should wait.

"Marion is too uncertain, and the hours for visiting the monastery are limited!"

Soon the door opened, showing a pleasant-faced monk standing there to welcome them. Before they went within he halted at the entrance, explaining that a handful of churchmen had established themselves here in the very early days because on these remote heights they could be comparatively safe from marauders.

[119] "It is certainly a natural fortress," responded Uncle Jim, looking from the steep cliff on which they stood to the narrow river bed, far, far below. "And a few sharp-shooting bowmen up here on the heights could keep off any number of the enemy. Come, Irma. Can't you imagine the venturesome Lombards creeping up the ravine, only to be held back by the storm of arrows?"

"But it could only be for a little time. In the end I am sure that the bold Northerners won. I don't know how it was in this particular case, as all traces of the Lombards in this region have now passed away. They were so few compared with the native races, and now the people here are Italians pure and simple."

"Your theories are interesting," said Aunt Caroline, as they followed the monk inside, "but unfortunately for them the convent here was founded by a member of an old Lombard family. The site was chosen for defence, probably against marauding nobles."

[120] Their guide spoke clearly and slowly and Aunt Caroline easily translated what he said. He told them that the convent gave a school and college training to boys of good family, and that these large and attractive halls had been provided for them. In the library were some good old pictures, but the most valuable treasures were the ancient manuscripts, among them the laws of the Lombards on parchment of the early eleventh century, and a Bible of the early eighth century. But for all this there was time for only a passing impression, and Uncle Jim was rather amused by the awe with which Irma regarded them. On their way out they saw a number of boys walking up and down the cloisters, arrayed in long surpliced coats that made them look like very youthful priests.

"They are intended for the Church," explained Aunt Caroline, "but those smaller boys in ordinary clothes will go into other professions. I am sorry," she added a moment later, as they stood in an ancient room, built into the solid rock,—almost the only thing remaining of the original abbey, "that Marion will miss this. It is too late, our guide tells me, for us to get admission to the church,

and we must bid him good-by here."

So, after their monk had dropped their visitor's fee in a collection box near the door, they went down the hills toward Cava di Tirreni. They did not meet Marion on the way, nor in the course of their drive along the one-mile, narrow street of the little town. The arcaded shops were dingy and the houses unattractive.

"In Italy you must get used to these squalid, rather dirty towns in the heart of a lovely country. [121] The Italians love to herd together, clinging closely to a habit no longer necessary for defence against enemies, as it was in the ancient times. Even in America they prefer city to country life," said Uncle Jim.

The soup plates had been removed when Marion appeared at dinner. He greeted his friends pleasantly without explaining what had detained him. Though Aunt Caroline gave a glowing account of their afternoon's trip, he made no comments beyond a mere "I wish I had been with you."

After dinner he turned to his book, and soon went to his own room on the plea that he must repack his valise and get to bed early in preparation for their morning start.

During the evening Irma and Aunt Caroline joined their landlady in the deserted dining-room to look at some of the antiques in glass cases along the wall intended for sale. After picking them over carefully, Aunt Caroline bought one or two old iron knockers and a piece of glass that she felt sure was Murano. The landlady's husband appeared at just the right moment to fix the price, and from a secret drawer produced a bit of old brocade that Aunt Caroline pounced on with exclamations of delight.

"It won't last until you reach Rome!" [122]

"Oh, indeed it will. But it is for ornament and not use, and the kind of thing I never *can* pass by."

After this Aunt Caroline added several other things to her collection—an old key and lock, and a fine bit of carved wood.

"If only it wouldn't crack and split in our dry atmosphere I would take some of this inlaid furniture home with me," she said. "Everything in the house is seemingly for sale even to the bed that Madame our hostess sleeps on. Although she is married to an Italian, I observe that she prefers 'Madame' to 'Signora.'"

At this moment the landlady approaching, invited them into the garden. "As Madame the American lady admired old things she might like to examine the lion's head at the door. It had belonged to the great Filangeri family, as indeed did the hotel in the ancient days. Naturally Madame had observed that this was no ordinary hotel, but a veritable palace with ancient traditions and legends, and——"

Finally Aunt Caroline stopped her flow of words to show Irma that the massive lion's head with [123] its open mouth was but a flambeau holder to light the path of guests at night.

"You will need more than one flambeau to light your path to-night," said Uncle Jim, joining them, as they stood there reading a tablet with an interesting inscription. "Remember that we take an early train for Paestum."

"Paestum—what is Paestum?" rejoined Irma mockingly, as she hurried ahead of Uncle Jim up the long marble staircase that led to her room.

In the morning, however, long before their train reached Paestum, Irma knew all about it. The [124] country through which they began to pass, soon after leaving Salerno, was not closely settled. Farther on there were great stretches of marshes where cattle roamed about. Marion was surprised to discover that the so-called buffaloes were quite unlike the bison, resembling large grayish oxen with a slight hump. They are the chief beasts of burden for the country people of this region. Uncle Jim explained that the whole country here was malarious. It had a bad reputation even in the time of Augustus, and on this account the name of ancient Poseidonia had been changed to "Pesto," and if you doubt me, you may look on the map. There, indeed, Irma did find "Pesto" instead of the more classic name, yet she continued to doubt Uncle Jim's account of its origin—"Paestum" was evidently from "Poseidonia."

CHAPTER VIII

PAESTUM AND POMPEII

"There is said to be one vehicle in Paestum," remarked Uncle Jim, as they reached the little [125] station, "and as we are not the only passengers on this train we might as well make up our minds in advance whether we shall fight for it or walk."

"Walk," was the unanimous response, and after checking their luggage they started up a long, dusty road. Some distance from the station an arch spanned the roadway. "It must have been part of an old town wall," said Marion, and at the same moment a tall, short-skirted woman came

toward them, carrying a large stone water jar on her head. In an instant Irma had focussed her camera, aiming it just as the woman was in the center of the arch.

"She doesn't seem to object," murmured Aunt Caroline. The woman was now close to them, and [126] as she passed them she did not even deign to smile or to look at them directly.

"The Temples! The Temples!" A few minutes later Irma gave an exclamation of delight.

"How beautiful—with the view of the sea beyond," added Aunt Caroline.

Then all stood still. Before them, with a background of blue sea and bluer sky, rose the two great temples, the largest of the three edifices that are now practically the sole remains of a once great city—Poseidonia—founded six hundred years before Christ, by colonists from Sybaris in Greece.

"Outside of Athens, there are no finer temples left standing in the world!" said Uncle Jim.

"Until I read it in my guidebook to-day, I thought one had to go to Greece to see Greek temples," added Irma.

"Oh, there are several in Sicily," rejoined Marion, in what Irma to herself called his "high and mighty tone," a tone that always made her feel that he despised her lack of knowledge.

"Yes," said Aunt Caroline, "but for those of us who are not going now to Greece or Sicily, these [127] are worth printing on our memories. I dare say, Marion, with your exactness, you would like to walk around them and measure them to see whether they are what they are represented to be. Irma and I will content ourselves with general impressions."

"I might verify the fact that the Temple of Neptune is one hundred and ninety-six feet long and seventy-nine feet wide, but it would be harder for me to prove without a ladder that each of the thirty-six columns is twenty-eight feet high," responded Marion good naturedly.

"No, no," cried Aunt Caroline, "no such uninteresting facts! All I wish to remember is the soft, mellow brown of the whole structure and its noble proportions."

Then, looking to the slightly smaller structure at the left, she added, "The Basilica is less complete and less imposing. It has something of the attractiveness of a younger sister."

"I don't like its color as well, but I suppose both are faded."

"Undoubtedly, though originally they were both covered with stucco to imitate marble; the [128] pediment was adorned with sculptures, and the temple held other works of art."

They were now crossing the rough field between them and the Temple of Neptune. Some of those who had come with them in the train were wandering about the interior—if a roofless space without walls may be called an interior—and a larger group had gone with the uniformed guide toward the more distant Temple of Ceres.

"That pinkish flower over there must be asphodel," said Uncle Jim. "Now don't rush to gather it, Irma. It would be far wiser to sit here and test the luncheon the padrone provided for us. Here is a good place, and Marion will open the box."

As Uncle Jim made room at the base of a great Doric column, Irma gave a little scream.

"Oh, it's only a little lizard—no, two little lizards, and you can't blame them for showing alarm at a party of American invaders. Why, even Marion doesn't object to them."

A deep flush rose on Marion's cheek. Irma was looking at him as Uncle Jim spoke, and saw that he pressed his lips tightly, as if to suppress an angry reply.

"Before he opens the box," continued Uncle Jim, whose spirits were rising, "I can tell exactly what [129] that pasteboard receptacle contains,—two hard-boiled eggs for each of us, a fine assortment of chicken legs and wings, some butter, some salt, several unbuttered rolls almost too hard to eat, and an orange apiece."

"You must have prepared the menu yourself," said Irma, laughing; "for things are absolutely what you said, except," and she opened a little package, "here is a piece of cheese."

"Oh, yes, I forgot the cheese. But I have opened too many Italian luncheon boxes not to know what to expect, and in ten years they haven't changed."

"*Muore di fame, muore di fame*," whined a small voice in their ears. Looking about, Irma saw a girl of twelve or fourteen, with a shawl over her head, carrying her hand to her mouth in the well-known gesture of hunger.

"*Muore di fame* (I am dying of hunger)," she repeated, standing in front of the four picnickers, while at the same time she turned her head from side to side as if fearing some one's approach.

"It is the *custode*," exclaimed Uncle Jim; "begging here on Government property is probably [130] against the rules, and she fears he will return before we have given her all our luncheon."

"No, no," he cried, but the girl reached out her hand as if to snatch.

"Oh, give her something," cried Marion, "or at least I will; the poor thing may be starving."

"*Muore di fame, muore di fame*," repeated the girl, catching the sympathetic note in his voice.

Then, just as he had given her a roll and a chicken leg she took to her heels, disappearing over a hedge of bushes between the temple enclosure and a partly ploughed field that stretched between them and the sea.

A moment later the *custode* came around the corner of the temple, thus explaining the girl's sudden flight. At the same time two dogs appeared, sniffing for their share of the luncheon. More polite than the girl, however, when told to go away, they went off some distance, sitting on their haunches and still eyeing the party hungrily.

It was now Irma's turn to be sympathetic.

"That little one makes me think of Nap, and I just can't help giving him a wing with something on it." [131]

"Just wait until we have finished."

Obedient to this suggestion, Irma waited, and at last there was a good heap of bones as well as some scraps of bread on which the two little creatures fell greedily.

Later, making her way with difficulty over the brambles, Irma reached the grass beyond the strip of ploughed land. She carried a little package containing rolls, an orange or two, and a little chicken. She had gone ahead of the others to get a photograph from this point of view. She had already taken nearer views of portions of the columns and base with Aunt Caroline posed for comparative size, looking a veritable pigmy.

The temples, with the background of hills, were less imposing from the other side. The eye could not help seeing not only the temple, but a lot of ugly little houses in the far background near the station.

"*Muore di fame, muore di fame*," cried two voices, one after the other. The girl with the shawl had crept up behind Irma, and a larger girl stood beside her. The first girl was a pitiable object, yet Irma knew that she had lately had something to keep her from starvation. The other was fairly well dressed, and for her Irma felt no sympathy. In fact the two had a manner so impertinent that she took no notice of the oft-repeated monotonous "*Muore di fame*." [132]

But she cast anxious glances toward the temples. Why did her uncle and aunt delay coming! Then she caught a glimpse of them just entering the Basilica. One of her tormentors now jerked her skirt, the other shook her hand in her face.

Irma waved them back, crying, "*Andate, andate*" (go away, go away), in Aunt Caroline's most effective tone.

The girls grew bolder and dashed at Irma as if to take both her camera and her package. Yet Irma, though frightened, was determined not to surrender either.

At last, when she attempted to call for help, she could not make a sound loud enough to be heard by her uncle or aunt. Of course she had not stood still all this time, but with one girl clutching her dress she could not move fast, especially as she was now in the ploughed ground, into which her feet sank deeper with every step. There was no occasion to fear, as the girls could accomplish no very desperate deed before help came, but Irma's spirit was up, and her nerves irritated by the constant "*Muore di fame*." So she held the package of food more closely than the camera, and the older girl, watching her chance, rushed off with it, while the other, making a dash at Irma's head, tore off her hat. [133]

"WITH ONE GIRL CLUTCHING HER DRESS, SHE COULD NOT MOVE FAST."

"Help, help," cried Irma, finding her voice as the amateur brigands ran toward the road. Then, almost at the same moment, something flew past her so quickly that she could hardly tell what it was. A minute later he had reached the two girls, who were unaware of the avenger's presence until too late to escape. When the flying figure stood still Irma recognized Marion, and a moment later he was back at her side, holding triumphantly aloft the hat and the camera.

"Did they hurt you?"

"Is it ruined?" The two young people spoke in one breath.

"No, of course they didn't hurt me," responded Marion, with some indignation, while Irma wondered why a little stream of blood trickled down his cheek.

"No," said Irma, in the same tone, "of course my hat isn't ruined," and she smoothed out the crushed ribbon bows, and plucked off one of the wings that had been broken in the tussle.

Then Marion wiping his face discovered a scratch. "I thought one of those girls had mighty sharp [134]
claws," he said, and Irma, opening her bag, presented him with a strip of thin court-plaster from the case John Wall had given her as a parting present, and then they retraced their steps toward the Basilica, where their elders were awaiting them.

"You haven't explored the temples," said Aunt Caroline. "You can get a very good idea of the interior by examining the stones that show the position of the altar, and——"

"Oh, I don't care about temples now, not until I have studied more. I just like to look about and wonder what the town was like with all its people moving here, when these fields were streets, or ——"

"There, there," interposed Aunt Caroline. "When I look about, I can only think that in a solitary place like this I should hate to be attacked by brigands. At the present moment we are monarchs of all we survey. Even the *custode* is lost to sight, though perhaps he'd appear if we were in real danger."

"I didn't find him of much use," she began, but at a warning glance from Marion, she was silent. [135]

"I wish we had time to go down by the sea, where the Greeks originally landed. As it's much lower land, the temples must show up wonderfully well."

"You must give up the seashore this time. We can barely catch the train, after visiting the Temple of Ceres. Come, children."

But Irma and Marion remained seated.

"Oh, Aunt Caroline, we'd rather wait a while; we'll go back part way by the town wall, and meet you under the Siren's Arch, that would be much more fun. You can dig for the Roman remains that they say lie hidden in that field over there. You know this is one of the towns that remained faithful to Rome in Hannibal's time. Ugh," concluded Marion suddenly, wincing, as if in pain.

"Oh, it's nothing," he replied to Irma's inquiries. "Perhaps I ran too hard in the field over there. You were a brick not to tell Aunt Caroline about it; she would have come down on me mighty hard."

Though Irma did not understand Marion's meaning, she thanked him for recovering her camera.

"It was nothing at all; the little wretches were probably more than half in fun and wouldn't have [136]
dared keep it long, with the *custode* likely to pounce on them, for I suppose one of them, at least, lives in that miserable little house beyond the fence. But it's strange that Uncle Jim didn't ask about the court-plaster on my face. His eyes are generally so sharp. But see what I've found for you," he concluded, picking up something near the base of the great, weather-beaten column beside which they sat.

Irma gave an exclamation of delight as he put in her hand a small piece of the travertine that in some way had been broken off from the column, inside which was a tiny shell,—a shell now exposed to the light for the first time in the more than two thousand years since the temples were built. When she had tied this up in a corner of her handkerchief, and had pressed two of the pink blossoms that Uncle Jim called "asphodel" between the leaves of her notebook, Irma felt that she indeed had begun to collect classical trophies.

From the old town wall, several sections of which are still in fair condition, Marion and Irma took [137]
their last view of Paestum and the surrounding plain. "I suppose the old Poseidonians used to go up in that corner tower and watch for their enemies," said Marion.

"Well, Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim are not enemies, yet we can watch for them. Ah, there we are! And if we return to the road now we can reach the station ten minutes ahead of them and have time to select post cards before train time."

"It will be dusk," said Aunt Caroline, as they took their places in the crowded train, "before we reach Pompeii. I am sorry we have to give up the beautiful Amalfi drive on the high, rocky road above the sea. But that rainy day at Cava was a lost day, and the telegram your uncle received as we left Naples requires him to hurry to Rome to keep a business engagement. To-morrow, Pompeii, and the morning after we leave Naples for Rome."

Of the Amalfi drive Irma caught a glimpse from a curve in the road above picturesque Salerno, [138]
and even away from the sea, looking toward the mountains they had glimpses of snow-clad peaks in strange contrast with the summer-like aspect of the country nearer them. But the people she saw at the stations along the way interested Irma almost more than the scenery. At Salerno station, especially, there were peasants of a very strange type. One man with a beard of long growth, in coat and trousers of sacking, carried a long axe, as if bound for the woods. Another brigandish creature with khaki trousers and a slouched hat wore a long black cloak, an end of which was thrown over his shoulders. Two girls setting out on a journey wept bitterly, as an old gray-headed woman kissed them good-by. One carried her belongings in two fairly large baskets, and the other had a white sacking bag for hers, with a few extra things tied up in a black handkerchief. The girls wore no hats, but like all the other women at the station they had their hair elaborately bedecked with combs, front, back, and side combs, until Irma wondered how their heads could bear the weight. *Carbonieri*, with their picturesque cocked hats, strutted across the platform. A railroad official with red pipings on his hat and gilt buttons on his coat also added to the gaiety of the scene.

"What are we waiting for?" at last Marion cried impatiently.

"The horn man doesn't dare blow until every one in Salerno visits this train." [139]

At this moment the little man with brass buttons on his coat blew his small brass trumpet, and the train set off for Pompeii, still a couple of hours away.

From Pompeii Irma wrote her first long letter to Gertrude, long in comparison with the one sent from the ship. But she had plenty of time that evening after dinner, and though tired after her hours of strolling in the ruined city, she felt in the mood for writing. Moreover, Gertrude had especially asked her to describe Pompeii, and having promised, Irma knew that the most sensible thing was to make good her promise promptly.

"My dear Gertrude," she began. "After all I am not to see Herculaneum, although you hoped I would. But a man we met to-day said we need not be sorry we have no time for Herculaneum. It gave him a kind of smothered feeling, and he did not stay there long. They have not yet dug out enough to make it really interesting, and all the fine statues have been taken to the Naples Museum, so there isn't so much to see yet, and it is all underground.

"But Pompeii is different. In one way it is cheerful, though at times I had an awfully melancholy [140]
feeling when I looked about at those roofless buildings and remembered how they had been destroyed, with thousands of people, all in an instant. Our hotel is close to the entrance, in fact my bedroom window looks out on the gate, and when I went to bed it seemed uncanny to be sleeping near so gruesome a place. But in the morning, when I saw two or three carriages standing there and loafers lounging about and tourists going in and out of the little curiosity shop next door, I forgot everything, except that I was a sightseer, too.

"There is nothing shut up about Pompeii, and I am glad I left the Museum until the last, for that took away some of my cheerful feeling.

"I was surprised when we first began to move about, to see such enormous paving-stones in their narrow streets, and you can hardly believe that the chariot wheels could wear such deep ruts. The horses' feet must sometimes have slipped down between the stones.

"The houses have no roofs, and from the street they are so small that I could think of nothing but playhouses. Some of them open out when you go inside and have more than one court. They all have at least one court, with rooms opening off it, and some have little fountains in the center, and sometimes the white marble basins are beautifully carved and there is grass growing around the margin, and even bright plants and vines are trained here and there, just as in the time of the live Pompeians. [141]

"As you walk about you can tell which room was a kitchen and which a bathroom, for they used lead pipes just like ours. In the smaller houses the family used to spend most of their time in the atrium. The sleeping rooms were generally tiny, and the poor slaves were put in little cubby-holes upstairs.

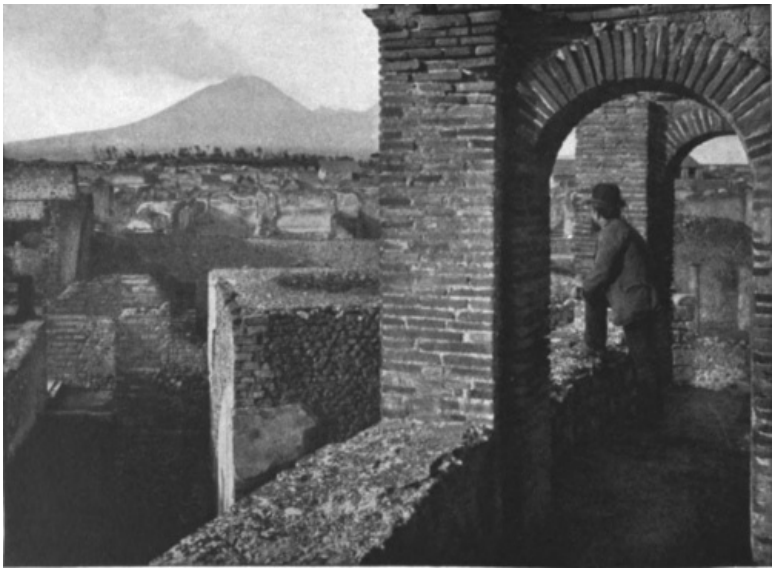
"The frescoes on some walls are bright, but I think our taste has changed, for Marion and I did not admire them so very much. In one lovely house I saw where the Young Narcissus had been found. The original is in the Naples Museum, but a copy is here in its old place. Another interesting house is where they found the graceful statue of a dancing faun. I saw the house that Bulwer calls the house of Glaucus, in the 'Last Days of Pompeii,' and there in front of it is the inscription in mosaics, *Cave canem*, which I needn't translate for you. They are always uncovering new houses, and one of the newest, the 'House of the Vetii,' is the most beautiful, partly because they have left most of the things in the places where they found them, instead of sending them off to museums. The frescoes here are the most fascinating little Cupids playing games and amusing themselves. Of course one carries away only a general impression of these houses. There are traces of bright color everywhere inside, chiefly red and yellow. The bases of many of the columns in the houses were one of these colors. Some streets were full of shops —*tabernae*. Would you have known what that meant? You can see the marble-covered counters, and the earthen jars for oil and wine and other things. One market has paintings on the walls, showing that various kinds of provisions were sold there, and in a large pit in the center quantities of fish scales were found. Probably that was where the fish were kept. Instead of quart measures like ours, I saw a set of marble basins side by side, with holes in the bottom to let the liquid run out into the buyer's jars. Most of the shops are labelled, so you can tell what was sold there. On some walls are notices scratched, that take the place of our posters, though Uncle Jim says they have more to do with politics than with buying and selling. [142]

"The great baths astonished me, for they had hot and cold water and different rooms for people to pass through, like a Turkish bath. You can't say it's a good thing that Pompeii was destroyed, but as long as it *had* to be, it's fine that they have excavated it. To see for yourself how these people lived is better than a hundred lessons in history. Of course it gives you an awful feeling when you stand by the villa of Diomedes and hear that the bodies of eighteen women and children were found there. They had fled to the cellar and had food enough with them to last some time, but the ashes sifted in and they were found with wraps over their heads and hands out trying to shield themselves. [143]

"Diomedes, with keys in his hand, was at the door, and a slave carrying money and valuables. I haven't time to tell you about the Forum and the Basilica and the theatre. Just imagine the fifty or sixty gladiators, whose bodies were found in the gladiators' barracks! Most of them wore heavy manacles, and what they must have suffered when they found they could not escape! [144]

"When I walked up the street of Tombs, where you get the best view of Vesuvius, I could not help thinking that in spite of its calm appearance the mountain is a very dangerous neighbor, and I am rather glad that we have decided not to make the ascent.

"Afterwards when I stood on a small hill, it was hard to believe that under the green slopes in front of us there lay perhaps as large a part of Pompeii as they have yet uncovered. Who knows what wonderful things may yet be found, though it may take more than fifty years to finish the work? It was up here that I dared pick a few tiny buttercups, that I send you as a souvenir of Pompeii.



"The town has a bricky look as you see it from the hill, that's one reason, I suppose, why it seems so modern. After all, the greater part of the inhabitants of Pompeii escaped alive. They fled at the first warning. When the eruption stopped for a while, many went back for their valuables, or because they thought it was all over, and there were some old and sick who, perhaps, couldn't be moved at first. All these two thousand were caught in the second fearful eruption. Casts of some of the bodies are in the little museum on the grounds, but I hardly looked at them, and, in fact, we spent very little time there because we had seen the same kind of things at Naples. This is a fearfully long letter, but I hope I shall find a longer one from you at Rome, where we go from Naples by the morning express to-morrow." [145]

[146]

CHAPTER IX

ROMAN DAYS

When Irma awoke on her first morning in Rome, she felt that one of her real desires was gratified. She was in the city she most wished to see. Looking at her watch she found it was too early for breakfast, and she did not care to go down ahead of the others in this new, strange hotel. So, seated in an easy-chair, she tried to recall some of the incidents of her journey of the day before, the five hours' ride that had seemed long, on account of the heat. The country through which they passed had been interesting, though she had seen few of the picturesque peasants working in the fields that she expected to see on every side. In the distance, however, she had had glimpses of snow-clad mountains, and occasionally on a hill a monastery or castle, or even a small walled town. [147]

Then across a vast plain to the right was the unmistakable dome of St. Peter's. Yes, she could write home that at the first sight of Rome her heart had beaten quicker. After the sunny ride from the station through crowded streets all, even the indefatigable Uncle Jim, had been tired, too tired, after unpacking, to do anything but rest, until at five o'clock they had gone to the large hotel near by for afternoon tea.

"This isn't Rome," Aunt Caroline had said, as they sat there over their tea and cakes, listening to the music. "It is the Waldorf-Astoria, and these people moving about are largely Americans. To-morrow we shall see Rome."

"To-day is to-morrow," murmured Irma, in her easy-chair, "and I wonder what we shall see first in Rome. I am sure I should never know where to begin."

Aunt Caroline decided for her. Then when they first set out, she would not tell her just what they were to see until they had mounted the steps of an old casino; after passing through a little courtyard,—all that remained of the once fine Rospigliosi garden.

"Look up," cried Aunt Caroline, as they stood in the large salon hung with pictures, and there on the ceiling, more beautiful than any reproduction, Irma saw the familiar Aurora, the godlike auburn-haired vision and the spirited horses: Apollo seen in a strong yellowish light, and the attendant hours in robes shading from blue to white, and from green to white, with reddish browns in the draperies of the nymph nearest him, and Aurora herself, a lovely figure, scattering flowers in his path. [148]

In the beautiful gallery, with its carvings and paintings, there were other fine pictures, but as she went away Irma still remembered only the Aurora.

The warm sun beat on their heads as they re-entered their carriage. "The Roman summer has begun," said Aunt Caroline, "though it is only May. We must accustom ourselves now to a daily siesta and save our strength; but first for letters."

A rapid drive brought them to their bankers, opposite the Spanish Steps. Irma recognized the place immediately from pictures she had seen, and while Aunt Caroline went inside for letters, she ran across the piazza to buy a bunch of roses from one of the picturesque flower girls gathered on the lower steps. But when, on the house at the right-hand corner, she read an inscription stating that in this house John Keats had died, she immediately unfolded her camera. She was so interested in her photograph, that when she saw her aunt standing by the carriage she recrossed the street without the flowers. [149]

"Here are letters for all of us," said Aunt Caroline, "even for Marion; two for him, the first he has had, poor boy!"

"Aunt Caroline," asked Irma, for the first time since they sailed venturing to put the question, "why do you say 'poor boy' when you speak of Marion?"

Aunt Caroline, who usually answered questions so quickly, was silent for so long that Irma wondered if her audacity had offended her. Then she replied gravely, "Marion has had a most unhappy experience. It is hard to say yet whether he is to be blamed or pitied. Until he is ready to talk about it, your uncle and I prefer not to speak on the subject, even with Marion himself. But when the right time comes, you shall know all about it."

With this Irma, for the present, had to be content. But she realized that the idle remarks of her [150]
acquaintance at Cava had some foundation in fact. At *déjeuner* Aunt Caroline gave Marion his letters, and Irma noticed that his face reddened as he looked at the envelopes, and that then he put them unopened in his pocket. This she thought a strange way of treating his first home letters. But then Marion was a strange boy.

Irma herself had impatiently torn open her own letters even while in the carriage, and had partly read Gertrude's before reaching her hotel.

"We miss you awfully," she wrote, "and Lucy and I hope you won't be so taken up with that other girl that you'll forget all about us."

"She hadn't received my Azores letter about Marion," mused Irma, "when she wrote that. I am sure I wish that Marion were a girl instead of such a queer kind of boy."

"You remember," continued Gertrude, "how jealous you used to be of Sally? Yes, you were, [151]
though you wouldn't admit it; well that's the way I feel about your Marian. But even if I am jealous, I do hope that you look better than when you left home, and that you are having a perfectly stunning time. I suppose you will be in Rome when you get this, and I wonder if you have seen the Queen—I mean Margherita. I have a photograph of her that I love, so don't dare come back without seeing her so you can tell me if she is like it. No matter if she hasn't invited you to call, just leave your card, and perhaps they will let you in accidentally. We miss you terribly at school. Until we are called up to recite we never know whether our translations are right. I wonder if you find the old inscriptions in Rome more fun than Cæsar. We've just had a week of early warm weather, and we girls have decided to let John Wall and George Belman fight for the head of the class."

"The letter sounds just like Gertrude," said Irma, as she finished, "and though it has no news, it makes home seem much nearer."

"Yet you sighed when you finished it; you mustn't let us think you are homesick," and Aunt Caroline patted Irma's shoulder, as they entered the house together.

"There's only one thing for to-day," said Uncle Jim, after *déjeuner*, as they waited for the [152]
carriage. "There are said to be three hundred and sixty-five churches in Rome, and if you intend to see them all, you must begin at once with the largest and most important."

"But I don't intend to see them all," expostulated Irma, "nor a tenth of them."

"Then you must begin with St. Peter's just the same. You have been in the Eternal City now nearly twenty-four hours without visiting St. Peter's. Such a thing is unheard of and will bring disgrace on us all. Ah, here's the carriage, and your reform will begin."

"Talk of floods in the Tiber," cried Irma, as they drove along the bank of the historic stream. "A little river like that could never do any damage. It could not be energetic enough to overflow its banks, especially when it's so fenced in."

"Even in modern times the embankment has sometimes failed to keep it in place," said Uncle Jim, "and in its three miles of wanderings the yellow Tiber is sometimes hard to manage. There, there, doesn't that please you?" and Irma answered with an exclamation of delight, glancing beyond the bridge to the other side, where she had her first view of the Castle St. Angelo, Hadrian's tomb, the antique circular structure around which clusters so much history.

But their horses were quick, and their driver did not stop for a long view; and after a turn or two [153]
they were soon crossing the sunny, paved piazza in front of St. Peter's, with its obelisk and fountain.

"This is to be only the most general view. You must come again some day when there is a great ceremony, when you can see various dignitaries; now you are merely to get a first impression."

"A first impression!" cried Irma. "Can I put it into words? It's a tremendous building; I shall never see another as large, and yet, it doesn't seem too large. What a great man the architect was!"

"I have been reading up a little to-day," said Marion, "so things are fresh in my mind. I won't pretend I'll remember them to-morrow, but it's true that this is not the first church on the spot. In the beginning there was a circus of Nero's here, where that beautiful emperor was in the habit of torturing Christians to death. There's a tradition that St. Peter himself was burned here, and so Constantine built the first St. Peter's over the spot. Perhaps we can go down into the tomb to-day."

"But this isn't Constantine's church?" There was a decided note of interrogation in Irma's voice. [154]
Perhaps it would have been better for her not to ask the question, for Marion's reply was in the nature of a snub.

"Any one can see that this St. Peter's is comparatively new. It was begun by Julius II in the first part of the sixteenth century, and Bramante probably made the original plans."

"Why, I thought Michelangelo——"

"Yes, my dear," interposed Uncle Jim, "in the end Michelangelo did come to the rescue of the first plan. For after Bramante died, leaving the building far from completed, some of his successors made changes that affected the beauty of the building. I believe the dome was largely the result

of Michelangelo's skill."

"It took long enough to finish it!" exclaimed Marion, who had been looking at his guidebook. "It was not consecrated until 1626, more than a hundred years after Bramante's death."

"Just six years after the landing of the Pilgrims," added Irma.

"To compare small things with great," said Uncle Jim, with a laugh.

"Which is which?" asked Irma, and for the moment no one answered.

"Perhaps you don't care for guidebook information. But up to the end of the seventeenth century, [155]
St. Peter's had cost about fifty million dollars, and it now takes about eighteen thousand dollars a year to maintain it."

"The salary of one of our ambassadors for a year," interpolated Irma. "Don't laugh," she cried, "that's the way I always try to remember things."

"Then," continued Marion, "perhaps you will remember the height of the dome, four hundred and thirty-five feet from the cross to the pavement, is twice that of Bunker Hill Monument."

"We are getting into the realm of useless knowledge," protested Uncle Jim, "and as this is but a [156]
bird's-eye view, we need only remember the beautiful proportions of the dome and the grandeur of the whole. Yet there are one or two things to see now. I must point out Canova's tomb of Clement XIII, and over there, by the door leading to the dome, you'll find Canova's monument to the last of the Stuarts. You ought to go over there and shed a tear or two, Irma, for you doubtless have the usual school girl sentimentality for the Stuarts. There are busts of the Old Pretender and his two sons."

"Guidebook information would probably be as useful as that of a misguided guide," said Irma, refusing to express herself about the Stuarts.

"Twenty-nine altars and one hundred and forty-eight columns," read Marion.

"Come," said Uncle Jim, "don't listen to him. I can show you something better worth seeing," and he led her to the nave, where he showed her in the pavement the round slab of porphyry on which the emperors were formerly crowned.

"Why, Charlemagne, of course," began Irma, and then she reddened. For Marion was standing near, and she suddenly realized that Charlemagne had been dead eight hundred years before St. Peter's was consecrated.

"Oh, it was in Constantine's church that Charlemagne was crowned, but though this slab is older than the present St. Peter's, I doubt that he or his earlier successors stood on it, and best of all, I doubt that Marion can inform us," he concluded in a whisper.

When at last the four turned toward the door, Irma noticed the people about her more than she [157]
had on entering. Bareheaded peasants were walking about in groups; laboring men, who had stolen an hour from work, bowed before various altars. Tourists of all nations were studying mosaic pictures, sculptured tombs, or were gazing at the priests in rich vestments and the altar boys in one of the chapels where there was a service. Here an old woman hobbled along, and there was a mother with two or three awestruck children. There were two or three soldiers in uniform, and several long-coated priests, visitors evidently from outside Rome.

"It is the People's Church," said Aunt Caroline, "the church of the people of the whole world," she added. "There may not be as many languages as there are people in this large building, but I'll warrant a dozen nations are represented here."

The fifteenth century bronze doors of St. Peter's amused Irma, with their curious mingling of Christian and pagan subjects, Europa and the bull, Ganymede, as well as scenes directly from the scriptures. She had a chance to admire her favorite Charlemagne, whose statue on horseback and one of Constantine were on either side of the entrance.

"Over there," and Uncle Jim pointed to the left, "is the German cemetery, which Constantine [158]
originally filled with earth from Mt. Calvary, and made the first Christian burying ground. We have as little time for that to-day as for the sacristy with its treasures, or the chapels with their pictures and sculptures. There is just one other important thing to see before we reach our hotel. Wake up, *cocchiere*, here we are."

As they drove between the colonnades away from St. Peter's and then along the Tiber bank, Uncle Jim called their attention to the new Rome rising on every side.

"It is the Rome of the masses," he said. "Many of these tall apartment houses are occupied by people of very moderate means. And see that great public building across the river! It is as ugly as some of our own city halls."

Their coachman now took a turn through narrow streets, crowded with people, to Aunt Caroline's disgust. "There may be all kinds of diseases floating about here."

But hardly had her protest been heard, when they drove up in front of a portico that Marion [159]
recognized at once. "The Pantheon! We were thinking so much of the narrow streets that we did not see where we were."

"Yes," responded Uncle Jim, "the Pantheon. He brought us the shortest way. I suppose you know this is the only ancient building in Rome. Walls and vaulting are the same as in the time of Hadrian. It goes back even farther than Hadrian, for Augustus's son in law, Agrippa, founded the temple, dedicated probably to the gods of the seven planets. When paganism died, it had no use for many years until Phocas the Tyrant presented it to the Pope, and it was dedicated to the Christian religion in 604."

"You can't mention anything happening in our country just then," said Aunt Caroline, turning to Irma.

"I might, but I won't, though I do remember that this was several hundred years earlier than our Leif Ericson," she retorted. "Uncle Jim, you did very well, even though you had to turn to your notebook."

"I'll admit that I had read up a few figures for this occasion, you and Marion sometimes put me so to the blush. But what do you think of it?"

For a full minute Irma was silent as she looked around the vast interior. "I am afraid," she began, [160]
"I am afraid that I like it better than St. Peter's. In some way it seems grander."

"You needn't be afraid; older and wiser persons have been heard to say the same thing. A circular building is always impressive, and no interior in the world has finer proportions than this. In some ways it isn't what it once was. The bronze casings of part of the walls one of the popes once stripped off to make cannon for St. Angelo, and in the eighteenth century the beautiful marbles of the attic story above were covered with whitewash, but nothing can destroy the beautiful proportions."

"Don't tell us what they are," urged Aunt Caroline. "It would destroy half the effect to hear what it is in feet and inches."

"There's just one thing Irma ought to know, since she quite scorns a guidebook now. That open aperture in the centre of the dome that looks like a small hole is thirty feet across. It is the only way of lighting the building."

"What do they do when it rains?" asked Irma.

"Why, they let it rain."

"Marion," exclaimed Aunt Caroline, "if you are willing to repeat so aged and infirm a joke as that, you must be feeling better."

Marion glanced toward Irma, but she made no sign as to whether or not she, too, scorned the [161]
joke.

"Twenty-eight wagon loads of bones," she was saying.

"Yes, my dear, it was dedicated to Santa Maria ad Martyres, and naturally this was regarded as a more fitting place than the Catacombs for their final interment. Yet the sacredness of the place didn't prevent Constans II from stripping the gilt tiles from the dome to use in Constantinople. But now you are to look at only two tombs on your way out, this of Victor Emanuel, which is always covered with wreaths, and over there Raphael's tomb—only a passing glance at each—and notice the wonderfully beautiful marbles of the pavement. It would repay you sometime to study them, and the—run, my dear, ask your aunt to hurry," he concluded hastily.

"We shall have time for the Corso," said Uncle Jim, as they drove off.

But the Corso proved disappointing to Marion and Irma.

"It is neither wide nor long, and why people with fine carriages and footmen should enjoy driving [162]
here at the end of a pleasant spring afternoon I can't understand," complained Marion. "Why, it's so crowded that there's no particular pleasure in being here."

"That's why most people are driving here, to see and be seen; that's part of the fun of living for the idler Italians, and as they can't sit about in piazzas like their countrymen and women a few grades below them, exchanging nods from a carriage is the next best thing. And you can't deny that the shop windows are attractive."

"It's almost like driving for pleasure on Washington Street, in Boston," said Irma, scornfully, "only it's a little less crowded, and there are no surface cars."

"Though you speak sarcastically, young lady, just now I won't attempt to stand up for Il Corso," retorted Uncle Jim.

"It doesn't begin to compare with Fifth Avenue," said Marion.

"It doesn't pretend to, young patriot. I simply brought you here to do as the Romans do fine afternoons. Some day you'll drive on the Pincian at the fashionable hour, and after that I'd like to hear your American comparisons."

"But where in the world can you find a street short as Il Corso with more associations with great [163]
men? Over there's the house where Shelley wrote 'The Cenci,' and Goethe's home in Rome is not far away. A little off at one side you'll find Donizetti's house, and on the other Sir Walter Scott's, and just ahead of us is the Bonaparte Palace, where Madame Letitia spent her sad later years.

You hardly have to turn out of your way to find the remains of old temples, and there in the Piazza is the Marcus Aurelius Column."

"Oh, it's inter—," but with the word unfinished, Marion put his hand to his hat as if to bow to some one in a passing carriage. He did not really bow, however, and the others noticed that he reddened deeply.

"That looked like the fairy godfather!" cried Irma.

"Whom I consider a myth," responded Uncle Jim.

But Marion said nothing.

Irma's first week in Rome seemed to pass almost as quickly as her first day. Though she had been sightseeing constantly, she still had not seen the Colosseum, the Forum, or the Vatican treasures. Each day was not long enough. In the morning she usually visited some gallery with her aunt. But in the warmer hours, from twelve to three, they rested. Some object of interest and a drive took the later afternoon, and by evening all were too tired to do anything but sit about and compare experiences with one another or with their hotel acquaintances. [164]

"I haven't forgotten your advice," wrote Irma in a long letter to her mother, "to remember clearly at least one or two things from each gallery. In the Borghese there is Canova's beautiful statue of Pauline, Napoleon's sister, and Titian's Holy and Profane Love, and in the Colonna that enormous ceiling painting—I almost broke my neck looking up at it—of the Battle of Lepanto, where some Prince Colonna fought, and some wonderful ivory carvings, one of them, in a few square inches, shows all the figures of Michelangelo's Last Judgment. Then in the Doria is Velasquez' Pope Julius X, in his red robes, and some Claude Lorraines that I liked.

"Then I loved Domenichino's Sybil, in the Borghese, and I can never forget the Saint Sebastians I have seen. It may be wicked to laugh at a martyr, but it is almost wickeder for artists to make a good man look like a pincushion stuck full of arrows. The Doria Palace is the handsomest of all, with its gilded furniture and fine ceilings and polished floors. How gorgeous it must have looked when a ball was given there in the old days. I'd like to have seen the private apartments and the Colonna gardens. They say it was from a building in the Colonna Gardens that Nero watched Rome burning. On certain days these galleries are free, but generally you pay admission to a regular ticket taker in a gilt-banded cap. I wonder if the princes who own these palaces make money by showing their pictures, or if public spirit leads them to open their houses. [165]

"One day Marion and I went to the Lateran where the popes lived before they had the Vatican, and please tell Tessie that the first thing we looked at was the Scala Sancta, or Holy Stairs, that they say were in Pontius Pilate's house in Jerusalem, over which Christ once walked. On this account people must go up and down them on their knees. But it is only on Holy Week that many do this. There are twenty-eight marble steps, although all you can see, as you look through the narrow door, is the wooden covering that protects them. The Empress Helena, Constantine's mother, brought them here. Tessie used to be interested in these Holy Stairs on account of a picture in one of her Sunday-school books, and she will be glad to know I have seen them. [166]

"Everything around the Lateran reminds one of Constantine. St. John Lateran has the site of a church he founded, and near it is the Baptistery where he was baptized. The font is green basalt, and there are beautiful porphyry columns and lovely gold mosaics on a blue ground.

"Opposite, in the piazza, is an obelisk Constantine brought from the Temple of the Sun at Thebes, and set up in the Circus Maximus. Three or four hundred years ago they found it in three pieces buried under ruins, and decided to place it here. Uncle Jim says there are more obelisks here than in all the rest of the world, and people who study hieroglyphs find Rome a better place than Egypt.

"Marion is good company, and often wishes to see just the same thing that I do, and then sometimes he doesn't; and I must say he always seems to suit himself. He knows a great deal. He has usually studied with private tutors and he has read everything. But he won't talk about his family. I don't even know whether he has any brothers or sisters. [167]

"He was splendid the other day when we went to the Capitoline Museum, from the minute we began to walk up the broad stairs toward the statue of Marcus Aurelius. He pointed out the places where Tiberius Gracchus was slain, and not far away, though so long afterwards, Rienzi, too.

"Then he explained that though most of the buildings now on the Campodoglio were by Michelangelo, this had been a centre for public offices even under the first emperors. The Tabularium, where all old records were kept, is under the palace of the Senators. We had not time for it, but Marion had been there before, and he says it is almost the only building now left of the time of the Republic. Then we walked through the Capitoline Museum and I recognized many statues,—the Dying Gladiator and Hawthorne's Marble Faun and the busts of the Emperors. Marion says nearly all have been identified from coins, and are truer than the heads of philosophers and poets that we saw. Then there is the famous mosaic picture of the doves that shows even the shadows, which came from Hadrian's villa, like so many things in marble and porphyry I have seen this week.

"There are many relics from the ancient graves, gold bracelets and other ornaments, and old inscriptions. They are not always easy to read, but here is one to amuse the boys that Marion [168]

translated for me. I can't give the exact words, but it was the epitaph of a boy eleven and a half years old who had worked himself to death in a competition to recite Greek verses. After we had seen all we wished in the museums, Marion took me through a narrow way, the Via Tarpeia, and past the German Embassy and then through a garden, where we paid an old lady a fee, and then, but of course you have guessed it, we were standing on the famous Tarpeian Rock. We looked down from the rock into a rather poor and commonplace street, and I tried to imagine what it was like in the old, old times when this was the edge of Rome, and Tarpeia was killed there for betraying the city to the invaders.

"Without Marion I never could have found the Rock, and I don't believe Uncle Jim and Aunt Caroline would have taken the trouble to go there." [169]

CHAPTER X

A QUEEN—AND OTHER SIGHTS

Irma was descending the Spanish Steps one morning on her way to the piazza when she heard Marion calling her. Turning her head, she saw him hastening toward her.

"What's your hurry?" he cried.

"I can't hurry going down these steps. I am on my way to return a book for Aunt Caroline. Then ——"

"Well, what then?"

"I haven't decided."

"Then come with me to Rag Fair, and after that I have something else for the afternoon. Aunt Caroline says she won't try to go out to-day, her cold is worse and Uncle Jim intends to stay in to read to her, and I, well, she said I must look out for you."

Marion said the last a trifle sheepishly, adding, "Of course I will do whatever you wish. But I am sure you will like my plan." [170]

"Yes, provided you haven't the Catacombs in mind, or that awful church with bones and skulls for decorations."

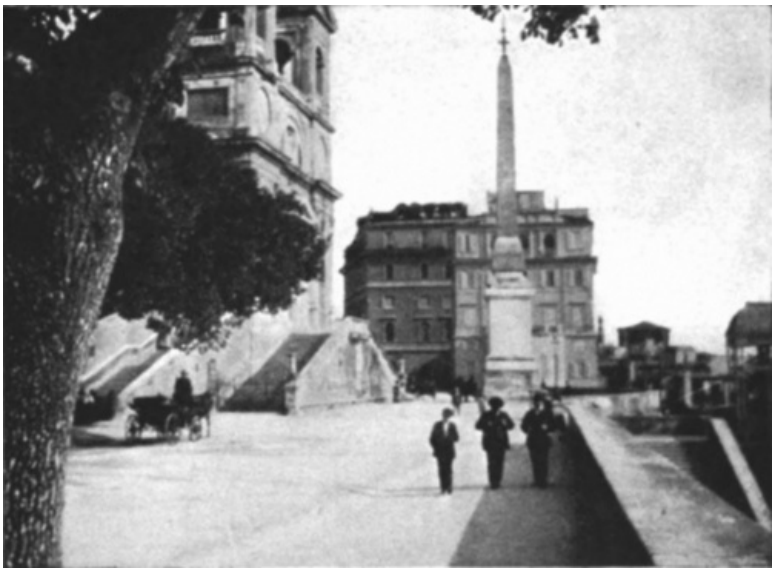
"The Cappuccini; no, we won't go there."

"And you won't ask me to ride around Aurelian's wall on a bicycle?"

"No, though you'd find it great fun! I don't know anything I have enjoyed better. The towers are so picturesque and they were useful, too. I went up in one to see the little rooms inside the walls that the soldiers occupied, and the guard-rooms, up there more than forty feet. They certainly had a good chance to see the enemy at a long distance. If you and Aunt Caroline would drive some day, I'd point things out to you."

"Perhaps we will, but now—" Irma had taken out her camera. "Oh, I wish I could get a photograph, but I suppose they will run when they see what I want."

"They" made a picturesque group, slowly mounting the steps, a mother with babe in arms, a shawl thrown over her head, a half-grown girl in a faded pink gingham, and a little boy in a shabby velveteen suit and felt hat with a feather over his curls.



NEAR LA TRINITÀ, ROME.

ROME. A GROUP ON SPANISH STEPS.

"The boy is probably an artist's model, dressed for effect. I am not sure about the others, but I can make them stand for you."

"Oh! Please!" Whereupon Marion stepped up to the woman, spoke a few words in Italian, and lo, [171] they at once grouped themselves picturesquely in a spot where the sun fell in just the right way for a photograph. Irma took her place, snapped her camera, turned the key, took a second snap, in case anything should go wrong with the first and murmured, "*Grazie, grazie*," one of her few Italian words.

"*Niente, niente, signorina*," said the girl, who seemed to be the spokesman of the party, looking inquiringly at Marion.

Then almost instantly Marion dropped a small piece of silver in her hand.

"That's the way to get them to stand," he said laughing; "generally the smallest copper will fetch them."

"But you gave more."

"Oh, this was a group of four. I have noticed that little chap before, selling flowers. He's very amusing."

Soon Irma had returned her library book, and by various short cuts Marion led her to the Palazzo Cancelleria, near which the so-called Rag Fair is held every Wednesday.

They found a series of canvas booths, where a great variety of things was displayed. The sellers, [172] more numerous than the buyers, praised their wares at the tops of their voices, if Irma or Marion even glanced toward them.

"I should call it a rummage sale, and things are rather rubbishy," said Irma.

At this moment a man thrust a pair of silver-mounted opera glasses in Marion's face, naming a ridiculously low price. With some difficulty, Marion shook him off. "Nothing would induce me to buy them."

"But they seemed very cheap."

"Yes, but that's the reason. I believe they were stolen."

"Oh, but would the police allow it?"

"Not if they knew it, but these people keep such things hidden. Perhaps other goods are stolen, too. There are some pretty things here."

"Aunt Caroline might find some old lace or embroidery that she'd like, but for my own part I am disappointed. However, we've seen the Rag Fair, and we can cross that off our list of sights."

Leaving the Fair and the voluble merchants, after a walk of a block or two Marion suggested that [173] they go home by trolley. This pleased Irma, who had not yet ridden in the Roman cars.

When the conductor came for their fare, Marion gave a cry of surprise.

"What is it?" asked Irma.

"Well, it's worse than ridiculous. I have lost my purse. My last small piece of money was the silver bit I gave to the girl on the Spanish Steps. I know I had my purse then."

While they were talking Irma put her own little purse in Marion's hand, and he paid their fare.

"Let us go back to the Rag Fair," she said. "Some one there must have taken it. You know how they were jostling us."

"There'd be no good in going back. The person who took it would hardly return it. Besides there wasn't much in it, not more than two hundred *liri*."

"Two hundred *liri*, forty dollars." Irma rapidly transferred the sum to American money. Why, that was more than she had brought from home as extra spending money and for little gifts, and Marion could say it was nothing.

"It is worth trying to find," she suggested mildly.

"If there was any chance of finding it, but we'd only waste time. It's too near luncheon, and I'm [174] anxious to carry out my afternoon plan."

"How strange Marion is!" thought Irma. "It doesn't disturb him in the least to lose money, and yet some little thing that no one can account for will give him a fit of blues for two or three days."

At three in the afternoon Irma came down to the hotel office, looking cool and comfortable in her simple pongee suit.

"I am awfully curious," she said, as Marion helped her into the carriage. "Aunt Caroline says she knows where we're going, but she wouldn't spoil your fun."

Marion only smiled, as he directed the coachman, "To the Villa Corsini," and the words conveyed little to Irma, beyond the fact that a villa was Italian for "park" and not for "country house," as in English. After a quarter of an hour through a part of Rome she did not know, at last they came to some rather poor streets, where people were lounging about their doors as if expecting something.

"I suppose they're not turning out just to see us pass."

"Who knows? Perhaps they have heard that we are distinguished American visitors." [175]

Soon they turned in toward a park, before whose gate stood a number of carriages and automobiles.

"We shall be here an hour," said Marion in Italian, and the driver bowed comprehendingly.

Showing their tickets, they went up a broad avenue past fine trees and occasional flower-beds. "It's a garden party for some kind of a charity," Marion explained, "and I thought it would be fun to see some of the princesses and marchionesses who are running it. There was a long list of them in the newspapers yesterday."

"Yes, it will be fun," responded Irma, really surprised that Marion should willingly waste an hour on what might be called a society affair. That wasn't the way with most boys, and from what she had seen of Marion, she had not thought him fond of society.

Soon they came in sight of a long table, where many men and women were drinking and serving [176] tea. Near it was a large marquee into which they looked as they passed, with a table handsomely spread and decorated with flowers and bright streamers. At one end of the apartment several handsome chairs were placed.

"Some special guest must be coming," said Irma, "but the lawn is good enough for me. Let us go toward those chairs under the trees." For a minute or two they watched the gay scene at the long table.

"It is evidently a family affair," said Marion. "Every one seems to know every one else. Those men are not bad looking, for Italians," he concluded.

"Many of the ladies are beautiful," responded Irma, "and what lovely gowns! I suppose they are in the height of fashion, but I should think they'd hate to trail them over the ground."

Presently a most attractive lady, whom Irma had especially noticed, approached them.

"Will you have your tea now?" she asked in English, with the slightest accent that showed it was not her native language.

"I will have it sent you at once," she continued, "and some cakes."

Without waiting for a reply, in a moment she had returned to the table, from which a young girl [177] soon came bringing a tray with cups of tea and a plate of tiny cakes.

"Yes, she is expected at once," the young girl replied to some question of Marion's that Irma had not heard.

"The Queen, the Queen Margherita," cried Irma. "You are expecting to see the Queen."

"You are a good guesser," retorted Marion. "For when I read that Margherita had promised to attend this fête I thought it would be fun for you to come. I know your friend Gertrude has been anxious to have you see her, and there may not be another chance unless you should make up your mind to ask an audience."

"Hardly," replied Irma smiling, "and I do hope she will come."

Before the two had finished their tea, the groups at the large table moved forward, forming a semicircle near the marquee. The other strangers, who like themselves were at little tables under the trees, rose and moved toward the crowd. In a few minutes a little group came up the avenue from the gate. Irma's whole attention was fastened on the gracious lady in the centre, who leaned a trifle on her parasol handle, as she bowed to those who greeted her on each side.

"I should know her anywhere," cried Irma; "her face is as sweet as in the photographs I have [178]
seen. Look, they are kissing her hand."

Margherita paused a moment, as if to take in the whole scene before her. Irma noticed that although she was scarcely above middle height, in her soft black gown and wide black hat she had an air of grace and elegance that would have distinguished her, even among those who did not know that she was the widow of King Humberto.

"How pleased Gertrude will be that I have seen her!" she exclaimed, as Queen Margherita entered the marquee, attended by a number of those who had been in attendance upon the tables, "and it is all owing to you," she added, turning to thank Marion for his thoughtfulness. "As King Victor Emanuel and Queen Elena have gone to their country place, we are not likely to see any other royalties in Italy. But *now* I can write home that I have seen Queen Margherita."

A little later, as Irma and Marion passed the marquee on their way to the carriage, they paused to glance within, where Margherita sat, talking with much animation, the centre of a circle of ladies.

"Well, young people," said Uncle Jim at dinner that evening, "you have had a giddy day, with rag [179]
fairs and fêtes and things of that kind. To-morrow we return to hard, earnest sightseeing, the Borgia apartments at the Vatican and the Vatican Library. Your aunt wishes you to go while her cold lasts, so she has a reasonable excuse for not travelling the several miles necessary to see these things."

"Fortunately I am strong," said Marion, "and Irma seems equal to any amount of walking."

"I'm not sure," Irma protested, "that I wish to see more in the Vatican. I enjoyed the sculptures the other day, and the paintings in Raphael's Stanze. Perhaps I am wrong, but I would almost like to leave Rome without seeing the rest of the Pope's palace. Just now I recall clearly all the frescoes: the School of Athens and the Borgo, and Parnassus and the others, and then the Ascension in the gallery, with that wonderful yellowish light. I am contented to remember nothing else of the Vatican."

"Oh, that will never do, the largest palace in the world, with a thousand different apartments, [180]
covering thirteen and a half acres, and you wish to remember it by a few frescoes and one large painting!"

"The greatest frescoes in the world. I've heard you say that yourself."

"Oh, yes, but the treasures of the Vatican are all great, and you must have a chance to judge between what you've seen of Raphael and what you will see of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel. Those popes of the Middle Ages were wise in their day, especially after Nicholas V, in 1450, who decided to make the Vatican the most imposing palace in the world by bringing under one roof all the papal offices. Since then the building has been constantly enlarged and improved. But now only a small part is occupied by the Papal Court. Certain days and hours most of the Vatican treasures are shown to visitors. If you could spend all your time there for a week, you would not have seen half."

Next day Uncle Jim decided not to go with the young people to the Vatican, and so again Marion was Irma's guide.

"I am less afraid of the Swiss guards than I was the first day," said Irma, as they passed the Pope's soldiers in their brilliant red and yellow uniforms, on their way to the Scala Regia.

"Oh," responded Marion, "they wouldn't dare touch a visitor. Just wait a moment, I've forgotten [181]
exactly where we go first."

So they waited, while Marion turned the leaves of his guidebook, and then he felt a hand on his shoulder, and heard in Italian a very positive "Move on." He looked into the frowning face of a Swiss guard, and without further ado he moved rapidly up the broad staircase.

"There," said Irma, when out of hearing of the soldiers. "What did I tell you? They might have done something terrible. You know we are not in Italy now. The Vatican is the Pope's country."

"And the Pope is one of the best-hearted men in the world. Why, actually you are trembling! I suppose they have rules to keep people moving, but they wouldn't dare harm an American."

Irma, however, was disturbed by this incident, and was not sorry a few minutes later to find herself one of several in an anteroom waiting the guide to take them through the library.

"A library!" she exclaimed, when they had entered the vast hall, "but where are the books?"

"In these glass cases—listen to the guide." [182]

Not until the end of their tour of the great hall did they learn that the library, in the ordinary sense of books and manuscripts available for students, was not open to ordinary visitors. The so-

called library through which the guide led them was high vaulted, and more than two hundred feet long, with painted ceiling, floors of marble mosaics from ancient temples and baths, and exquisite marble columns also from ancient buildings. In the end they saw some books worth seeing: the oldest Bible in existence, a manuscript of the fourth century, and an old second century Virgil. Of later times there was a volume of Henry VIII's love letters to Anne Boleyn, and many exquisitely illustrated manuscripts, among them a Natural History illuminated by Raphael and his pupils.

"I wish he'd cut it short," said Marion, as the guide gave long descriptions of each manuscript that he pointed out in its case, or in the drawers that he sometimes unlocked.

"I rather enjoy what he says about the manuscripts as you translate it for me," responded Irma, [183]
"but he need not describe every present given to every pope. Vases are vases, and we know all these things were presents to one pope or another. They are all costly and some are beautiful. But I am getting tired."

It would not have been possible, even had they dared try to hurry the loquacious guide. Before they left the hall Irma almost forgot her fatigue in looking at the ancient paintings, inscriptions, and other relics of early Christians. Again, as at the Lateran, she sighed deeply at the pathos of the little things brought from the Catacombs, combs and small toilet articles, little brooches, and other pieces of simple jewelry.

"You are really tired!" exclaimed Marion, as they passed through the glass door out of the hall. "But in the Sistine Chapel you can sit down."

So it happened that after Irma had looked into a mirror held under the ceiling, on which are painted Michelangelo's frescoes—the sibyls and the prophets, and the well-known Adam and Eve, Irma from a bench along the side looked with more or less interest at the paintings opposite her by Pinturicchio and other masters.

A girl of sixteen, however, is not expected to have the interest of her elders in old masters, as [184]
Irma frankly acknowledged.

"Of course I know the Last Judgment of Michelangelo's is a great altarpiece, but I do not care to look at it longer. I'm very glad, though, that you brought me to the Sistine Chapel. When I read about the great church ceremonies in which the Pope takes part, I can imagine the crowd here, and the Pope in the centre and——"

Before Irma had finished speaking, from behind a wooden partition that screened some men repairing the mosaic pavement, one of the workers stepped out, and with a finger of one hand on his lips, lifted the other on high with one finger significantly extended. When he saw that he had gained Marion's attention, he held up a small object, as if he wished Marion to examine it. Then Marion went forward, and the man put the object in his hand.

"Cheap enough for a franc," said Marion, displaying a small octagon of mosaics, green, red, and white.

"Why it's the same pattern as the pavement there."

"Of course, that's why I bought it," he replied, "as a souvenir of the Sistine Chapel."

"But ought you to take it?" asked Irma. "Had he the right to sell it?" [185]

An expression of anger crossed Marion's face.

"Do you think I would do what is not right? Come," he continued, "we ought to be on our way out."

Then he strode on, keeping far enough ahead of Irma to prevent conversation. "He is certainly like a spoiled child!" she thought, "and I fancied we were getting on so well together."

The drive back to the hotel was rather silent, as well as hot. "In our hottest weather it is never like this," thought poor Irma. She was glad enough to reach the shelter of the cool hotel.

"Did you see where the papal dominions end and Italy begins?" asked Uncle Jim at *déjeuner*.

"No? Then you didn't look in the right place. There is one window from which the guide could have shown you a soldier of the Pope's on guard, while at a short distance a sentry from the Italian army is pacing up and down."

"From one or two windows I caught sight of the beautiful Vatican gardens," Irma replied, "and [186]
even if the Pope is a prisoner, he must find a great deal to enjoy in his walks."

"*If* he is a prisoner," began Uncle Jim.

"He is certainly a voluntary prisoner," said Aunt Caroline, "but the subject is too large a one to discuss now."

Marion was silent, evidently sulking. But Aunt Caroline understood him, for when he left the [187]
table without a word she made no comment.

CHAPTER XI

TIVOLI—AND HADRIAN'S VILLA

"Tivoli," said Irma, as they sat at luncheon in a pleasant garden not far from the cascades, "has disappointed me."

"In what way?" asked Uncle Jim.

"Oh, the name sounds so bright and frivolous that you expect it to be very gay here, and it isn't."

"The cataracts are lively."

"Yes, they foam and roar like the falls of Lodore, when you reach them, but Tivoli itself is a crowded little town, and the people seem solemn. Even the Temple of the Sibyl is shabby and dirty, without looking old."

"Irma turning pessimist," cried Uncle Jim. "But the town isn't the whole of Tivoli. Villa d'Este is charming enough, unless it has changed since my day, and then there's the road to Hadrian's villa!" [188]

Marion took neither one side nor the other in the discussion. He had talked to Irma little enough since their Vatican visit a day or two before. Yet he was always polite, and she judged from the past that his sulkiness would not last long.

The drive to the Villa d'Este was short, and as she stood on the terrace looking over the tops of the pointed cypresses, Irma admitted that this view alone was worth seeing.

"Ligorio, whom Cardinal Ippolito d'Este employed to construct this villa, was certainly an artist," said Aunt Caroline, "and I am sure it is true that there are few finer Renaissance villas in Italy."

WALL OF ORVIETO.
***See page* 211.**

CASCADES AT TIVOLI.

"If only it were not going to ruin so fast. Broken statuary and moss-grown fountains are not very cheerful. But perhaps there are some amusing stories connected with the place. What has the guide been saying to you?" said Uncle Jim.

"Oh, he has been telling me that he is one of the most remarkable guides in Europe, with government certificates and letters of recommendation from innumerable tourists. The German Emperor depended on him, so he says, on his visit two or three years ago, and, ah, yes—" The guide had brought the party to a stop as he pointed to a stone bench at the end of a path.

"Yes," continued Aunt Caroline, "let us sit down, one by one, for this is the bench on which the [189] Kaiser rested to get full enjoyment of the vista of the house on the terrace at the end of the long avenue of pointed cypresses. But come, he says he has even a finer view to show."

A few minutes' walk brought the party to a wall bounding one side of the garden, whence they had a wide outlook over a flourishing country.

"He says," interpreted Aunt Caroline, "that where that large factory stands was Maecenas's villa, and that Horace also had a farm not far away."

"I could contradict him if it were worth while," said Uncle Jim, "although it is true enough that many eminent Romans, including Augustus himself, had villas in this neighborhood. But there are few sites of which we are sure, except that of Hadrian's villa a hundred years later."

The guide continued to pour out information and misinformation until the party returned to the [190] carriage, and he was even anxious to go with them to Hadrian's villa.

"No, there we shall not need him," said Uncle Jim decidedly. "I have studied the plans, and as we shall not attempt to explore a very large part of the one hundred and seventy-nine acres, I believe I am equal to my task of guide."

Leaving their carriage at the entrance, the party was soon at the custodian's house. Here Aunt Caroline and Irma lingered to compare pictures of Hadrian's villa as it is, with sketches showing the artist's ideal of its original splendor. Other tourists were wandering about the vast ruins, and the custodian was occupied with the first comers.

"Whether a palace or a collection of palaces, it is the most surprising ruin I have ever seen," said Aunt Caroline. "Imagine what it must have been in Hadrian's day! Many of the finest statues now in Rome were unearthed here a few centuries ago, and these mosaic pavements and broken columns give us an idea of the whole. It was really, I suppose, a collection of magnificent buildings with baths and great halls and even quarters for the imperial troops."

Irma, walking about, had a strange feeling of loneliness; she had never seen a building so vast. It [191] brought before her more vividly than anything else she had seen the greatness of the Roman emperors. She wished to be by herself, undisturbed by Aunt Caroline's continuous explanations and Uncle Jim's facetious comments.

"Over there," said Marion, whom she met unexpectedly at a turn, "an opening in the trees gives a fine view of the valley, with Tivoli on the hills beyond."

As Marion did not offer to accompany her to the spot toward which he pointed, Irma went on alone. Uncle Jim and Aunt Caroline were not far away, and would doubtless follow soon enough.

"It was very good in Marion to tell me of this view," thought Irma, as she looked over the valley. "He is getting over his sulkiness."

After waiting a few minutes, longer perhaps than she realized, Irma turned back to the place where Marion had spoken to her. But now there was no one in sight but a distant custodian, who was engrossed by a tourist. "Where is Marion?" thought Irma, "and why did Uncle Jim and Aunt Caroline turn about so quickly?"

At this moment she saw a small cube of green marble in her path. Though it was very like the [192] marble of the pavement on which she stood, she could see no broken place.

"What a perfect paperweight it would make!" she thought. "I couldn't have a finer souvenir from Hadrian's villa."

But as she was about to pick it up, the custodian suddenly turned his head. She wondered if she were doing wrong. Yet the little green cube still fascinated her and she waited until the custodian and the tourist had moved out of sight.

While she waited Irma made a few notes in her book, and when she at last felt that she could safely do it, she picked up the little piece of marble and dropped it in her bag.

But now where should she go? She had a vague idea of the general direction, yet she knew that a wrong turn might lead her far from the entrance. How foolish she had been not to consult the custodian, and all for a wretched piece of marble! For the moment she felt like throwing it away.

The feeling of melancholy she had had since first entering the villa now increased. The sun was low, and as she looked at her watch she saw it was but ten minutes of train time.

"If, by any chance, we should become separated, you and Marion must surely be at the station [193] five minutes before train time," Uncle Jim had said, while they were still in the carriage, pointing

out the little structure, where the steam tram for Rome made a stop.

"That is why they went on," thought Irma, "they supposed Marion was with me, and now what *will* they think?"

Now, strange though it may seem, when the tram pulled away from the little station, Uncle Jim and Aunt Caroline did not realize Irma's absence. After a hurried cup of tea, they had rushed for the cars with a number of other passengers.

"Where's Irma?" Aunt Caroline had asked anxiously, as she took her own seat.

"Oh, she's in the next car; I saw Marion helping her on." This was Uncle Jim's honest opinion. But the girl whom Marion was assisting politely, happened not to be Irma, but another girl of her general appearance, as it seemed to near-sighted Uncle Jim.

Meanwhile Marion, quite unconscious that Irma was not with his uncle and aunt in the forward car, surrendered himself to a book.

Poor Irma! She was not ashamed of the tears that began to fall, when after several minutes' walk [194]
she found herself back at a point near where she had found the unlucky bit of marble. It was far from a pleasant prospect that she might spend the night at Hadrian's villa, twenty-five miles from Rome.

She had no intention, naturally, of sitting still, and she felt sure that eventually, probably even before dark, she might find her way out to the custodian's house. The last tram for the day had returned to Rome, and she wondered who would give her shelter for the night.

"Crying won't help," and she wiped away what she meant should be her last tear. "I am sure I know the general direction, and if——"

"Hello, hello," cried a cheerful voice behind her, "a lady in distress, and no one but me to rescue her. This is *remarkable*."

Irma started to her feet, almost ready to throw her arms around the speaker, whom she had instantly recognized. Before her stood the fairy godfather.

It did not take long to explain the situation, though the old gentleman was rather outspoken in his words of blame for Marion and Uncle Jim.

"Your uncle evidently thought the boy was looking after you, and I must say he deserves [195]
punishment, if he has gone back to Rome without you."

"Oh, it is my fault for not staying with the others."

"Well, well, that can be settled later; meanwhile, if you have really seen all you wish of Hadrian's villa, I will conduct you outside, where I have a carriage and pair. We can soon reach Tivoli, where I can send a telegram that will meet your friends when they reach the end of the route."

"But when shall I go back to Rome?"

"On the regular railroad from Tivoli. Fortunately it has an evening train. Ah, here we are!"

As Irma waited at the little building at the entrance to the grounds, where post cards and other relics were sold, she saw a piece of marble, almost the counterpart of the one that had made her lose her way. She did not buy it, in spite of her first impulse.

"I believe it's not wrong for me to keep the other piece," she thought. "In one way it has taught me a lesson."

On their way to Tivoli the old gentleman seemed more inclined to get Irma's impressions of [196]
Rome, rather than to talk freely himself. She did not, therefore, venture to ask where he had been since their landing at Naples, nor even whether he had been long in Rome.

This last question seemed unnecessary, as the old gentleman's conversation showed a wide acquaintance with modern as well as ancient Rome. Irma had begun, however, to ask him one or two questions about Roman school children, when without replying he said abruptly, "Now, tell me, don't you think there are too many churches in Rome?"

"There *are* a great many," replied Irma, smiling, "and I shall not have seen more than a tenth of them, even if I stay here a month longer."

"Then you do not care for them?"

"Oh, I simply haven't time. Indeed, I care for some of them. I used to think church legends rather [197]
hard to believe, but now they mean much more to me. Perhaps I did not like San Pietro in Montorio as well as some others when I first saw it the other day, but it meant more when I found they believe it is built on the very spot where the apostle was martyred, and so, while the church of San Paolo seems too large and splendid, still it is beautiful to have a church to mark St. Paul's burial place."

"Yes, Rome constantly reminds us what the martyrs suffered. You came out the San Lorenzo gate to-day?"

"Yes."

"Well, the church of San Lorenzo just beyond honors St. Lawrence, whose story is one of the most pathetic. He was assistant to the Bishop Sextus II, and when the latter was condemned to death he begged that he might die with him. 'In three days you shall follow me,' said Sextus. St. Lawrence was a young man of great personal beauty, and he had been a devoted friend to the poor. Sextus directed him to distribute the treasure of the Church among the poor, and when he was asked by the Tyrant to show the treasure, he gathered about him those he had helped. His bravery and piety converted his jailer, Hippolytus, and he met his death—roasting on a gridiron—with the greatest bravery. Whether the story is wholly true, there was certainly a brave martyr named Lawrence. St. Cecilia, too, is another martyr who ought to interest you. Ah, Rome is full of such memories! But this is not a cheerful subject for a girl who has lost her relatives." In an instant the old gentleman had turned the subject, giving Irma an entertaining account of Easter week celebrations that he had once seen in Rome. [198]

As a result of the despatch from Tivoli, Uncle Jim was at the station to meet Irma.

"You gave us a great fright," he said reproachfully. "We did not discover that you were missing until we had almost reached Rome."

"Don't scold the young lady," said the fairy godfather. "It was the fault of that boy." He spoke so sternly that Irma was glad Marion was not present. Yet Uncle Jim did not resent this speech. It almost seemed as if he had met the old gentleman before. Then, with a bare acknowledgment of the thanks that Uncle Jim showered on him for his care of Irma and his thoughtfulness in telegraphing, the old gentleman jumped into a carriage and drove rapidly away.

"Do you know him, Uncle Jim?" asked Irma.

"I must have seen him on the *Ariadne*," he replied.

"My dear Chris and Rudolph," wrote Irma a few days later.

"This is to be a long letter, because we have a rainy day and I can spare the time. For my trunk is packed, and to-morrow we leave Rome. [199]

"In the first place, you wish to know about the seven hills. Well, I believe they are all here, only they have been so built upon or so levelled that they are hard to find. Even in old times the Palatine and the Aventine were the only hills worth speaking of, and they are still fairly steep. Not so long ago they showed a small hut on the Palatine called Romulus's house that had been preserved since the earliest days. So it seems certain that Romulus and Remus were real people, and if we needed more proof, not long since they discovered an old tomb in the Forum which they are quite sure was the grave of Romulus. I have looked down into it, and am willing to believe this, too. On the Palatine now are the ruins of the enormous palaces of the emperors. Generally only parts of the high walls are standing, but from these you get an idea of the grandeur of ancient Rome. On the walls of one house (The House of the Pages it is supposed to be) they found a rough little drawing, such as a boy might scratch on a blackboard to-day, the picture of a donkey, and under it: 'Work, little ass, as I have worked, and may it profit thee.' [200]

"Besides the palaces they have unearthed the small house of Germanicus, in which we saw some good wall paintings, and what would interest you more, lead pipes for carrying water, almost like those we use in our houses.

"We spent one day in the Forum with a special guide, who made everything so plain! I saw the place where Cæsar fell at the foot of Pompey's statue. They are constantly unearthing new things in the Forum, and Aunt Caroline says it is really twice as large as it was when she was last here. The beautiful House of the Vestals interested me the most.

"The Colosseum is some distance from the Forum, and you know it from photographs. Only no picture can really give you a good idea of its size. When you stand inside you feel as if you were hardly larger than a fly.

"Rome, for the first few days, seemed like a big, new city, with bright shops and rushing trolley cars and *carabinieri* in cocked hats sauntering about. But I soon began to see old Rome everywhere. You have to patch it together as you go about. Pavements and columns from ancient temples are found in the Middle Age churches. Alabaster and colored marbles from all over the world were brought to Rome, and as late as the fifth century there were thirty-six marble arches, hundreds of temples, and many great baths, circuses, and fine private houses, besides the rows of tall houses arranged in flats in which ordinary people lived. There were also a great many fine statues, nearly all of which have disappeared. In the Middle Ages, when people wished to build new houses and churches, they simply pulled down some fine old Roman temple or palace and so got building materials without any expense. But there is enough of ancient Rome left to help form a picture of what it was. Sometime I hope you will see it all, the old wall with its towers, the Appian Way with its tombs and monuments. [201]

"But old Rome is only a part of what we enjoy. The streets are bright and gay with so many people driving about, and soldiers in uniforms sometimes marching, sometimes walking along the sidewalks like ordinary people. Then often we meet twenty or thirty school children dressed just alike, taking exercise in the care of sisters, or priests in their church dress. Then there are a great many theological students studying in Rome, and some of them wear broad red or broad blue sashes, or have other colored trimmings on their long black robes. [202]

"I dare say you are disappointed that we have not seen the king and queen—I wrote mother about [203]

Margherita—but I have been all through the royal palace, the Quirinal, and will tell you about it when I come home."

CHAPTER XII

AN ANCIENT TOWN

"I feel sorrier even than I expected," said Irma, as their train drew out of the station at Rome. "No other city can be half as interesting."

"Just wait, my dear," replied Uncle Jim; "wherever you go in Italy you will find more churches and pictures than you can properly grasp. You are a pretty good sightseer, but in another month you will have had enough."

"It isn't antiquities and pictures that I mind leaving," responded Irma smiling; "but I was only beginning to realize how many pleasant people there are in Rome."

"You and your aunt were certainly getting rather frivolous; teas and calls and that kind of thing are a great waste of time in a city full of churches. Remember, to improve your mind is your chief object in coming abroad." Uncle Jim had assumed a mock-serious manner. [204]

"To improve her health," interposed Aunt Caroline; "and I have written her mother that she has gained six pounds and has recovered her red cheeks."

"So you attribute this improvement to teas, and not to churches!"

"Our little bit of social life the past week or two has been good for us both. Americans away from home often seem unexpectedly interesting, and we have enjoyed hearing little things about the Roman winter that we might not have heard if I had not met so many New York and Philadelphia acquaintances. Then we have seen some of our artist friends at work in their studios, and this has been entertaining."

"Don't forget the shops, Aunt Caroline. Even if I haven't had much money to spend I have enjoyed shopping, and I think I have done very well with Roman souvenirs. Sometimes I have wished I could spend just a little more, and yet I have done very well."

If Irma had been looking at Marion, she might have seen that he was observing her more closely than the pages of the book that earlier had seemed to absorb him. [205]

As they journeyed, Uncle Jim reminded Irma that they were travelling toward the sources of the Tiber, and at one station he told her that here she might go off to Perugia, the home of Perugino and Raphael.

"Orvieto," he added, "is a town set on a small mountain by itself, and I hope you will like the funicular."

"By funicular!" cried Marion, in a tone of disgust; "that's the kind of thing I particularly hate."

"You might go around by carriage. There is a winding road, as I remember, but it takes much longer."

When they arrived at Orvieto, Marion, however, entered the strange little train that was to be pulled up the steep ascent by underneath cable.

"Look back at the view," urged Aunt Caroline, when they were almost at the top. Turning her head Irma beheld a beautiful sight, the broad valley lying far beneath and the distant hills. Then glancing toward Marion she saw that he was leaning upon the seat in front and steadying himself as if to brace himself against disaster.

"Sit up straight," called Uncle Jim, mischievously. "You cannot possibly fall out, and if the car slips we shall all perish together." [206]

Then Irma noticed that Marion bit his lip, as if angry, and made no effort to look at the view.

A short drive from the end of the funicular brought them to an old-fashioned hotel.

"A little rest, a little *déjeuner*, and then the cathedral!" exclaimed Aunt Caroline. "I can hardly wait to see it. That is the only thing that brings people to this queer little town."

"It is surely a queer little hotel, and we are the only Americans here," thought Irma, observing the guests at the other tables, a stout, long-frocked priest, a uniformed officer, and two or three swarthy Italians, apparently prosperous business men.

Soon after *déjeuner* they set out, and a turn or two brought them to the piazza of the Duomo, or cathedral.

For a moment all stood silent, as the sun shining full on the façade showed them an enormous picture.

[207]

"Isn't it the most wonderful thing you ever saw?" cried Aunt Caroline, and Irma thought it too beautiful for words. For those who had planned and those who had carried out the plans had managed to give to the little hill town a church that any city in the world might envy. Beautiful pictures in mosaic in rich tones and gold backgrounds occupy the upper part of the front. The marble pillars are exquisitely carved, and around the large rose window are marble statues of apostles and saints, while fine bronze emblems also form part of the decorations.

"I would really rather not go inside," said Irma, when Uncle Jim proposed their seeing the interior. "I should like to sit here for an hour and simply look at this beautiful, enormous picture," and she raised her eyes to the high, pointed gables of the cathedral, far, so far above her.

While she was speaking Uncle Jim had crossed the street to a group of boys gathered on the cathedral steps.

"Yes," he said, as he returned, "they are actually playing cards, and they didn't show the slightest signs of guilt when I looked over their shoulders."

"Just think of being so intimate with this cathedral that you could play games on its steps without thinking of the front."

"And those bareheaded women repairing the pavement never glance at the church." [208]

"Oh, Marion," protested Aunt Caroline, "don't give her a penny. Here are two more old women hobbling along, and if you give to one you will have the whole hospital at your back. I am sure there is some kind of an institution there at the corner of the piazza."

Marion smiled good humoredly, and took his hand from his pocket, without producing the bit of silver that the old woman evidently expected.

Two other old women came along, one leaning heavily on a crutch, the other with a heavy woollen shawl over her head in spite of the heat of the day.

"But just think what a fine time they could have with my half franc to spend."

"You will find some more worthy cause, if you need a cause on which to waste your money. There —there—go—go," cried Aunt Caroline to the three old women, who had now come close up to her, mumbling and making signs of hunger.

"Come, Irma, inside the cathedral," and laying her hand on Irma's arm, Aunt Caroline crossed the [209]
street, while Uncle Jim and Marion followed: and if the truth be told, as soon as Aunt Caroline's back was turned, the very coin that had been burning Marion's pocket quickly transferred itself to the hand of the most importunate of the old women. This, at least, was Irma's impression, as she looked around before entering the cathedral door, attracted by the rather peculiar striking of a clock. Looking in the direction of the sound she gave an exclamation of surprise that led Aunt Caroline to turn also. There on a building at the corner stood a life size figure of a small man hitting a bell with a hammer, and thus informing the town of the hours and quarter hours without the need of a clock face.

The cool, white interior of the cathedral was a pleasant change from the hot piazza. The pillars were of marble, striped black and white like the outside. The young people admired some of the old frescoes by Fra Angelico and Signorelli, and watched the priest copying the head of Virgil, one of several poets of the future life chosen to decorate one chapel. But when Aunt Caroline drew out her book to sketch some architectural details Irma sighed audibly.

Only Marion, however, heard and understood the sigh.

"Aunt Caroline," he said, "while you are drawing, Irma and I might ramble around the town. The [210]
streets are so narrow that there would be no fun driving, and you never care to walk in the sun."

"Certainly, children. Run off by yourselves. You needn't apologize for tiring of the society of your elders. As we have so little time here I intend to devote myself to the cathedral inside and out. Only remember what you see, and please don't get lost."

So Irma and Marion set off by themselves. Although they had been informed that the little Municipal Museum contained many interesting vases and ornaments found in the ancient Etruscan tombs so numerous in this neighborhood, they decided to omit the museum.

"We saw so many of those things in the National Museum at Rome," sighed Irma, "and these cannot be any finer. Aren't you tired of museums? There must be much to see here, for Orvieto is such an old, old town."

"Yes," assented Marion, "and we might as well begin to set ourselves against museums, for Uncle [211]
Jim says that all the Italian towns, no matter how small, are stuffed full of local pride, and have municipal museums, and even art galleries that they tax the poor people heavily to support. If no one should visit them then taxes would be lighter, and the poor Italians would be happier, and not so many would be driven to emigrate to America."

While Irma laughed at the absurdity of his reasoning she also thought that Marion was a very clever boy.

Then they wandered through the narrow streets of Orvieto, passing under stone arches, looking in at various shops, where shoemakers or tinsmiths or tailors were working in rather primitive

fashion. Irma photographed one or two old churches, and at last they came to a wall that seemed to hold the town from tumbling down the high hill. There they had a wide view across a lovely valley.

While they stood there, three or four well-dressed children surrounded them, asking for money, and going through the usual form of speech, "We are dying of hunger." Far from sympathizing, Marion and Irma only laughed as they drove the children away, and finally the children, too, burst into loud laughter as they retreated.

"I never imagined an Italian town as clean as this," said Irma, as they walked over the big cobblestones of a sidewalkless thoroughfare. "It looks as if it had been swept and scrubbed, and yet I am sorry for the people so near the beautiful country, who yet must live in a closely built town."

"Oh, many probably work in the fields below there, young as well as old. Though they don't need [212] the protection of a fortified town, as they did in the Middle Ages, they still love to huddle together."

Before returning to the hotel, the two went to another edge of the town. A public garden covered the site of the old fortress, but from a ruin of the ancient castle they formed an idea of what it had been in its days of usefulness.

"Give me your camera for a moment," cried Marion, as Irma leaned against the wall looking over the Valley of the Tiber, toward the Umbrian hills.

"Now, stand still, just as you are," and when she heard the click she turned to thank Marion.

"You must be a thought reader. I was wishing I might have a picture taken here to send home, but——"

"You weren't afraid to ask me?"

"Well—you might have thought I was vain—or something. It always seems so silly to wish to have [213] one's own picture taken. But this is for Gertrude. She tried to make me promise to have one taken in every town we visited."

"I really believe you'd rather please Gertrude than any one else. I am almost sorry I took the photograph." Marion turned away half angrily, and Irma could not tell whether or not he was in earnest, as they followed the custodian of the garden, who had been insisting that they must see the *pozzo*, or old well.

When they had looked down into its gloomy depths of a couple of hundred feet the man seemed rather disappointed that neither of them would descend part way.

"The remarkable thing about it is that the spiral staircase is so built that donkeys with buckets went down on one side, and came up on the other with water."

"But who cares about that now?" cried Irma impatiently.

As they turned away from the well, they saw a hotel omnibus approaching, and a moment later Aunt Caroline was calling to them.

"We were so afraid we might miss you. They insisted on bringing us down early for the funicular, [214] and here are your bags. But this is better than being late, and it will give your uncle and me a chance to visit the famous well." Whereat Irma and Marion exchanged smiles, though it did not seem worth while to dissuade their elders from seeing one of the few sights of the old town.

"It will be a quarter of an hour before the train starts for Siena, and they ought to have some way of killing time."

"By the way," continued Marion, as they waited for the train, "you may be glad to hear that you were right and I was wrong, the other day about my purse."

"The one that was stolen?"

"Yes. I ought to have reported it, as you said. It contained a piece of—well—something that I wouldn't have lost for anything. I only found it out when I came to pack this morning. I had thought it was in its box. But when to-day I found the box empty, I remembered that I had it in my purse to take to a jeweler's to repair."

"Can't you report it now?"

"Oh, it's absolutely too late, now that we have left Rome."

At this moment the train came in. [215]

CHAPTER XIII

OLD SIENA—AND NEW FRIENDS

When Irma looked out of her window before breakfast her first morning at Siena, she was surprised to see before her not a town street, but what seemed a section of farming country, with vegetable gardens and occasional small cottages. She saw men and women at work in the fields, and she wondered whether she were awake or asleep. For her impression of Siena, as they had driven through the streets the night before, was of a closely built town. When she had dressed, she hastened from her room to see what impression she would get from a front window.

[216] It seemed to be a morning of surprises, for as she passed a sitting-room at the head of the stairs, she heard Marion laughing, yes, actually laughing, and other voices were mingled with his in conversation and laughter, too.

So surprised was Irma that she paused, with her hand on the banister, and a moment later Marion stood beside her.

"Come in, there is some one here you ought to meet," he said, and almost before she realized it he had led her into the room. The faces of the two girls who stood near the window were certainly not exactly the faces of strangers, and yet she could not tell where she had previously seen them.

"Miss Grimston, Miss Sanford, this is Irma Derrington."

At these words of Marion's she realized who the strangers were, the two girls she had seen at the Naples Aquarium.

"Don't I come in for an introduction, too?" said a boy's voice, almost before Irma had a chance to say a word to the two girls, and at the same moment a tall, blue-eyed boy came forward with a smile. "I am Richard Sanford," he said pleasantly.

"Come, children, come to breakfast," cried Uncle Jim, now appearing at the door; "your aunt will have her coffee upstairs."

[217] Then he started back. "Excuse me," he said, "I did not realize that Siena was so full of young Americans," and then Marion repeated the introductions.

In the breakfast room a table was found where all the young people could sit together, under the vigilant eye of Uncle Jim, "a chaperon *pro tem*," as he called himself, whose chief duty it was to see that they did not let their conversation interfere with their appetites. Before the meal ended he had made them admit that he had done his duty.

"We have seen all the most important things in Siena," Katie Grimston explained, "but we had arranged to be here a week, and that gives us two days more. Mrs. Sanford happens to be rather tired to-day, and while she is resting we can go about with you if you'd like to have us."

"Indeed we should," responded Uncle Jim, "for if you have been over the ground, you can probably save us many steps."

"Of course we won't promise to go everywhere, but we can save you time at first."

A little later Irma was at the door, ready to start. The street in front of the house looked like the street of some pleasant New England suburb. The houses seemed comparatively modern. But not so very far away she caught glimpses of roofs crowded together, and of the tower of a large church.

[218] Marion and Katie and Uncle Jim had gone off a little ahead of the others, and Irma found herself with Richard Sanford and his sister.

"Let us take a short cut to the Duomo," said Richard. "We've always driven, but it would really be more fun to walk."

The girls assented, and the three set off in good spirits. But Richard, although he asked his way once or twice, did not pay close attention to directions, and they quickly found themselves going down a steep, narrow street that had no sidewalk, and was paved with large stones that made walking difficult. The street was full of people, chiefly women and little children, and some of the children gathered around the Americans as they passed along.

"The only thing I know about the cathedral," protested Irma, when they found themselves at the bottom of the long street, "is that it occupies the highest land in Siena, which I am sure we shall never reach if we keep going down hill."

[219] "Patience, patience," cried Richard pleasantly. "I'll show you that I am a regular Duke of York," and he stepped aside to talk with an intelligent-looking woman in a doorway, who gesticulated while she talked.

"Her gestures tell me more than her words," said Richard, "and all we have to do, evidently, is to turn a corner or two and go up hill again."

"Oh, Richard, you are so heedless. You should have thought twice before bringing us down here," cried his sister.

"But think what fun to go up those queer little stepping-stones," and with a long stride Richard was soon so far ahead of them that again the only sensible thing was to follow.

For a moment he was out of sight around a corner, and when they came upon him, he was on the

steps of a building that was at a considerably lower level than the cathedral towering above. Then they followed him within, and Ellen fortunately withheld her word of reproof, which might otherwise have seemed an interruption to a service that was going on.

"A christening," she whispered to Irma; "this must be the baptistery."

"See, there are two of them. I believe they are twins." Both girls now drew nearer to the font. [220] There were several persons besides the priest, and two of the women wore cloaks with bright linings, one blue, one pink. The lady of the pink-lined cloak held in her arms a baby with a cloak of the same color, and a baby in a blue cloak was held by the wearer of the blue-lined cloak.

"I wish we could look at them," whispered Ellen, as the children and their train turned away from the font. "I do so love to see twins," and then, to the surprise of both girls, the baby in the blue cloak was carried out of the baptistery, followed by her parents and grandparents, without a farewell to the baby in the pink cloak; while the parents of the other child sat down for a minute or two before taking him away.

"They are not twins. They are not even brother and sister," cried Ellen, in a tone of great dejection.

"As if that made any difference!" exclaimed Richard, overhearing her. "Oh, Ellen, you can be such a goose. But come, after you have admired Donatello's stunning St. John, we must go outside and take a few more steps up to the cathedral."

From the piazza the black and white striped marble, the gabled front and its fine sculptures, [221] reminded Irma of the Orvieto Duomo. But it had not the rich color of the other. On each side of the door were columns surmounted by a marble wolf.

"Oh, you must get used to *La Lupa* in Siena. You know the story goes that Siena was founded by Senus, son of Remus, hence the Sienese claim the wolf as their especial emblem. You'll see it everywhere. Now follow me and listen attentively, young ladies, and you'll find you can 'do' this vast Duomo in the shortest time on record. No, no."

The last was said to a guide who was following them closely, a half-grown boy, who was not easily shaken off.

"Richard really is a very good guide," whispered Ellen. "He knows so many stories about everything, and when he doesn't remember he can make up something just as interesting."

In consequence of this remark of Ellen's, Irma was not always sure how much was truth and how [222] much imagination, in the legends that Richard rapidly told of saints and church dignitaries, painted on the walls, or done in graffito in the marble pavement. But of one thing she was certain, she had never seen a building so complete in its carvings, whether of wood or marble, its paintings and gildings. She admired the tall flagstaffs captured at Montaperti, though they seemed out of place in a church. She stood long, studying the details of the exquisite marble pulpit by Nicholas Pisano, when Richard exclaimed, "The most beautiful pulpit in Europe. He worked on it for three years, and then received for it—about thirty dollars."

"Is that the truth or a legend?" she asked, smiling.

"The real true truth," he answered. "I saw it in a book of accounts in the Municipal building. They have a great many interesting manuscripts there. The letters of Catherine of Siena, and many other autographs would fetch their weight in gold in our country."

"An autograph wouldn't weigh very much," suggested Irma.

But Richard took no notice of the interruption.

"Well, I made a particular note about Nicholas Pisano. So I am sure I am right. But come, if you wish to do the cathedral in the shortest known time, we must go at once to the library."

"I am not in so tremendous a hurry."

"Ah, that's because you have no idea how much there is in Siena. See, there's the librarian letting [223] one group of victims go. We can easily slip in."

The room they now entered, though small, was beautifully decorated. Above the rich woodwork were ten frescoes on the walls, each a complete scene from the life of some hero.

"He is Enio Sylvio Piccolomini," explained their self-appointed guide, "who became Pope Pius II, and isn't that a funny scene where he is trying to persuade the king of Scotland to harry the border so that Henry VI of England may have so much to do at home that he won't interfere with the affairs on the continent?"

"Oh, but the colors are so rich, and Enio Sylvio, if he looked like that, must have been a very interesting person."

Richard laughed at Irma's seriousness.

"Pinturicchio knew how to please Pope Pius III, the nephew of Enio Sylvio, who engaged him to [224] paint these pictures. But still, on the whole, I imagine that the Piccolomini were rather interesting. For generations they held the chief offices in the church here in Siena, and in the years they were fighting with the Tolmei, they kept things pretty lively. But in Enio Sylvio's time

the worst of the Civil Wars were over. But now come," and Richard looked at his watch. "You can have only five minutes for all these illuminated books."

"Oh, more than that," cried Ellen.

"No, my dear, that is enough for a general impression, which is all you would retain if you were to spend an hour here."

The five minutes, however, lengthened into ten before Ellen and Irma were ready to leave the fascinating folios in their leather bindings. They were all books of devotion, some of them music books, with the chants of the church, and all of them illustrated with tiny paintings rich in color.

"It is all very well to hurry us," said Ellen, as they walked toward the door of the Duomo, "but you spent a whole morning here, and this is my first visit, as well as Miss Derrington's."

"You have a good enough general impression," replied Richard, with a laugh; "and what more can any one expect, on a first visit?"

"Evidently," thought Irma, "Richard Sanford looks on sightseeing much as Uncle Jim does."

A little later, at the great door, Irma and her friends almost ran into Uncle Jim, behind whom walked Katie Grimston and Marion. [225]

"Well, you must have taken the longest way round; where in the world have you been, Katie?" asked Ellen.

"Oh, we came through the town, and there were so many nice little shops there that I had to stop, as I always do," replied Katie, whose hands were full of little bundles. "Besides, none of us were in a great hurry for the cathedral. You know I have been all through it," and she glanced coquettishly at Richard. "If you wish us to go on with you now, we can as well as not," she added.

"You must suit yourself, but as Marion and his uncle have not been here, I should think you'd like to give them the advantage of your superior knowledge."

Then Uncle Jim spoke for himself. "I really think Marion and I ought to take a turn around inside, if nothing more. But Miss Grimston——"

"Oh, of course I'd rather do what you do," said Katie, turning her back to Richard, who thereupon went outside. Then after Irma had had a word or two with Uncle Jim, she and Ellen found Richard near a carriage. [226]

"It is too warm to walk, and I am going to take you down to the Campo. It is the most interesting spot here in Siena and I wish to be the first to show it to you."

"Oh, not more interesting than St. Catherine's house," said Ellen.

"More interesting to me, and I believe it will be to Miss Derrington," said Richard.

As they drove along, Irma realized that it was indeed strange that she should be so contented in the company of Ellen and Richard, two persons of whom she had not even heard until this very morning. As if he read her thoughts, Richard said rather abruptly, "I suppose Marion hasn't had a chance to tell you that he and I used to go to school together in New York. That was years ago, when we were first out of the kindergarten. Lately he has studied at home, and I've been off at boarding school, so I have seen him only occasionally in my holidays. You must have seen more of him, Ellen."

"Oh, no," responded his sister. "Until to-day, I had hardly even seen him since he was a small boy. Of course I felt very sorry for him this winter."

"Ah, here we are!" and Richard signalled the driver to pull up, as they reached the end of a narrow street. [227]

"Oh, it is picturesque!" cried Irma, looking at the square before her. The great open space was hardly a square, but a piazza tending toward a semicircle, and slightly lower than the street. On the side farthest from them were several fine buildings, from one of which rose a high, square tower, of which Irma remembered to have seen many pictures. Then she recalled something she had just read. Surely Richard would know.

"Yes," responded Richard. "This is the very tower they are copying for the Provincetown monument. What a genuine Yankee you are to remember. There," continued Richard, "this is the famous Campo. It is in a hollow, where the three hills of Siena meet. How I should like to have seen it five or six hundred years ago, on one of those days when a fisticuff game was going on, or one of the more exciting donkey races. Oh, it makes our sports to-day seem tame, when we read what these old Sienese used to do. You see," he continued, without waiting for the girls to ask questions, "at one of these fisticuff fights one Sunday before Carnival, the fighters on one side grew so excited when driven off the ground that they fell upon their opponents with sticks and stones, and then with lances and darts, and all of Siena crowded to the neighborhood. The soldiers, the greatest men of the city, too, tried in vain to stop them, and some of the soldiers were killed. Then people who lived in the very palaces we're looking at threw stones out of their windows, but the mob only threatened to set fire to the houses." [228]

"Well, how did it end?" asked Ellen impatiently.

"Oh, the fight would probably have continued to this day, if some one, after several soldiers had been killed, had not thought of getting the Bishop of Siena, and all the Friars here to come down to the Campo, and when they began to march in a solemn procession right through the thick of the fight, carrying the cross and other religious emblems, of course the fighting stopped. But naturally their games were not often as exciting as this."

"What were the donkey races like?"

"Oh, quite different. The city was divided into *contrade*, or districts, and on the days of the races [229] each district appeared with its captain and other officers, with its special banner, and a donkey painted in its colors. The game was to get the donkeys to go twice around the Campo. No one on the field was permitted to have a weapon of any kind, not even a finger ring, but they could fight and push and do all in their power to prevent any donkey's winning, except that of their own district. After the donkey races died out they used to have buffalo races; you know," in a tone of contempt, "the kind of buffaloes they have in Italy, and later horse races, which they still have."

"Here on the Campo? How I should like to see them."

"Then you must come here the second of July or the middle of August. The *Palio* is the name given to the race, and as the city is still divided into *contrade*, these horses are mounted by representatives of the different ones. But I have a friend who came here one summer, and he says that in spite of the crowds and the display of rich banners and colors these races are now rather tame affairs."

"Nothing is what it used to be," said Ellen, half mockingly. "My brother," she explained, turning [230] to Irma, "is romantic, and always longing for the past, in spite of which I don't believe he would have cared to live in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."

"Well, they did some things better than we can, the men of those days. Just come for a moment to the Palazzo Municipio, and I'll show you some pictures that will make you envy the Sienese."

As the girls followed he marched them rapidly from room to room, decorated with enormous frescoes, in which were shown the victories of the Sienese over their neighbors, especially over their chief rival, Florence. From the great Council Hall they passed to the Hall of the Nine, who at one time were supreme in the Government of Siena. After one or two efforts Irma ceased trying to understand the allegorical figures that had almost as large a place in the pictures as the historical. But the color was so beautiful, and generally the paintings were so pleasing that she restrained the laugh that was often on her lips, when something appeared to her particularly absurd. But Richard, who had been here before, had the meanings of the allegories, as well as the historical incidents, at his tongue's end.

In one room, he told them, a treacherous leader of the Sienese forces had been entrapped and [231] stabbed to death by The Fifteen, who then were the rulers of Siena, and he would have described fully these blood-curdling events, if Ellen had permitted.

Finally, as they drove towards home, Richard pointed out several old palaces in which leading families had lived, and in almost every case he had a tale of Salimbeni or Tolomei or Saraceni in the days when the followers of one great house would kill hundreds of the followers of the other. "When," said Richard, "these narrow streets literally ran blood in those old days of Guelph and Ghibelline."

"Thank you," said Irma faintly, as they reached their hotel, "I feel as if I had swallowed a whole history."

"Well," responded Richard, "I thought it was well for you to accomplish all you could this morning, for I don't see why you shouldn't make quick work with Siena, and go on with us to-morrow or the next day to San Gimignano."

"I don't know, I am sure, what Aunt Caroline's plans are," said Irma, "but I can ask her."

Yet she realized that she could not repeat Richard's strange name. "San—what?" [232]

CHAPTER XIV

NAP—AND OTHER THINGS

A whole day as strenuous as the morning Richard had provided would have been too much for Irma's strength. Fortunately Aunt Caroline came to her rescue, and insisted on a rest during the early afternoon, and prescribed a drive later. But after driving a short time, Aunt Caroline herself suggested visiting the Oratory of San Bernardino, and one or two other churches where certain masterpieces of Sodoma and other great artists were to be seen.

In the evening, after dinner, Uncle Jim brought in a number of letters, forwarded from Rome. There were three for Marion, whose face brightened perceptibly as he glanced at the envelopes.

"Here are two from Cranston," added Uncle Jim, as he gave Irma hers.

"Cranston," exclaimed Katie, "is there any one here from Cranston? That is where my grandmother lives." [233]

"I know it," rejoined Irma, whereupon Katie tossed her head with a little air of exaggerated surprise, as if to say, "And how does it happen that you know anything about my grandmother?"

"But I do not know your grandmother," continued Irma. "She has been away ever since I lived there. It is only Nap,—the little dog——"

She could not bring herself to say "your little dog," even if she had been willing to admit Katie's ownership.

Instantly Katie comprehended. "Oh, you are the girl," she said, "who found my little Pat."

"Rescued him," began Aunt Caroline, who well knew the story.

"Whereby hangs a tale," added Uncle Jim.

"A dog's tail?" queried Richard, with a boy's desire to make a joke, although he didn't yet understand the story of this particular Nap.

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you for taking care of my dog," said Katie, "though my relations would have kept him for me." [234]

"They didn't seem able to," thought Irma.

"Well, he's Irma's dog now," said Uncle Jim decidedly. "You would be quite sure he knows to whom he belongs if you could see him follow Irma about, as I saw him last summer."

"Nap, as you call him, 'Pat' as I say, is still my dog. I have never given him away. Every one knows that," and Katie looked in defiance at Irma.

"As the bone of contention is so far away, by which I do not mean that Pat is unduly thin, it seems as if we might leave the subject in peace for the present."

"Of course," continued Katie, "I did not expect to be in Europe so long. But I am to join grandma in Paris next month, and a week or two later we shall sail. I shall be glad enough to see Pat again."

There was no more just then for Irma to say. She wondered if Katie really meant what she said. Later, when they were alone, she would ask her.

Soon Katie left the sitting-room, and Marion and Irma and one or two others for whom letters had come proceeded to read them.

Richard, who had been politely silent for some time, now turned to Irma, when he saw she was at leisure. "Would you mind telling us about the little dog. All I could understand was that Katie intends to have her own way about something, and when that is the case, it is very hard to make her change her mind." [235]

"I should like to hear about it, too," said Marion. "I know just a little about Nap."

"I'll tell you what," cried the resourceful Richard. "There's a little balcony outside, at the end of the hall, just large enough for four. If we go there, Ellen, Marion, and Miss Derrington, we can have the whole story, without disturbing any one else."

"There's really little enough to tell," began Irma, as they seated themselves outside. "Only, about three years ago, a little less, perhaps, when I first went to Cranston to live, one morning I met a boy with a small dog. He asked me to buy it to save it from being shot. The lady who owned it was going abroad, he said, and had ordered it shot. But he thought it cruel, and was willing to sell it. Well, I took a great fancy to the little creature, he had such lovely brown eyes; and while I was wondering whether I could buy him, Gertrude came along, and between us we bought him. Gertrude is always so generous." For a moment Irma was silent, as her mind went back to that memorable October day, and to the way in which the little dog had helped settle the misunderstanding between her and Gertrude. [236]

"Then we had to name him, and happened to choose Nap, which sounds so much like his original 'Pat' that he must have felt pleased."

"But where does Katie come in?" asked Richard.

"That's the strange part of it. We took Nap with us on an excursion to Concord, and there we ran across Ada Amesbury, who is old Mrs. Grimston's granddaughter. Nap and she recognized each other at once, because, you see, he really belonged to Katie Grimston, whose home, you know, is in Concord."

"Well, if Mrs. Grimston or Katie wished to have the dog shot, just because they were going to Europe, I can't see why they should object to your having him!"

"Oh, naturally that story of the boy's was only made up. He saw a chance to get a little money by selling the dog, and Katie's family thought Pat was lost. Ada Amesbury was to have taken care of him in Katie's absence. When I first heard about it I thought I ought to give Nap up, but Mrs. Amesbury said it was fair for me to keep him until Katie's return." [237]

"I should say so!" interpolated Richard.

"But now Katie has stayed away so long it will be very hard for us to part with Nap, especially for my little sister Tessie,—Theresa, I mean."

"Oh, you and Katie can surely settle the matter now," said Ellen. "She should be glad enough to let you keep him. A dog is a great trouble to any one who travels much."

"I suppose Katie will stay at home for some time after she returns. Perhaps I oughtn't to say Katie behind her back, but I know so many who speak of her in that way. She has quantities of friends in Cranston."

"Ellen," said Richard, "even though Katie is our cousin, don't you know her well enough to be sure that if she has once said she would claim Nap, she is not likely to give in, or give up, or whatever you call it?"

"That's the worst of it," said Ellen; "she isn't easy to influence." [238]

"Oh, well," sighed Irma, "I suppose if she is so fond of Nap, she has a right to him. Of course we have written to Mrs. Grimston and Ada has written to Katie, but she has always said she expected to have the dog on her return."

"You could easily get another pet dog," interposed Marion, who thus far had taken no part in the discussion.

"It couldn't possibly be the same," and Marion knew that Irma was despondent.

"It is cold," cried Ellen. "Let us go back to the sitting-room," and as they passed through the dimly lit hall, Marion saw Irma wipe away a tear. Had she known that he noticed this, and had she thought the matter worth explaining, she might have told him that Nap was not alone responsible for the tear, but that behind it was the feeling of homesickness, her very strong desire to see Tessie and the boys and her parents, and yes, even Mahala and Gertrude, and in fact every one in Cranston.

Marion this evening was more sympathetic than usual, because he had received a letter with [239]
better news than any he had had since leaving home. Yet such was his reticence that he could not talk of it, even to Aunt Caroline.

On their return to the sitting-room, when Irma was introduced for the first time to Mrs. Sanford, she partly understood the reason for Richard's extreme energy. Mrs. Sanford was pale and delicate in appearance, and as Richard's father had long been dead, she could see that he not unnaturally had to take great responsibility, and had had to make plans that under other conditions would have been first proposed by his mother.

"It seems a great pity," he was saying to Aunt Caroline, "that you should not go on with us to San Gimignano. It's a fine drive, right through the heart of Tuscany, to the queerest old town. You may never have such a chance again."

"Richard!" exclaimed his mother, smiling, even while her tone held more or less reproof.

"A chance, I mean, to go with us."

"One carriage would hardly hold seven persons."

"No, there would be two carriages, and each would have a pair of these fine Sienese horses. I [240]
have never seen stronger or better kept beasts in Europe, and one carriage shall be driven by that rosy-cheeked *cocchiere*, who has been so devoted to you, mother, and we'll find his twin for the other carriage, and when any two in one carriage grow tired of any other two, why they will change places with the others. And we'll have two huge luncheon baskets for supper on the way, for of course to avoid the heat we must leave late in the afternoon. Oh, it will be great; and it's only twenty-five miles, and if you wished you couldn't go by train, nearer than Poggibonsi."

"You seem to have it so well arranged that the rest of us need not say or do anything," said Uncle Jim, with an attempt at sarcasm that could not cut very deep.

"Well, what do the others say? You, Marion, for example?"

"Oh, it might be worth trying," responded Marion, and when no one really disagreed with Richard, he felt that the matter was settled as he wished.

The next day Aunt Caroline and Uncle Jim devoted themselves to the Accademia. With Ellen and [241]
Marion, Irma did walk through the Accademia, with its countless pictures, a complete exhibition of the renowned Sienese school, but there were very few paintings before which she cared to linger.

"You won't go shopping with me?" asked Aunt Caroline, as she turned away. "They make fine old furniture here and beautiful carved frames."

"Yes, and genuine old masters,—madonnas, bambinos, and all the saints," said Marion. "Some one has been telling me about them."

"Ah, but I am not looking for an old master," said Aunt Caroline, "and I shall like the furniture all the better if it isn't old."

The rest of this morning the young people strolled along the narrow picturesque streets, occasionally going inside some old building where Richard knew there was something to see, or standing at a corner, he would give them the details of some bloody street combat between Guelphs and Ghibellines. Once he took them up into a high building, from which they viewed the old city wall, and from the same window he pointed toward the field of Montaperto where the Sienese completely routed their great enemies, the Florentines.

"The battlefield is six miles away," he explained. "I am only pointing in its general direction. It's [242] hard to believe that the Sienese killed twelve thousand Florentines and made six thousand prisoners, though that was when Siena had a hundred thousand inhabitants, instead of twenty-five thousand, as now."

Richard took them to the Litza, the pretty park that is thronged with Sienese, old and young, every afternoon, and he explained the nearness of the farms that Irma had noticed between the Litza and the back of their hotel.

Finally in the afternoon she went with Richard and Marion to visit the house of the famous Saint Catherine, in the street of the dyers, for Catherine's father, Bernincasa, had been a dyer, and in this small house Catherine was born in 1347.

Every room of the small house on this steep street had been turned into a chapel or oratory. Life- [243] size paintings of St. Catherine were on the wall. The pavement she had trodden was covered with wooden slats. The rooms where, as a little girl, she had helped her mother in her humble household tasks were now richly decorated with paintings. There was a certain solemnity in all the rooms, in the smaller oratories, as in the larger lower church. The pictures on the walls spoke of the saint's good deeds, and Richard told stories he had read of her kindness to the poor, of her comfort to prisoners, in one case staying by young Niccolo di Toldo, holding his head even while the executioners were severing it. One of her missions was to the pope at Avignon, another to Rome, where she went with a band of her disciples, and her influence made itself felt wherever she was.

"She must have been a wonderful woman. Her memory is as fresh in Siena as if she had lived but last year, and the reverence for her began even before her death, more than six hundred years ago."

The rest of the afternoon passed quickly, and all the young people spent the evening pleasantly together. Although Irma was aware of a slight unfriendliness on Katie's part, the two girls talked and laughed about Cranston people, some of whom Katie knew better than Irma, as she had made many visits at her grandmother's in Cranston.

When the day dawned when Mrs. Sanford and her party were to drive to San Gimignano, it was [244] clear that Richard had carried his point. Aunt Caroline at breakfast announced that she had decided to shorten her stay at Siena. "Our trunks have already gone on to Florence, and there is nothing to prevent our driving to San Gimignano with the Sanfords." The plan pleased Irma, who was really anxious to see the strange town that Richard had described. Uncle Jim professed to be resigned to anything that suited Aunt Caroline; and Marion, although he said nothing, was evidently interested in what promised to be a novel experience.

Accordingly, toward four o'clock, two large comfortable carriages drove up to the door of the *pension*, each drawn by a pair of sturdy horses, with a young, red-cheeked, amiable driver. All the employes of the house, down to the cook and a little scullion, lined up beside the door, with hands extended for the centimes and francs that Uncle Jim and Richard doled out, some of the boarders waved a good-by from the little balcony—and then they were off.

At first Marion and Aunt Caroline were in the carriage with Mrs. Sanford and Katie.

"Families do get so bored by one another travelling," said Richard. "That's one reason I hoped we [245] might take this trip together. Any one who grows particularly tired of any one else has only to ask to exchange to the other carriage. Ellen and I usually get on very well together, but Katie——"

"Hush, Richard," and Ellen laid a warning finger on her brother's lips.

The road over which they travelled was hard and smooth, and although houses were few, there was much of interest on every side. Richard invented many tales by the way, about noble Florentines riding this road, only to be waylaid and killed by Sienese rivals. In his stories the Sienese were always as successful as they were in the paintings on the walls of the public buildings in Siena. Once they stopped to look back, and the coachman chose the most favorable point for a last view of the city wall, with one of the old gates.

Richard and Ellen both understood Italian, and spoke it fairly well.

"I have just been complimenting the *cocchiere* on his accent," said Richard, "and he took it quite as a matter of course. He says that every one knows that only in Siena can one hear the true Italian, and that the strangers who wish to speak Tuscan properly come to Siena to study."

"I thought that it was Florence where one must go," said Ellen. [246]

"Hush, hush," whispered Richard; "if our coachman should understand you, I should fear for our lives. The very horses might run away and dash us into a ditch. Florence and Siena forsooth!"

The coachman himself did his part in entertaining them. He pointed out the entrance to one

estate, and told a story or two about its owner, whose house was set far back and hidden from the road by extensive woods.

"Where do the working people live who cultivate these great farms?" asked Ellen, and the man answered by pointing to a large house in the distance. "Sometimes twenty or thirty people live in one of the houses of the *contadino*, or farmer. Their real home is in some town, but they stay with the farmer while he needs them."

[247] Even with the best of company a long ride on a warm afternoon becomes tiresome. After a time Irma found herself counting the milestones, or kilometre stones, and she saw that instead of being perfectly plain blocks, most of them had some little carved ornament. On one hill they saw a wall that enclosed an old town, and the coachman could hardly find words to express the rapidity with which the population was diminishing.

"Why in the world should any one wish to live on the top of a hill?" asked Uncle Jim. "It was all very well when war was their occupation, but in these piping days of peace it would be too much like work to have to mount that hill daily for the protection of that old castle wall."

After a while the party came to a place where they could draw up by the side of the road and examine their lunch baskets.

"The first hotel luncheon I ever saw," exclaimed Uncle Jim, "without chicken legs and butterless rolls."

"You never before had me to order for you," said Richard. "I know their tricks and their manners, and so I did a little shopping on my own account. At this time of day I knew we would need nothing very substantial, and now you may praise the Sienese fruit and pastry to your heart's content, for that luncheon came chiefly from the little shops, and not from the landlady's larder."

[248] "We can show appreciation without mere words." And soon the luncheon was finished to the last crumb, with due appreciation.

The air was cooler, and shortly they were passing through a factory town at the foot of a hill. As working hours were just over, people were sitting at their open doors, or going in and out of the little shops, much as they would in a New England village. Indeed, Uncle Jim said it made him think of a certain New Hampshire town that he knew well, until, as the horses clattered up the hilly street, suddenly at one side were the high substantial walls of a mediæval town.

Through an open gate they could see the old, narrow streets and high houses. In the beginning there had been but a castle here, around which the town had grown. Now, in modern times, it had spread all over the hill, or perhaps had spread up from the little mill that had had its first humble beginning on the stream below.

"I seem to be looking at history as it is made," said Irma.

"That's a fine way of putting it," cried Richard.

"Irma sees things exactly as they are," added Uncle Jim.

[249] Soon they had descended the other side of the high hill they had so lately mounted. Ahead of them, and still a good distance away, was another hill with a coronet of slender towers.

"San Gimignano!" exclaimed Richard.

"I have never seen it before, but I know it from the pictures. Isn't it picturesque? I wanted to surprise you, Ellen, so I have said hardly anything to you about it. But you all know," and he included Uncle Jim and Irma in his remarks, "that you are soon to be inside of the one town in Italy that has kept its old mediæval towers. If the whole town is as quaint as the towers, you will thank me for bringing you here."

"We thank you now," said Uncle Jim.

"Why is the carriage ahead waiting for us?" asked Ellen.

"Katie thought you might like to come in here for the rest of the journey."

"Probably Katie herself wishes to change," whispered Richard.

Whereupon Ellen jumped lightly from the carriage, and a moment later she and Katie had exchanged places.

San Gimignano lost none of its picturesqueness as they drew near it, passing olive orchards and vineyards as they went up the hill.

[250] "What a beautiful country!" cried Irma. "The people up there must be very happy if it is all as pretty."

It was now growing dusk, and the horses took the last turn very quickly. Irma noticed that Katie was quiet. Could it be that she and Marion had had some disagreement? The driver hurried on through an arched gateway.

"Oh, a narrow, city street," cried Irma, in a tone of disappointment.

"No matter," responded Richard, as their horse clattered along. "We'll get some fun out of it to-

morrow. Now, in the dusk, I'll admit it does look rather like a tenement district."

After their long, warm drive, it wasn't a pleasing prospect to find their hotel on this narrow street instead of in a pleasant garden, as Katie said she had pictured it.

"At least it is different from any other hotel we have seen," said Ellen, philosophically, "and we hoped San Gimignano would be rather queer."

"But not this kind of queerness," Katie continued to protest. [251]

CHAPTER XV

A LETTER FROM FLORENCE

Irma had been two or three days in Florence before she had time to write the long letter to Tessie that for some time she had been planning.

"Dear Tessie," she began:

"Though I have sent you messages and post cards, this is my first letter. I know you do not care [252] to hear much about pictures and churches, of which I have seen almost too many, so I will tell you about other things. I can't say much about foreign children, only that they all seem shy, except the little girls who beg, and the little boys who wish to be our guides, and I am sorry to say that sometimes, just to get rid of them, we give them the penny that we know is not good for them. They want all the money they can get from *forestieri*, for we are *forestieri* here.

"The Italian children seem to have long school hours, and that is one reason we do not see many of them about. When we do see a group together it troubles Aunt Caroline that they are not playing, but simply standing about solemnly. Sometimes, when we pass a station in the middle of the day, we see a little boy with a loaf of bread under his arm, cutting off a slice with a jack-knife. That probably is all he has for breakfast, and perhaps his dinner will be nothing but a dish of macaroni.

"Well, all we have ourselves for breakfast is chocolate and some rolls and butter. Older people [253] take coffee. If we ask for a boiled egg we can have it, but we are trying to live as the Italians do. After breakfast we go sightseeing, and we are always half starved by one o'clock, when we have *déjeuner*. Everything then is served in courses, and if you are late you simply have to go without the things that were served before you sat down. In the middle of the day we rest, for it is as hot as our hottest summer from twelve to three. After that we drive, or visit some church or museum, ending with afternoon tea. If you happen to have friends at some hotel, it is fun to drop in there. But over all the pastry shops, that are almost like restaurants, you see the sign 'afternoon tea.' It is the one English expression most Italians seem to know.

"Dinner is served in courses like *déjeuner*. But whatever else they give us, we are sure of one thing, a course of chicken and salad. By the time the chicken comes to me, it is generally all wings, which I never eat. None of us ever eat salad, because we are suspicious of the water it is washed in.

"You have not had many railroad journeys, and so the little cars and engines might not seem as funny to you as they do to us. Each car is divided into little compartments, with room for five persons on each side, and there you have to sit and stare at the persons opposite. But we have generally been fortunate enough to have a carriage to ourselves.

"When we arrive at a station, we always find a row of men in blue cotton blouses and conductors' [254] caps lined up waiting to carry our bags. They are the *facchini*, or porters, and each one tries to carry several bags, for it is the law that he shall be paid ten centimes, or two cents, for each piece of luggage he carries.

"We got rid of crowded railway carriages and *facchini*, when we went from Siena to Florence. For we drove all the way, staying one day at San Gimignano, the most curious place we have seen. We wouldn't have thought of going there but for Richard Sanford, whose family we met in Siena. Just think! His cousin, Katie Grimston, is travelling with him and his mother. Katie Grimston, who says that Nap still belongs to her; and I am afraid she really will take him away from us. But to return to San Gimignano. It is on the top of a high hill, and has a wall going completely around it, with handsome great arches, or gates.

"There are eight tall towers in the town, and five on the walls. But none of them are considered safe now for visitors to climb, though we had all we could do to keep Marion and Richard from trying one or two of them. The people of San Gimignano were divided into two great parties, Guelph for the pope and Ghibelline for the emperor. From the towers, belonging to the leading families in the town, they could do any amount of harm to their enemies in the streets below, and also keep a lookout for outside enemies on their way from Siena.

"Next to the towers (which, to be honest, look a great deal like factory chimneys of gray stone) [255] you would like the pictures in the cathedral that tell all the old Bible stories, especially the one where they are building the Ark, with Noah and his family and all the animals standing about and

looking on.

"In another church some beautiful frescoes by Gozzoli tell the story of St. Augustine's life. One, where he is shown going to school with his books under his arm, is very entertaining.

"All the young people seem to have left San Gimignano. There are none but middle-aged and old, [256]
and I never in one place saw so many bent old men and women. The town itself is so gray and old and poor that we were glad to leave it. We had enjoyed our drive from Siena so much that Aunt Caroline and Mrs. Sanford thought we might as well drive to Florence. This was forty miles, and we all got rather tired. But the country was beautiful, and after our sixty miles of it by carriage, we feel that we know just what Tuscany is. The farmers use great white oxen for their work, white and large and smooth skinned. They made more impression on us than anything else we saw.

"Now we feel quite at home in Florence. My room looks out on the Arno, the river that runs through the centre of the city. Not far away I see the famous Ponte Vecchio, or old bridge. Give my love to every one, especially Mahala and Nap.

"Your affectionate sister,

"Irma."

Hardly had Irma signed her letter, when Ellen Sanford came into the room.

"The door was half open, and you did not hear my knock. But what a long letter. My family never gets anything but post cards from me when I am travelling."

"Well, this is to my little sister. I promised her one long letter."

"I am glad it's finished, for now you can go out with me. Katie went off in great spirits, because she had managed to get Marion and Richard both to go shopping with her; the boys hate shops, too. Your uncle and aunt have taken mother driving, and so what shall we do?"

"Let us go to the Medici Chapel. I am tired of galleries. I shall need a week to digest what I saw yesterday at the Uffizi."

"What suits you will suit me," said Ellen, and soon the girls were driving toward San Lorenzo. [257]

"These booths remind me of the Rag Fair at Rome," said Irma, glancing at the display of trinkets and small household articles on canvas-shaded tables, in an open space near the church. "Only these things are much cheaper. But what a crowd. Italians seem to like open-air shopping."

Within the lofty church the girls saw much to admire, especially the sculptures by Thorwaldsen, Donatello, and Verocchio. But the tomb of Cosimo de Medici, "the father of his country," was a plain porphyry slab.

"The great monument must be somewhere else." And Irma followed Ellen to the old sacristy, where, though they saw other Medici tombs, they knew these were not what they sought. In the new sacristy were Michelangelo's famous statues of Lorenzo, with the figures of Dawn and Twilight at the base, and of Guiliano, with Day and Night. But beautiful as these were, they knew they must search further.

At last some one directed them to a door outside, at the other end of the church, and then with [258]
tickets they entered the mausoleum.

"Ah," said Irma, "it is really all I expected. Some one told me it was not in good taste, and it is not really completed. But a building like this is more impressive than if decorated with paintings. The pavement is beautiful, and the walls of exquisite marbles seem built to last forever."

"There are not many statues," said Ellen.

"No, but I dare say they meant to have more. It is because the grandeur of the Medicis didn't last that this interests me, Ellen. In the Palazzo Vecchio and the Riccardi Palace we have seen them painted as conquering heroes, and every one of them holds his head as if he owned the world."

"They did own a good bit of their little world in their own day."

"That is just what I mean. We have the paintings and the statues, and we know all that Cosimo the first and Lorenzo the Magnificent did for Florence by encouraging art and establishing museums and libraries. But the later men who were not so great built this chapel, and when I look on these magnificent tombs, and remember what harm came to Savonarola through a de Medici, and what harm Catherine de Medici did——"

"Oh, Irma, I believe they did more good than harm in the world, and this tomb is a splendid [259]
memorial."

"Yes, it is; only the effect it has on me is different from its effect on you."

"Now for the library," said Irma, as they turned away from the tomb, "and after that I will try to show you something quite different."

"This isn't at all like a library," exclaimed Ellen, as they stood in the high-roofed hall of the Laurentian Library. "There are no bookcases, and why are these pews here?"

Before Irma could reply, an attendant explained that Irma's pews were stands for the valuable manuscripts, and he added that Michelangelo had designed them as well as the fine wooden ceiling of the great room. He permitted the girls to look at the manuscripts in substantial covers chained to the stands. Many of them were Greek and Latin classics of great age. Others were in Italian, and exquisitely illuminated, like the *Canzone* of Petrarch, with portraits of Petrarch and Laura. Ellen bought large copies of these portraits, with the delicate coloring exquisitely reproduced, and Irma sighed, as she realized how seldom she herself could spend money on things she liked. [260]

"Ask him the way to the cloisters," she whispered, as they bade the librarian good-by; and Ellen, when she had interpreted his reply, asked, "But why should we go to the cloisters?"

"Oh, you will see," and Irma looked at her watch. "We are in good time. It is only quarter of twelve."

"In good time for what?" persisted Ellen, as they entered the cloistered enclosure at one side of San Lorenzo, and walked along the arcades to read the many memorial tablets on wall and pavement.

"I will tell you," said Irma. "This is a kind of Animal Rescue League, a refuge for stray cats. Persons anxious to get rid of their cats bring them here, and those who wish to adopt cats come here for them. They say that the stray cats of Florence hide here in corners and on roofs."

"Well, if I needed a cat I shouldn't know how to find it here. There certainly isn't one in sight."

"Well, that's why twelve o'clock is the important hour. Exactly on the stroke of twelve the cats are fed with meat. They seem to know the time, and come rushing down from roofs and chimneys, and after they are fed people choose the cats they want." [261]

"Hark! Isn't twelve striking now?" asked Ellen, as the bells of many churches began to peal loudly. "It is certainly striking twelve; but I see no cats."

"I don't understand it," said Irma. "I read a long account the other day, in a book that described Florence."

"Here is the custodian; I will ask him."

After talking for several minutes with the custodian, Ellen turned with a smile to Irma. "This is the place where the cats used to be fed, and it was a very ancient custom to let stray cats have refuge here. But many of them refused to be adopted and became so wild that now they are all given over to a society, I suppose like the prevention of cruelty. Your book was not up to date, though it is not very long since the feeding of the cats was given up."

"Well, I am glad that we have seen the place where they used to feed them. I can at least describe it to Tessie. I am always trying to see things that will entertain her when I go home."

At *déjeuner* Katie was in great spirits; she had bought a number of pretty things, and had kept the two boys with her all the morning, on the pretext that she was in great need of their advice. Among her purchases a long double necklace of large amber beads was especially beautiful, and Irma praised it generously. [262]

"I would rather have them than anything I have seen in Florence; any piece of jewelry," she added quickly.

Uncle Jim and Aunt Caroline exchanged significant glances.

After *déjeuner* Richard and Ellen invited Irma to go with them to San Marco.

"Mother and Katie say they wish simply to drive, and Marion, I believe, is going with them to San Miniato, and your aunt thinks you might not care for the Accademia to-day," said Ellen, as she gave Irma her own invitation. "But Richard is sure you would enjoy San Marco and Savonarola."

SPIRES OF FLORENCE.

SAN MARCO, FLORENCE.

So in the early afternoon the three friends found themselves wandering in the beautiful cloisters [263] of the old monastery, with its little flower garden in the centre, and its great pine, whose trunk was wreathed with ivy. They walked around a second cloistered garden whose rosebeds were fenced in by a row of pointed bricks. Seated on a bench, they looked up at the tiny windows of the second story, and wondered if the garden that Savonarola had looked on was much like this.

"We must not sit here long," and, as he spoke, Richard walked over to one of the frescoes painted on the brick walls under the arches. He called Irma's attention to those by Fra Angelico, representing scenes in the life of Christ.

"The monastery," he explained, "was suppressed forty years ago, and the whole building is now a museum. There are some beautiful paintings in the chapter house and the refectory, but I am most anxious to see the cells upstairs, nearly all of which are decorated with paintings by Fra Angelico and his pupils."

"Richard," said Ellen, "I see that this is to be one of the occasions when you are going to appear terribly wise and talk like a book. Sometimes, when you are particularly pleased with things in general, you are so frivolous that I feel that I ought to explain you to some one, but to-day I believe that you are going to the opposite extreme."

"No matter," interposed Irma. "You know all about San Marco, but I am less wise." [264]

"Well spoken, young lady," said Richard, in the tone which Irma already had learned to associate with his fun-making mood. "But I cannot pretend to have any knowledge about San Marco, or Savonarola or Fra Angelico that you and my sister might not already possess, if you have read your books carefully. First, as to Savonarola; he became Prior of San Marco in 1490, and when he preached in the church here, the whole piazza in front was crowded hours before the doors opened, and shopkeepers did not think it worth while to open their shops until the great preacher's sermon was over. He made religion seem a simple thing, within the reach of all who tried to live pure lives. He addressed himself to the poor and to the young; and he especially blamed the love of luxury that was spreading in Florence, though he encouraged artists to use their talents on religious pictures."

"Well, we all know that," said Ellen, mildly.

"Then you remember how on the last day of Carnival, 1497, his followers went from house to house collecting books and pictures and musical instruments and other things that they thought had an evil influence, and burned them all in a great fire in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. I will point out the place later." [265]

"I should like to see it," responded Irma, to whom Richard had turned.

"Savonarola had made many enemies by his plain speaking, and though for a time Florence seemed to have had a change of heart, when the Pope Alexander VI excommunicated him, the supporters of the de Medici power went against him, and at last San Marco was stormed, and Savonarola was carried away to death."

"Yes—yes—it is a very sad story. It is pleasanter to go into these cells and remember how Savonarola encouraged art. Let us look at these frescoes carefully," and the three walked on slowly, stopping a moment at the entrance to each cell, where, on the whitewashed walls, were exquisite paintings by Fra Angelico, his brother Fra Benedetto, and Fra Bartolommeo. At last, after a turn or two at the end of the corridor, they came to the Prior's Cell, with Fra Bartolommeo's frescoes on the wall.

"Of course you recognize Savonarola," said Richard, "and that other is his friend Benievieni, and look at these smaller cells inside; here is his hair shirt and his rosary and this bit of old wood, as the inscription says, is from the pile on which he was burnt." [266]

"Ugh!" cried Irma, "I don't like it"; and she turned to look at Savonarola's sermons and his crucifix.

The three were silent as they left the dormitories of the good brothers of San Marco, especially when they remembered the great prior, whose terrible death the fickle Florentines in time repented.

"Time is so precious to-day," said Richard, as they left San Marco.

"And why, pray?" asked Ellen.

"Because you have me with you, dear sister. You cannot be sure when I shall be ready to go with you again."

"Indeed!" responded Ellen. "We are not sure that we shall need you again."

"Well, then, since time is precious, we will drive for a moment to S. Annunziata to see something fine and something funny."

Soon they were in the little courtyard of the church, and after leaving them for a moment Richard returned with a sacristan, carrying keys. He unlocked the doors of the corridor surrounding the court, in which were some fine frescoes by Andrea del Sarto and two or three other great painters. After they had admired these paintings, while their guide moved off toward some other visitors, Richard said, "Here is the 'something funny,'" and he pointed to a number of small, crude paintings at the end of the corridor. [267]

"They *are* funny; what in the world are they?" asked Irma.

"You mustn't laugh, even though they seem funny. Come here, and I will explain," and Richard pointed to one that showed a man falling headlong down a steep flight of stairs. "This man, you see, escaped death from a broken neck, on the date put above the picture, and this one, on the deck of the ship tossing about so wildly on the ocean, was saved from shipwreck, and this other in the carriage with two wildly prancing horses was evidently not fatally injured, and this woman in bed, surrounded by her weeping family, was apparently at the point of death, when her patron saint saved her."

"Oh," exclaimed Ellen. "Then these are pious offerings, and I won't laugh at them. It is rather a pretty idea to show thankfulness in this way, and we oughtn't to laugh, even if they could not have Del Sartos or Botticellis for their artists." [268]

On their way home, they looked at the spot in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, now marked by a stone, where Savonarola was burned, and his two chief followers, Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro.

"When I leave Florence," said Irma, "I shall remember the Palazzo Vecchio more because it was the prison of Savonarola than for anything else."

"But you haven't forgotten the wonderful great halls, and the gildings and paintings. There are no halls more splendid in Florence."

"No, I haven't forgotten them, and I remember Uncle Jim told us the Hall of the Five Hundred was built from the plans of Savonarola for his great Council, and Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. But the return of the de Medici changed all this, and instead, every inch of space records the greatness of the de Medici and their victories over the enemies of Florence. But the great statue of Savonarola is there, and I believe his memory will last the longest."

"You are right," responded Richard absentmindedly. He had just seen a flower girl with a basket of exquisite roses.

"Oh, Richard, you are extravagant," cried Ellen, as the girl emptied her basket. [269]

"One can't be extravagant with flowers in Florence," he replied.

Katie and Marion were standing at the door when they reached the hotel.

"Where did you get those roses?" Katie asked, as they descended from the carriage with their arms full.

"Gathered them, of course," replied Richard promptly, although the question had not been addressed to him.

"Richard gathered them for us," added Ellen. "He is a brother worth having."

"Marion and I didn't see any like them," said Katie. [270]

CHAPTER XVI

A CHANGE IN MARION

It was the evening of Constitution Day, the Italian Fourth of July.

Aunt Caroline and Irma, seated in the doorway of the hotel, watched the passing crowd. On the Arno in front of the house, not far from the Ponte Vecchio, were several boats decorated with flags and paper lanterns. There was also a large float, and the voluble porter explained that a chorus was to be stationed there during the evening to sing.

"Where is Marion?" asked Uncle Jim.

"He has walked to the Cascine with Katie and Richard and Ellen. I wished to stay with Aunt Caroline," replied Irma.

"I am afraid Katie has cut you out with Marion," exclaimed Uncle Jim.

"How foolish!" protested Aunt Caroline. "Irma has no such ideas. Marion has never exerted [271] himself for Irma, and she has always been too busy to think of him."

"When it's quite dark," continued Uncle Jim, "we must walk over to the Piazza in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. They say the illumination of the tower is the thing best worth seeing, better even than the fireworks these crowds are waiting for."

A little later the three stood in front of the tall gray tower of the old palace, whose outlines were wonderfully beautiful, set in a frame of fire made up of countless tiny lamps.

"Hello," cried a voice, "we didn't expect to see you here." Richard was the speaker, and with him were Marion and Ellen.

"Where is Katie?" asked Aunt Caroline.

"Oh, she and Marion have had some kind of a spat, and she insisted on our leaving her at the hotel."

"Spat! Nonsense!" interposed Ellen.

"Well, a quarrel by any other name will do just as well. I'm glad she can stay with mother. One of us ought to be with her."

Marion made no reply to Richard. But he walked beside Ellen on their way back to the hotel, while Richard helped Irma find a way through the throng.

"What a quiet, orderly crowd!" cried Aunt Caroline, "and to-day their Fourth of July!" [272]

"It's only after they have crossed the Atlantic that foreigners grow uproarious. There seems to be more law and order over here."

The Lungarno was packed with people when they reached the hotel, so all went upstairs to Aunt Caroline's room, that overlooked the river and the boat from which the fireworks were sent off. There were one or two set pieces, the chorus on the large float sang several part songs, and at intervals showers of stars of all colors fell from the Roman candles and rockets sent up from the boats.

It was late when they began to separate. "Where is Marion?" asked Aunt Caroline, when the lights were turned on, and the others came to bid her good night.

"He must have gone to his room," said Uncle Jim. "I noticed half an hour ago that he was not here."

"Perhaps he didn't like the noise," said Richard, with what sounded like a slight shade of sarcasm. "His nerves are not very strong."

The next morning, when Irma went to breakfast, none of the older members of her party were at [273]

the table, and Marion, too, was missing.

"Of course Marion didn't give it to me," she heard Katie say, as she took her seat.

"It's certainly very strange that it should be the same device as his small seal."

"Probably they wouldn't look at all alike, if you should bring them together and compare them."

"Can mine eyes deceive me?" Richard assumed a tragic tone.

"It's the ring that Katie has around her scarf." Ellen explained to Irma. "Richard is sure that Marion gave it to her. But he ought to believe Katie when she says this is not so."

[274] Irma looked closely at the ring through which Katie had pulled the end of her silk necktie. The dragon carved on the agate stone certainly seemed familiar. Yes, she recalled the same dragon on an old-fashioned seal that Marion had shown her one day; at least it looked the same, though of course the dragon was by no means an uncommon device. But after all, this was no affair of hers. If Katie said Marion had not given the ring to her there seemed to be no reason for Richard to doubt Katie's word. Suppose even that he had loaned it to her, why should her cousin concern himself about it?

After breakfast Katie and Ellen drove to their dressmaker's, and just as Irma had finished a home letter Marion appeared in the reading-room.

"I had an early breakfast," he explained, "and have been out walking. Now I wish some one would take a trolley ride with me. Will *you* go?"

At first Irma could hardly believe the invitation was meant for her; she had been so little with Marion the past fortnight.

But when she saw that he undoubtedly meant her, she accepted gladly.

"It does not matter where we go," he cried, as the car started. "I simply wish to see what the suburbs are like out this way."

Soon they had passed beyond the old narrow streets, and were running through a broad avenue of the newer Florence that has begun to drive the old city out of sight.

After a word or two to the conductor, "Why, this is a car for Fiesole," said Marion. "I had meant to drive out there some day, but now——"

[275] He did not finish the sentence, but later in the morning Irma realized what he had had in mind when he spoke.

"Fiesole," Marion began to explain, "the old Faesulae, was an important place long before Florence. I believe there are imposing Etruscan fortifications still to be seen up there on the hill. But Fiesole was conquered and destroyed in the early part of the twelfth century, and Florence soon became rich. Many English and Americans have country villas at Fiesole. It is not so damp there as in Florence. There are several people I know living out there, if I cared to see them."

"Oh, we don't come to Europe to see Americans," said Irma, noticing a severe expression on Marion's face, such as she had seen before, when Americans were spoken of.

[276] After leaving the car they rambled around the pleasant, shady roads of Fiesole for an hour or more, visiting the piazza and the old church. At the terminus they had to wait a little time for the car by which they were to return. While standing near a little shop where they had made some purchases, a tall girl rushed up to Marion, and, seizing his hand, first raised it to her lips, and then poured out a flood of words.

Marion reddened, pulled his hand away, and looked puzzled, as the girl began to talk. But before she had finished her long, long sentence, his face cleared, and he turned toward Irma.

"She was on the *Ariadne*; her mother died. Perhaps you remember."

Of course Irma remembered. This was the girl upon whom she had so often looked from the deck above the steerage, the girl for whose family Marion had raised the subscription.

When the girl's words at last came to an end, Marion tore a leaf from his notebook and gave it to her, after he had written something upon it.

"*Grazie, grazie*," she cried, and then, when he shook his head to some request of hers, "*A rivederci*, signor and signorina," she cried, as they stepped toward the approaching car on which they were to return to the city.

[277] "Now, I will explain," said Marion, as they rode toward Florence. "Luisa hopes some time to return to America, and I have given her my mother's address, in case she should need advice from us." ("The second time," Irma thought, "I have heard Marion speak of his mother.")

"She was greatly disappointed," continued Marion, "that we could not go up to see the family. They have a little house back there on the hills, and with the subscription raised on the ship they could lease it for five years, and they have a little besides to keep them going until their garden is grown. The grandmother hopes to sell enough flowers and vegetables in Florence to pay for clothes and things they can't raise on the farm. It's surprising, though, how little it takes for

people to live on over here. Luisa says she earns something by working for a cousin who has one of those little shops at the terminus, two days in the week."

While Marion talked, Irma longed to ask why he had been unwilling to add her little gift to the money he had raised for Luisa's family on the *Ariadne*. But, in spite of his being so friendly now, she did not quite dare question him. Later in the day, however, when alone with Aunt Caroline, she told her about Luisa, and brought up the matter of the subscription.

"Oh," said Aunt Caroline, "I can partly explain that subscription to you. Marion told me little at [278] the time, but since then we have had a talk. Indeed he is much more inclined to confide in me than when we first left New York. He says that he spent more or less time among the steerage passengers coming over, and when he found money did not come in readily for Luisa's family, he decided to make up the whole amount himself.

"He seldom changes his mind, when once he has decided upon a certain thing, and so when you offered your money he did not think it right to take it. You know Marion has a great deal of money of his own, and he could afford to do all that was necessary for this poor Italian family. I am sorry, however, that he hurt your feelings, for really Marion is goodhearted. Of course he has had a particularly hard time this year, and has not yet got over the effects of all he has been through."

"Now," thought Irma, "I will ask Aunt Caroline to tell me all about Marion. Every one else seems to know, and I hate mysteries." But before she had a chance to ask the question, Marion and Uncle Jim appeared on the scene, and the opportunity was lost.

After this the days at Florence passed swiftly. Aunt Caroline was absorbed in the galleries, and [279] Uncle Jim or Mrs. Sanford spent much time there with her. The young people did their sightseeing by themselves, Richard, Ellen, Irma, and Marion, at least. Katie seemed, as Richard put it, "disaffected." She said she had been in Europe too long to care to spend much time over galleries and historical places.

"Shopping is much more necessary now, as I am to sail so soon, and grandmamma is willing to pay duty on any amount of things."

So, while Katie bought embroidered dresses, and spent hours over fittings, the others made what Ellen called "pilgrimages." Once it was to the old palace that had been Michelangelo's home, lately presented to Florence by a descendant of his brother. There they saw furniture and smaller belongings of the great man, manuscripts and sketches and plans of some of his great works, and on the walls of one room a series of paintings representing dramatic incidents in his life.

"And yet he died almost a century before Plymouth was settled," said Irma, returning to the historical comparisons of the first part of her trip.

Again, one day, rambling through a narrow street, they came to the so-called "house of Dante," a [280] tiny dwelling with small rooms and steep stairs, and though Marion tried to throw cold water on the enthusiasm of the girls by telling them that no one now really believed this to be the house where Dante had lived, they only laughed at him.

"No one can prove that it is *not* the house where he was born; and every one knows that it belonged to his father. But at any rate it's a charming little museum, and since I have seen all the interesting manuscripts and books there, I am more anxious than ever to read Dante," and Ellen patted her brother's arm, adding, "No, Richard, what we wish to believe we will believe, especially when it's true."

"Just like a girl," responded Richard, smiling.

One other day they made a pilgrimage to the Protestant cemetery, chiefly to please Ellen, who wished to see the grave of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. They found it without trouble, a plain marble sarcophagus on Corinthian columns, with no inscription except the initials of the poet and the date of her death. Near the sarcophagus a few pink roses were in bloom.

"How I wish I dared pick one," sighed Ellen. [281]

"Why not?" asked Richard. "There's no one but us to see, and we won't tell."

Irma was not sure how much in earnest Richard was, but she believed he was only in fun, for he made no reply to Ellen's, "Oh, I think there's nothing worse than carrying away flowers and stones as souvenirs. I have known people to do such silly things. Surely you remember Hadrian's villa."

Now Irma, although she had no clue to Ellen's reference, at once recalled her own success in securing a fragment of marble from this same villa of Hadrian's, and what it had almost cost her. Even while she recalled it, it seemed to her that Marion glanced significantly toward her, yet she was sure she had never told him what had caused her to miss her train on that eventful evening.

One never to be forgotten day, Irma, Uncle Jim, and Aunt Caroline went down to Perugia. Mrs. [282] Sanford and her party had been there before their arrival in Siena, and Marion, who said he hadn't time for both, preferred a trip to Pisa. But to Irma, the railway journey itself, through tunnels, past mountain towns, around the lovely shores of Lake Thrasymene, was something long to be remembered.

"If I hadn't come to Perugia," she said to Uncle Jim, "I suppose I shouldn't have known what I had missed, but now it seems as if I shouldn't have really known Italy without coming here. It is so much larger than Orvieto, and brighter, and yet it is a hill town with streets that tumble into one another, and picturesque arches, and though it hasn't an Orvieto Cathedral, it has more beautiful churches than one expects to find in a place of its size. Then that perfect little Merchants' Exchange! One could spend a day there studying the frescoes. There are more quaint carvings on the outside of the buildings than in most places we have seen, and in spite of this broad main street, with the trolley cars running through it, it seems still a mediæval town, a cheerful one, not a melancholy one like San Gimignano. Then I shall be very proud when I go home to say that I have actually been in the house where Raphael lived and taught before the world knew how great he really was."

"A long speech for a little girl," said Uncle Jim, "but it doesn't explain your unwillingness to stay [283] with your aunt this morning while she makes a careful study of the exhibition of Umbrian art."

"Why, I think it *does* explain it. I was there long enough to learn Perugino by heart, his funny little bodyless angels, and his young men with thin, graceful legs and small skull caps, and of course his beautiful color."

Uncle Jim laughed at Irma's characterization of Perugino. "And is that all you remember of that great building with its treasures of art, as the books might say?"

"Of course not," said Irma indignantly. "I remember quantities of other things. Raphael, and all [284] those strange, pious Umbrian painters, and the beautiful silver chalices from the churches, and all the carved crucifixes. On the ship going home Aunt Caroline will be able to talk to us for hours about these things, describing them exactly. Isn't it much better for a girl of my age to enjoy this lovely view? Come, let us sit down on a bench in the little piazza in front of the hotel. As we look off to the valley, so far below, we seem to be on the edge of a high mountain. Every one in Perugia seems to enjoy the view. See, there are two soldiers strolling about; a group of priests; well to do children riding around in that donkey cart; half a dozen others who are almost in rags watching them; several strangers besides ourselves; two or three dignitaries of the town. So it's a very popular place."

Again Uncle Jim smiled at Irma's astuteness. Then he left her to enjoy the view still longer, while he went down to the Municipal Building, to "rescue" Aunt Caroline, as he expressed it, from too long a stay at the exhibition of Umbrian art.

On her return to Florence the next evening, Irma wrote Lucy about her visit to Assisi. She had promised this before she left home, as Lucy had especially asked her to see for herself the thornless roses growing in St. Francis's Garden.

"I have seen the garden," she wrote, "in the cloister back of the church, and here is a leaf from [285] the thornless rosebushes. The good brothers have these leaves already pressed on little cards, as souvenirs of the visit to St. Mary of the Angels, St. Francis's church. Inside the great church they have preserved the tiny church in which St. Francis preached, and also the cell in which he died. The great church of San Francesco on the hill above where St. Francis was buried was built in his memory. His body was finally buried there. It is an enormous building, and I will try to tell you here about the beautiful frescoes describing his life. But I have some photographs for you, and they show all his great deeds told in pictures.

"I wish I had time to tell you about Florence. But in six weeks I shall be at home again, and then how much I shall have to say! It seems to me that all the paintings you and I like best are here, and in color they are so beautiful. The Pitti Gallery is wonderful. It is in a great palace where the de Medicis (of course) once lived. It now belongs to the king, and his rooms are most beautiful. But the gallery is quite apart from the rest of the palace, and filled with the greatest paintings, Titian and Raphael and Andrea del Sarto and Botticelli and Bronzino, and some time, when I am older, I hope to come back and study them and criticise them just as I hear people doing now. Now I simply enjoy them.

"There are always many people copying in the galleries, especially in the Uffizi, and the other day [286] we saw two sisters in their convent dress at work at easels. I suppose they were painting for their convents. There are so many things in Florence I wish we could look at together, the cathedral and Giotto's tower, and the wonderful della Robbia reliefs; you know the small cast of the singing boys that your mother gave you Christmas. Then, though this is different, I wish you could see the green, pointed hills that are outside of Florence on two sides. When I first saw them they seemed like old friends, I had seen them in so many paintings by the old painters who worked in Florence. I thought they put them in just for ornament, but now I know they couldn't help it. This was the background they were most used to here.

"But there! I have seen so many things besides pictures—the old palaces, like fortresses, and the [287] people who seem so gentle, though they are descendants of all those old fighters who thought nothing of killing one another when they had had the slightest disagreement (or often when they hadn't had any) just because their ancestors were enemies. Yet in some ways they were very good to one another. Yesterday we met a queer-looking procession, hardly a procession, for there were not more than a dozen men, but they wore long black robes, with hoods, and black masks over their faces, and holes cut for their eyes, and, really, they were terrifying.

"Uncle Jim explained that they were the Misericordia, or Brothers of Mercy. Rich and poor belong to it, and have for centuries, and when a man is on duty, when he hears a certain bell ring—I

think it's in the Campanile—he stops whatever he is doing and goes to the headquarters of the brothers to learn whether he is to watch with some sick man, or help bury some dead person with no friends to follow him to the grave.

"I have been disappointed not to see more picturesque costumes here, but in the cities they are never seen, and seldom in the country. The apprentice boys in different trades wear big aprons, and the nursemaids have great caps with long, colored streamers, but that is all.

"I feel rather mean, sometimes, when I think how hard you all are working now, and I am just amusing myself. When you get this, examinations will be about over, and I do wonder if George Belman will be at the head of the class.

"Well, even if I am idle now, I may have to study hard enough in August. I won't be able to make the excuse that I am not well.

"Hastily,

"Irma."

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CHAPTER XVII

IN VENICE

"I wouldn't have missed Bologna for anything," said Ellen, one very warm June morning, as Mrs. Sanford and Mr. and Mrs. Curtin and the young people in their care found themselves on the train between Bologna and Ravenna. "If every Italian city would have arcades over the sidewalks like those in almost every street of Bologna, life would be better worth living."

"So the arcades made the most impression on you," said Uncle Jim smiling. "And what have you to say of Bologna, Mrs. Sanford?"

"Well I am glad to have found that it is really true that there were learned women in Italy in the Middle Ages. I certainly cannot forget that I have seen a statue to a woman professor of the fourteenth century, who used to lecture in this university at Bologna. If there were women professors, there must have been women students." [289]

"Ellen thinks the little tombs on pillars outside the churches were the strangest things she saw," cried Katie.

"Not stranger than the leaning towers," interposed Irma. "I suppose the people of Bologna must be terribly afraid of earthquakes. I hated even to drive near the leaning towers."

"I did not know we were to tell only strange things we had seen," said Aunt Caroline. "I was most impressed by the Accademia. You others did not stay long enough in the gallery. Besides Raphael's St. Cecilia, there are very many pictures worth seeing; no one can really have a good idea of Guido Reni without coming to Bologna."

"Well, I enjoyed the drive through the park, and our glimpse of Carducci's house on the way back. It was all so restful after the noise of the streets," said Uncle Jim.

"There are certainly many beautiful churches in Bologna, and more homelike-looking palaces than I have seen anywhere else in Italy," said Mrs. Sanford. "We might have enjoyed a longer stay there." [290]

"I didn't think much of the shops," interposed Katie. "There was hardly a thing I wanted to buy." Whereat the others smiled, as shopping was Katie's favorite pastime.

"You'll find them worse in Ravenna, for that is not only a decaying, but a decayed city, from all the accounts I've heard."

"I almost wish we were not going there," added Aunt Caroline. "They say it's full of malaria."

"Oh, in one short day and night we can keep out of the way of germs."

It was noon when they reached Ravenna, tired enough after a warm journey.

"Dante's tomb is only a step from here," said Marion to Irma, as they finished *déjeuner*. "Bring your camera and we'll go out and take a shot at it." Irma posed herself in front of the door of the domed building containing the remains of the great poet, while Marion took a snapshot. They stopped for a minute to read an inscription on an opposite house, where Garibaldi had been entertained, and turning another corner, with some little trouble, Marion found the simple dwelling where Lord Byron had lived during his year or two in Ravenna.

"Now," began Marion, "if you can get Ellen to come, I move that we three drive about the town. I am tired of too large a crowd, or perhaps it is the weather. But this is one of the days when more than three would spoil all the fun of looking at things." [291]

As the suggestion pleased Ellen, the three started out in their carriage ahead of the others. There

were no trolley cars; few people were moving around in the long, dusty streets; and many of the larger houses, or palaces, were indeed deserted mansions, with no signs of life about them.

"First to Theodoric's tomb," Marion had announced, as they started, and as they drove along he talked entertainingly about old Ravenna, especially in the last days of the Roman Empire, when the Emperor Honorius held court there, believing the place to be safe against the barbarians. Later, after the fall of Rome, Theodoric made this his city, and tried to revive the Western Empire.

"Ravenna used to be a great seaport," said Marion, "with a harbor for a large fleet, but the sea has been gradually receding until now it is five miles away."

"These marshes and this little creek, I suppose, are all that the sea has left Ravenna as a reminder of those days," said Irma. [292]

"Yes," responded Marion, "but Theodoric's tomb is a thing we shall remember better." And the girls agreed with him a few minutes later, when they stood in the garden in front of the gray walls of the impressive circular mausoleum.

"Oh, please stand still a moment," cried Marion, as they leaned over a particularly beautiful rosebush; then a click came from the camera.

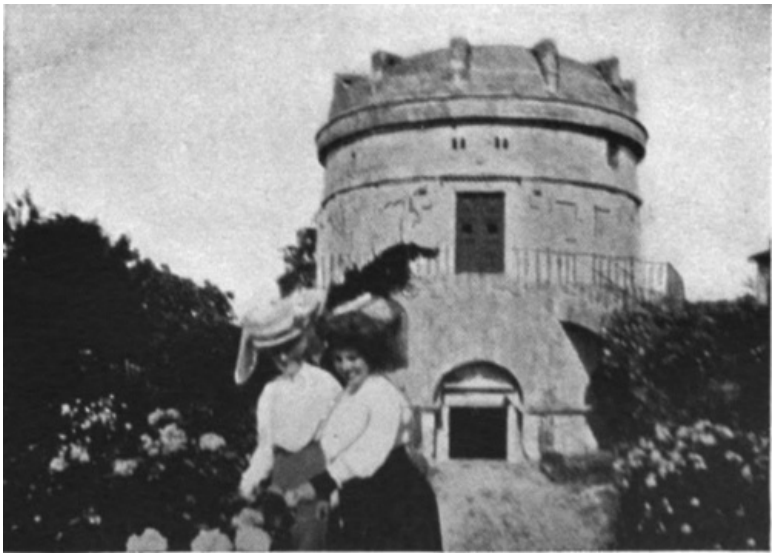
"I hate to have my picture taken when I am not expecting it," cried Ellen.

"Don't worry! Theodoric's tomb will quite overshadow us," responded Irma, in mock consolation.

After this the three drove from one church to another to see the splendid mosaics that are Ravenna's chief treasures. Saints and emperors and other great personages were there in all the glory of rich color, and scriptural truths were taught in the symbols of the early Church.

"Although the figures are sometimes out of drawing and the designs rather queer, it is just the same in these mosaics as in some of the old frescoes; they were put on the church walls to teach truth to the mass of people who could not read, and that is why I do not laugh at them."

SIENA. GENERAL VIEW, WITH CAMPANILE.
***See page* 227.**



RAVENNA. THEODORIC'S TOMB.

It seemed to Irma, when the whole party met at dinner that evening, that Katie was displeased with somebody or something. Had Richard been teasing her? For teasing was a cousinly privilege which he often exercised. Was she annoyed that she had not been asked to join Marion's particular group of three? For the present there seemed to be no answer.

The next day, after a warm journey of several hours, the whole party stood on the steps of the railway station at Venice, waiting to see their luggage put aboard the gondola. "How strange it seems to wait for a boat instead of a cab to take one from the station to a hotel," and Irma watched the water of the canal break with a slight wavelike motion against the steps.

"Yes," responded Richard, who happened to be standing next her, "and here we part for the present. I wish our rooms were in the same hotel, but since that cannot be, Ellen and I, at least, will try to give you all we can of our society."

"Please do," said Irma. "Ellen says you will be only a few doors away. Good-by, good-by," she [294] concluded, as Richard helped his mother and Ellen and Katie into a gondola, where they sat rather stiffly with their bags piled up behind them in the stern.

"Is it what you expected?" asked Aunt Caroline, as they glided in their own gondola over the Grand Canal.

"Yes," sighed Irma; "it's more than I expected. I know that I shall be perfectly happy in Venice."

But although Venice did not disappoint Irma, many things in this Queen of the Adriatic were different from her expectations. She soon discovered that it was possible to walk almost as far in Venice as in any other large city, provided you did not object to threading your way sometimes through narrow passages and over curving bridges.

"Has any one ever counted the bridges in Venice?" she asked one day. "There must be hundreds of them," she said on the second day of her stay there, when she and Marion had had a long walk that had ended in the great Piazza in front of San Marco.

"Some one has counted them, of course, but I can only guess that there are several hundred. But here we are at the heart of Venice. Isn't it great?"

"Yes, this is just what I expected; it is almost too beautiful to be real," and Irma stood in front of [295] the great church with its gilded domes, its mosaic pictures, and the four bronze horses from Constantinople, over the main entrance, forming, as a whole, a picture of which the eye could never weary.

"Let us not go inside to-day," said Marion.

"Oh, I would rather get a general impression of the piazza. That beautiful building, white and yellow, must be the Doge's Palace. Ah, yes, and there is the Lion of St. Mark's on his column. But who is that odd-looking saint on the other column, standing on a crocodile?"

"St. Theodore, I believe. It's a wonder that he can continue to look so pleasant, since he was quite cut out by St. Mark."

"I don't understand."

"Oh, St. Theodore was the patron saint of Venice. He was a Byzantine saint, by the way, until [296] some Venetian sea captains at Alexandria, where St. Mark was buried, took offence at the way the relics of the saint were treated by the sultan. They got the priests in charge to view the matter as they did, and so the body was secretly delivered to their care. On the voyage to Venice the saint saved the vessel from shipwreck, and after their arrival St. Mark threw all others into the shade. Nevertheless, St. Theodore smiles on, as if he had nothing to forgive."

"It is an interesting story; and is it perfectly true?" queried Irma.

"As true as any Richard would tell you," replied Marion.

"Oh, the pigeons, the pigeons!" cried Irma, turning about and walking toward a spot where scores of pigeons were gathering around a girl who was scattering handfuls of peas from a little basket. As Irma approached, the girl looked up, and then——

"Why, Irma Derrington!" she cried, and she let her basket fall to the ground as she rushed toward Irma.

"AS IRMA APPROACHED, THE GIRL LOOKED UP."

"It really is Muriel," said Irma, as she hastened toward her friend.

"Why haven't you written in all these weeks?" cried Muriel reproachfully, after the first exchange of greetings.

"How could I without your address?"

"Didn't I give you our banker's?"

"Indeed you did not; but you might have written to me."

"Indeed I hadn't the slightest idea how to reach you. But no matter, I hope you will be in Venice a week at least." [297]

"Yes, indeed; and here is Marion Horton. You remember him."

At this moment Mademoiselle Potin came forward from the shade of one of the arcades in front of the shops, where she had been watching Muriel, and while Marion talked with her politely for a few minutes, Muriel, speaking in an undertone, said, "How much brighter Marion Horton looks. And is it possible that he goes about with you? He was generally so glum and unsocial on the ship. He looks stronger now, too."

"Oh, Aunt Caroline says he has gained in every way, and lately we have been travelling with a Mrs. Sanford and her son and daughter and——"

"Richard and Ellen? Oh, I know them quite well."

"Then you know how lively Richard is, and I think their being with us has made Marion come out of his shell."

"When he's pleasant I should think he might be very good company. But Mademoiselle Potin has been telling me about him, and I should think he has had good reason to feel a little melancholy."

"There," thought Irma, "I won't let another day pass without finding out from Aunt Caroline what it is that every one else knows about Marion, that makes him seem an object of sympathy." [298]

Meanwhile Marion had approached the girls.

"Of course you both have some story to account for the pigeons, and each story is probably different."

"I have no story, except that they are regarded as almost sacred, and it would be a great sin for any one to kill them."

"To be *caught* killing them," interposed Marion, "but I have an idea that many a pigeon pie in Venice is indebted to these same pigeons of St. Mark's. But if you have nothing better, I will tell my story. It is simply that some carrier pigeons brought good news to Enrico Dandolo, the Crusader, when he was besieging Candia, and since that time these pigeons and their descendants have been under the special protection of the city."

"It is certainly great fun to feed them," said Muriel, "and if you come here often, you'll see all kinds of people doing it,—old and young, rich and poor. Why, I have seen a man sit for an hour by that pillar, feeding them." [299]

"As your basket quite emptied itself when you let it fall, let us go over to one of those little tables outside the restaurant and have some tea. We may, may we not, Mademoiselle Potin? And you will join us?"

During the pleasant half hour spent over the tea and cakes, pigeon after pigeon approached them, looking, evidently, for stray crumbs. One was even so bold as to hop up on the table, and would not be driven away until Muriel had fed it.

"It is all delightful," said Irma, "only I must write to Tessie about these pigeons, and I have so much to do. I am growing selfish. The air of Venice makes me wish to do nothing but enjoy myself."

Later, when they went to the spot where the gondolas were waiting, they found that Muriel's hotel was in a different direction from theirs.

"Please come to see me to-morrow," she cried, as she glided away. "You know I cannot always do what I wish to."

"That means that perhaps her mother may not let her come to call on you," commented Marion.

"Nonsense," cried Irma. [300]

Katie was on the balcony of the hotel, as they made their landing. She seemed surprised to see them. "I thought you were going to walk back," she said.

As she spoke, she put her hand to her collar. This attracted the attention of both Irma and Marion, and Irma saw that Katie wore around her tie the circlet with the dragon's head, and she could not help noticing a strange expression on Marion's face as he too observed it.

That very evening, when she and Aunt Caroline were alone, Irma remembered the question she had so often meant to ask about Marion.

"When we first left home," responded her aunt, "I could not have answered you. What I said might have prejudiced you against Marion. But things have changed, and even he could not object to my telling you now.

"It is not a complicated story. Marion's father died when he was a little boy. He has no sisters, [301] and his only brother is a few years older than he. Herbert, I am afraid, has always been his mother's favorite, because he is much livelier than Marion, and fonder of people. But though most persons would call Herbert the more amiable, he has a terrible temper, and all who have seen him under its influence know how unreasonable he can be. One day, last winter, both boys were out in Herbert's motor. While going very fast it seriously injured a child. There were no witnesses to the accident, and the motor did not stop. But a mile farther on, when they had begun to slow down, Marion signalled a mounted policeman, told him there had been an accident, and obliged Herbert to turn back. By this time the child's parents had come out, and a crowd had collected. The boys were arrested, but soon had bail. At the trial Marion refused to utter a word against his brother, for I will say this for Herbert, he did admit that he was acting chauffeur. At last Marion had to admit that Herbert was going much faster than the law permits. Herbert's lawyer tried to show that the child's carelessness caused the accident. But further testimony of Marion's changed this. As Herbert was of age, the judge decided to make an example of him, and he was sentenced to jail for a short period, and in addition had a fine to pay. The child by this time was almost well, and many persons thought the punishment excessive."

"I should think it was his brother who should be pitied, and not Marion." [302]

"Ah, many persons thought that Marion by a word might have put Herbert in a better light. His mother took the view that it was Marion, and not Herbert, who had disgraced the family. Some newspapers wrote articles criticising him, and one published his photograph, labelled "An unbrotherly brother." Now Marion himself had had a nervous breakdown during the winter after an attack of measles. When he had given his testimony at the trial he fainted and had to be carried from the room. The strain had been too much. Your Uncle Jim and I at once invited him to go abroad with us (for his father was an intimate friend and classmate of your uncle's) when we heard that his mother would not even speak to him. The strange thing was that while other relatives were so bitter toward Marion, Herbert did not blame him. Yet in all these weeks Marion had no letter from Herbert until we reached Siena. Even now I think his mother has not written him."

"He has been very badly treated," said Irma. "I cannot see that Marion did anything wrong." [303]

"I will say this. Marion himself is partly to blame for being so cut off from his relatives. He, too, has a temper. When he found that several blamed him, he wrote a disrespectful letter to an uncle of his father's, who is really very fond of him, saying that he hoped never to speak to one of the family again, or something to that effect. Mr. Skerritt is joint guardian of Marion with your uncle —and——"

Here Aunt Caroline paused. Then she added, "When Marion is twenty-five he will have a large income. Even now he has more money to spend than would be wise for most boys. But fortunately he is not a spendthrift."

"Thank you," said Irma, when her aunt had finished. "I understand Marion better than I did. If he should speak to me about this, I suppose I can say that I sympathize with him."

"Certainly, and I hope that he will be more inclined to talk now, since Herbert has forgiven him."

"I don't see what he had to forgive."

"I am only speaking from the family's point of view."

The next morning, as Irma sat in her favorite corner of the little balcony overhanging the Grand Canal, Marion approached her. On a small round table that a waiter had moved out for her, she had set a pasteboard box containing most of her souvenirs for the family at home. There was nothing very valuable, though these pretty trifles had taken all the money Irma had brought from home; cameo pins from Naples, one or two mosaics from Rome, some strings of Roman pearls, an amber necklace from Florence, a leather cover stamped in gilt for books, and a couple of strings of Venetian beads, so dainty and fine that in her inmost heart she rather begrudged giving them away. [304]

"What is this?" asked Marion, holding up an envelope.

"That? Oh, that has the asphodel you gathered at Paestum, and in that small box is the fossil shell you gave me the day you rescued my camera from that foolish little girl."

"How long ago that seems," responded Marion. "We have seen so many places since then that Paestum is ancient history, and yet it is little more than a month away."

"I haven't forgotten," said Irma. "I thought you were very brave." [305]

"Brave!" Marion colored. "I should think you'd call me a regular duffer when you remember what a fool I made of myself getting on board the *Ariadne* at St. Michael's. I can tell you I felt awfully ashamed to think that a girl had saved me from a tumble into the water. I haven't forgotten what I owe you, though I haven't been able to get even yet."

"Oh, yes, you have. You saw that I wasn't any too brave the night I thought we were going to sink."

"Ah, that was natural. For you know we had barely escaped collision with a man of war. But what's this?"

While talking, Irma had opened a small package, and Marion, fumbling with things on the table, had come across the piece of green marble from Hadrian's villa.

For a moment Irma hesitated, then she plunged into the story of the way she had missed the train that memorable afternoon.

"Aha!" exclaimed Marion, "and you were the girl who disapproved of my buying that tile from the Sistine Chapel." Then he started as if to go into the house. "Excuse me," he said. "I'll be back in a minute."

When Marion returned he had the octagonal tile in his hand. "Fair exchange is always a good thing," he said, "and if you will take this, I would like to have the Hadrian marble. It will be a good reminder to me of something I can't explain just now." [306]

"Yes, you may exchange," said Irma, hesitatingly. For in her inmost heart she preferred her own marble. Yet, this was almost the first favor Marion had ever asked of her.

"Thank you," said Marion. "I was altogether too ugly about that tile, but to tell you the truth I have had so much nagging this year, before I left home, that I've been too ready to defend myself."

"I know," responded Irma.

Marion looked up suddenly, as if he wondered how much she knew. But Irma said nothing.

Not far from the hotel some gondolas were tied to the poles that marked their station. Marion leaned forward and signalled, and the nearest gondolier glided up.

"Put these trinkets away. I will leave the box in the office," said Marion, "and we can go out for an hour."

Irma accepted the invitation gladly enough, and the two were on the point of starting when Richard and Ellen appeared. Marion invited them also, and soon the four young people were gliding past S. Maria della Salute up toward the railway station. [307]

"There," said Richard, as they passed one beautiful palace after another. "If this were not Marion's party, I could tell you all kinds of wonderful stories as we go along. But as it is, I must content myself with saying, 'This is the Palace where Robert Browning spent so much time, and where he finally died. There, on that corner, lives Don Carlos. He and the parrot are not visible to-day, but you can almost look into the kitchen windows and see the most wonderful collection of copper kettles. When Lord Byron lived in that gray-fronted edifice, he was in the habit of taking a daily swim in the waters of the Grand Canal. I would like to tell you about the Dandolos and Foscari, and all the others, including the Falieri. Some of them were beheaded; some had their eyes put out, and——"

"Don't, Richard," cried Ellen. "The Venetians were almost as bloodthirsty as the Florentines and Romans, and I wonder at their cruel deeds when I look about at all the beauty here." [308]

"Oh, there are also highly romantic stories, if I only had time to tell them, not bloodthirsty, but full of sentiment," continued Richard, in the tone that always meant he was only half in earnest. "The Merchant of Venice, for instance, and here we are at the Rialto, which of course makes you think of Shylock, though it was the section back there, and not the bridge, that Shakespeare had in mind."

"I walked through the Merceria the other day," said Ellen. "You know it's the street that runs from this bridge to the clock tower opposite St. Mark's."

"Did you find many bargains?" asked Marion suddenly.

"A few, though we were not out to shop. But it was great fun to see the real Venetians hurrying along almost like Americans."

At this moment one of the little steamboats that constantly ply up and down the Grand Canal seemed to be bearing down upon them. Irma gave a little scream, but already the gondolier had pushed his craft away so adroitly that they barely felt the swash.

VENICE. THE GRAND CANAL.

VENICE. A GONDOLIER.

Once or twice they pulled up at some landing to have a better view of an old building or Campo, and always an aged man arose from some corner, boathook in hand, to help them ashore, waiting until their return to receive the small fee that custom has decreed. [309]

At last, as they glided homeward, and came in sight of their hotel, Irma discerned Katie standing on the balcony.

"Irma," said Marion, in an undertone, for evidently he, too, had seen Katie, "has Katie said anything to you about Nap lately?"

"No, not for some time."

"Well, I hoped she would say you could keep Nap."

"Aha, Marion," cried Richard, "I believe I understand why you have spent so much time with Katie lately, escorting her around to places I wouldn't have taken the trouble to go. I see why you did it."

"Why?" asked Ellen; "why should he need a special reason?"

"Perhaps he didn't need it. But I believe he has set out to make Katie give up Nap to Irma, but," and he turned toward Marion with a flourish of his hat, "I'll bet you almost anything that you don't succeed. Katie is my cousin, and I know."

As they landed at the steps of the hotel, Katie greeted them pleasantly. [310]

"The rest of us have had a splendid afternoon. We've been shopping."

"Of course," interposed Richard.

"Oh, this time we went to such interesting palaces, full of wonderful old furniture and pictures, collectors' places; and your aunt, Irma, has bought any amount of lovely things. And then, over across the way, we saw them making mosaics, and I have bought some beautiful long slender iridescent glass vases."

"You can buy the same in New York," murmured Richard, "and we'll have all the trouble of carrying these vases home. Probably they'll be put in a basket for *me* to carry."

Then in a sudden spirit of mischief: "Katie," cried Richard, "did Marion give you that arrangement for your scarf? I don't know whether to call it a pin or a ring."

"Nobody gave it to me," she replied, in a tone of annoyance.

"Then *where* did you get it?" It was Marion who spoke sharply.

Katie made no answer.

"Did you advertise it?" asked Marion.

Even to Katie this question seemed as puzzling as to the others. [311]

"I don't know what you mean," she replied. "I bought it at Rome."

"Oh," said Marion, and it was quite evident that he did not believe her.

"Well," said Katie, "if you must know, I bought it at the Rag Fair, and very cheap it was. Every one tells me that I have a great bargain, for the carving on the stone is very fine, and I wouldn't part with it for anything."

Marion made no comment after Katie's speech, and instantly Irma understood the whole thing. [312] This was the "something else" that Marion had lost with the two hundred liri in his purse. It had probably been stolen by some one at the fair. Certainly it was easy now to account for Katie's bargain.

CHAPTER XVIII

EXPLANATIONS

"I am sorry," Aunt Caroline was saying, as she and Irma and Uncle Jim drifted along in a gondola, "that you will lose Milan. Perhaps you might have gone up with your uncle on his trip last week, but it seemed hot."

"It was hot," interposed Uncle Jim. "And I had so much business that I could have given no time [313] to showing Irma around. She could have seen the Cathedral, of course, which, after all, is one of the most beautiful in the world, and different from the others you have seen in Italy; and she could have visited one or two delightful galleries. But I doubt that your head will retain an impression of half those you've already visited. If you will accept my impression of Milan, you will know just what it is, a busy, bustling city, full of energetic people who are making their way upward. If the rest of Italy could catch the spirit of Milan, the whole country would soon be prosperous. In fact the spirit of independence is so strong that car conductors, policemen, and shopkeepers, as well as cabmen, are insolent, and inclined to look down on the *forestieri*. Sometime, when you return to Italy in cooler weather, you can visit Milan; but be thankful you didn't go there with me last week."

"We shall have a warm journey back to Naples, and if your business were not so pressing, I should be inclined to go to Switzerland. While she is over here, Irma ought to see——"

"Oh, no, no," interrupted Irma, without waiting for Aunt Caroline to finish the sentence. "Really I do not need to see more. I ought, that is, I *must* go home."

"Why, my dear child," cried Aunt Caroline, "I had no idea you were getting homesick. I thought you were enjoying everything."

"Yes, I am enjoying everything," replied Irma, "and that is why I feel as if I can hardly wait to see [314] them all at home. I just long to tell them about everything, and I don't want Tessie to grow up before I see her again. And if Katie gets to Cranston before I do, she will take Nap away, and perhaps I may never see him again. Oh, I am glad we are going home." Irma's voice now broke

completely, and she made no attempt to hide her tears.

"There, my dear, it is the warm weather. The climate of Venice is too relaxing——"

"We'd get home sooner, Irma, if we should give up our Mediterranean passage and take a boat from Havre or Cherbourg. Perhaps you would like to start to-morrow with Mrs. Sanford's party. You wouldn't lose sight of Katie then," said Uncle Jim mischievously.

"Nonsense," rejoined Aunt Caroline. "A few days more or less will be nothing to Irma, when once her face is turned toward the United States."

"I feel better now," cried Irma. "Those were only makebelieve tears, but I do feel better to be going home. I am glad that we are not to be away three months more, and, if you please, I would rather not go to the Bridge of Sighs to-day."

"You can look at it without any qualms," said Uncle Jim, "for our matter of fact historians say that [315]
since that bridge was built more than two hundred years ago, only one prisoner has been sent across to the *pozzi*, under sentence of death."

"*Pozzi*?" asked Irma.

"Yes, *pozzi*, or wells, is a good name for those dungeons across from the palace. The water used to rise two feet in them, and the poor wretch had to spend his time on a kind of trestle. I went through the *pozzi* the other day, but I shouldn't care to have you or your aunt there; they are too depressing for tender-hearted people."

"Why not take a last look at the Doge's Palace to-day; that would be more cheerful," suggested Aunt Caroline.

"Certainly," and in a short time their gondola was at the steps near St. Mark's, the usual old man rose from his slumbers and steadied the gondola with his hook, and the three, after getting their tickets, wandered through the immense halls of the Doge's Palace.

"When I was here the other day," said Irma, "the carvings and gildings and the enormous paintings dazzled me. Yes, I feel it is the same now, and I believe, after all, I care more for the general impression. I cannot remember each separate painting."

"Why should you try to?" asked Uncle Jim. "These gray-bearded doges in their caps and ermine- [316]
trimmed cloaks are much alike, whether Titian or Veronese, or some other one of the great masters painted them."

"Doesn't it seem as if those old doges were pretty conceited," said Irma, "to have themselves painted in sacred pictures with the Madonna and Christ?"

"But you will notice that they are generally in an attitude of humility, and perhaps in that way they meant to attribute their greatness to something besides themselves."

"A Doge could not do whatever he wished. Weren't they something like our presidents, simply elected to be the executive officer of the state?" asked Aunt Caroline.

"Yes, it was the Great Council, and not the Doge, that held the supreme power, at least until the time of the Council of Ten. But the Doge, although at first chosen for only a year, was often re-elected term after term, and with his councillors he often had great power."

"Yet the Venetians didn't like him to have too great power?"

"Oh, no. You noticed the black tablet in the great hall in place of the portrait of Marino Faliero, [317]
beheaded for his ambition."

"Yes, I have read about him, but I feel almost sorrier for Ludovico Manin, the last Doge. You know the French made him abdicate in 1797, and they burnt his Doge's bonnet, and the Libro d'oro—the Golden Book of Venetian nobility under the Liberty-tree, and they say this nearly broke his heart, although he lived a number of years longer. When he died he left all his fortune to some charity."

"The history of Italy is full of tragedies," responded Uncle Jim. "So don't waste your sorrow on any one man, even though he is the last of the doges."

A little later the three were in front of St. Mark's.

"I must look my last at the Piazza," said Irma.

"But I thought you were coming down this evening to hear the band play."

"Oh, yes, but there will be such a crowd that we shall only sit at the little tables."

"Yes, and sip lemonade."

"Of course. It is Muriel's party. It is singular that we have seen her so little. But the music and [318]
the lemonade and all we shall have to say to each other—for she goes away to-morrow—will prevent my thinking much of the Piazza. Just now," and Irma half closed her eyes, "I am imagining the day when the Venetians gathered here to decide whether or not they should help the Crusaders. What a grand sight it must have been; and now, I open my eyes and see nothing but pigeons."

"Aunt Caroline," said Irma, as they glided homeward, "I like Venice better than any other place. There seem to be more really old buildings here than anywhere else. I have not tried to remember the great pictures as I did in Rome and Florence. I have a general impression of Bellini and the Vivarini, Titian and Veronese and Tintoretto, they are the great Venetian painters, but I cannot describe any one picture."

"We hardly expect a girl of your age to care for artistic details," responded Aunt Caroline, smiling. "You could probably tell more about the palaces."

"I am not sure that I could describe a single one of them, so that any one would recognize it. It is [319]
the effect of Venice as a whole that pleases me, even if it isn't just what artists paint it. The palaces are really much grayer than they look in pictures, and there are never many sails on the canal, and even down toward the Lido there is seldom one of those bright painted sails."

"Is there any other thing that falls below your expectations?"

"Oh, some things are different, but I like them all the better. I used to think that only gondolas and small pleasure boats went on the Grand Canal. But there are so many other things—these little steamboats that pass constantly up and down, and take people so quickly and cheaply, and those large *barche* that are like express wagons. Why, the other morning I sat at my window before breakfast, and first a large gondola passed, loaded with vegetables; and then a larger one piled high with bricks for building; and then it really looked so funny—some family was moving, and there was a boat full of furniture, with the mother and children sitting at one end, while the father and eldest son were pushing it on with their long sticks. Then the gondolas, too! I thought they were only pleasure boats; but the other day, when I saw a funeral procession going across to the island where the cemetery is, I realized they took the place of horses and carriages for everything."

"I believe there isn't a horse in all Venice," said Uncle Jim, "and only two or three at the Lido. But [320]
here we are," and a moment later they had landed at the hotel.

That evening, in spite of the charm of the music on the Piazza, and the evident gaiety of the crowd of listeners, the young people of the Sanford and Curtin parties were less gay than usual. Muriel, the next morning, was to start for the Dolomites, and later in the day Mrs. Sanford and her party were to begin their journey to Paris, allowing a few days for Switzerland on the way.

"Irma," whispered Richard, in one of the pauses of the music, "I must tell you that I think Marion and Katie have struck a bargain about Nap. It seems Marion was able to prove that that ring we have seen Katie wear around her scarf really belongs to him. He showed her his initials inside. They were very small, but could be seen under a glass. He lost a purse one day when he visited the Rag Fair in Rome."

"Yes, I was with him," said Irma.

"Well, the same day Katie and a friend whom we met at our hotel in Rome also went to the fair. [321]
The ring was offered for sale at one of the booths, and Katie took a great fancy to it. She ought to have known it was stolen; for she got it for almost nothing."

"Then she can afford to give it back to Marion; for of course she ought to do so."

"That's just the point. Katie hates to give it up; I heard her talking to Marion about it. She said she'd like to buy it, but he wouldn't listen to that. Then he began to talk about your little dog, and I am pretty sure it ended in Katie's promising to give up all claim to the dog if Marion would let her keep the ring. Rather it was just the other way. Marion made the offer and Katie agreed, but it amounts to the same thing, and as soon as Katie is out of the way Marion will tell you."

It happened, however, that after all the good-byes had been said to Muriel and her mother and Mademoiselle Potin, the other young people and their elders walked home to their hotel. It chanced that Katie was near Irma part of the way, and thus had a chance to announce her decision about Nap.

"After all," she said, "a dog is a great trouble, and Nap is so much better acquainted with your family that I think I will let him stay with them."

"Oh, thank you," replied Irma, wishing she felt free to tell Katie what she had heard about [322]
Marion's offer. "Thank you," she repeated. "It would break my little sister's heart to give him up, and I should feel very badly myself."

At this moment they reached a bridge where they went single file. When they were on the level road again, Irma found herself beside Aunt Caroline, and she had no chance to discuss Nap either with Katie or Marion.

"Our last evening together!" exclaimed Richard, as they reached the hotel. "There's a faint moon, and if so young a thing as that can sit up late, why not we?" and before Aunt Caroline and Mrs. Sanford had time to protest, four young people were seated around the little table on the balcony overlooking the Canal, and Richard had sent the waiter for what he called "a last lemonade."

Marion had not joined the others. He stood with his hand on the railing. The water was lapping the steps just below him.

"Don't fall in," cried Richard, from his seat at the table. "You look as if you were meditating a

bath. But it's late, and in spite of the moon the water is cold."

As Richard spoke the girls turned their heads in Marion's direction, and there, under their very [323]
eyes, Marion was hurling his coat from him. With his hand on the railing a moment later he had sprung into the Grand Canal.

The others jumped to their feet; Katie screamed, and in an instant Richard might have plunged after Marion, had he not seen a reason for Marion's act. Some one had fallen into the water, and Marion had made his wild leap to rescue him. It all happened very quickly, and when, a few minutes later, rescuer and rescued stood on the balcony some distance from where Marion had gone in, the latter was seen to be a boy of about ten. He was evidently more frightened than hurt, and he whimpered a little as the crowd gathered around him.

"I don't see how it could have happened," cried Katie. "No one *ever* falls from a gondola," and her tone implied that this particular boy could not possibly have been in need of rescuing.

"But he *did* fall in; you can see that for yourself; a small boy can always get into impossible mischief."

There was certainly no doubt that this particular small boy had managed to elude both his [324]
mother and the gondolier. Sitting on the prow, he had been screened for the moment by the cabin. Then a sudden impulse had led him to creep to the very end, where he raised himself to shake his hand in defiance at the gondolier. At this moment a passing steamboat gave a new motion to the gondola and threw the little fellow into the water.

"Oh, but really it was nothing," cried Marion. "The water was not deep, and the gondolier would have been in almost as soon as I—and——"

"Nonsense, nonsense, boy; when you do a brave thing take the credit that is your due."

Irma started at the voice. She was one of the crowd that had drawn nearer to Marion.

"I saw the whole thing," continued the voice. "You acted without a shadow of fear, but this chill may be bad for you."

"Come, Marion, I will go with you to your room," and Richard led the unresisting Marion away, only too glad to escape the eyes of the curious who had come from the numerous reading and reception rooms on the first floor, at the rumor of an accident.

"Billy," said the mother of the boy, who had caused all the excitement, "this is the last time I'll let [325]
you sit up after eight o'clock, no matter how you tease."

"Madame," interposed the voice that a few moments earlier had praised Marion, "I would advise you to take your little boy at once to his room. His escapade might have cost him his life, and might have had serious results for my nephew, who is only recovering from the effects of a shock to his nerves. Put your little boy to bed at once, Madame."

Then the mother and the little boy and a number of sympathizing friends walked off, while the fairy godfather, for of course it was he whose voice Irma had recognized, took Irma's hand in his.

"Well, my child, we haven't met since I brought you back from Hadrian's villa. I found I couldn't [326]
safely keep so near Marion without really explaining myself. But the time hadn't come. He wrote me a pretty savage letter before he left New York. He thought I was one of those who had accused him of cowardice. This was a mistake on his part. But in the mood he was in three months ago, it would have been useless to try to change his mind. I had occasion to come to Italy myself, and there seemed to be no reason why I should not come on the ship with him. I knew that in the company of your aunt and uncle and yourself," and the old gentleman smiled at Irma, "he would have influences that ought to lift him out of his depression."

"Did Uncle Jim and Aunt Caroline know?" asked Irma.

"Yes, they knew after a while that I was hovering near. But I did not mean to dog Marion's steps, especially after I had seen at Rome that he was beginning to be himself again. At first Marion was unaware that I had come to Europe, but when a letter of apology was forwarded from him to me, I thought the time had come to tell him. So I had written him that I would see him soon.

"He is really a fine, manly fellow, and it hurt him very much that he should have been so unjustly blamed. But I know that you, as well as your uncle and aunt, have been very patient with him, and now, well, now I must have a little talk with him before he falls asleep. I am to sail with you from Naples. Good night."

Irma thought it quite the natural thing for the fairy godfather to disappear in this sudden fashion. [327]
When she had answered the questions that Richard showered upon her, she ran up to Aunt Caroline's room.

"So you have always known about the fairy godfather."

"I had never known him by that name until you gave it to him," said Aunt Caroline, smiling. "But as Mr. Skerritt, I have always felt that he was one of Marion's best friends. I spoke of him to you the other day when I told you Marion's story. Perhaps he mentioned that he is going back on the ship with us. Do you realize that in three days you will be sailing away from Italy?"

"It is hard to realize it."

"But you are glad to go home?" queried Aunt Caroline.

"I am a little more homesick than when I left home," responded Irma, "but I have enjoyed every minute in Italy."

The evening before leaving Venice Irma made a long entry in her diary: "No one knows how glad [328] I am to be going home. Four months is a long time to be away from one's own country, and especially from one's family. Of course I have enjoyed everything, and I have learned even more than I expected, and I am so grateful for the trip. But there's no place I would rather see now than Cranston.

"To-night I had such a surprise. Aunt Caroline came to my room, carrying a large pasteboard box. Then she opened it and showed me a lovely amber necklace, just like one I had admired in Florence. 'This is a present for you from Marion,' she said, 'and these other little things he hopes you will give to Tessie and the boys and Mahala. You will know how to divide them.'

"I won't attempt to describe them, only I know Tessie will be delighted with the little flock of bronze pigeons, because I have written her about the pigeons of St. Mark's. There was even a silver-mounted leather collar for Nap. 'You may wonder at Marion's thoughtfulness,' explained Aunt Caroline, 'but he says you have taught him to think of others besides himself, and he appreciates your patience with him when he was so unamiable.'

"It is true that Marion *did* seem rather disagreeable at first, and perhaps I didn't try to like him [329] because I was so disappointed that he was not a girl. But now—well, I only hope Chris and Rudolph will know as much as he does when they are his age. So I told Aunt Caroline that the whole trouble had been that I didn't try to understand him at first. Then she smiled, and added, 'Marion is sure that he has learned a great deal from you, especially how to govern his temper. But he says particularly, that no one is to thank him for these things. It is as if you had bought them yourself, for everything in the box is something he heard you admire, when you and he were out together. I believe there's something from every city we have been in. He says the money part doesn't count at all for everything there represents your taste.'

"But I think I shall find some way of thanking him, if not now, sometime when our trip is over, and really, if it hadn't been for Marion, I am sure that I should not have had half as much fun."

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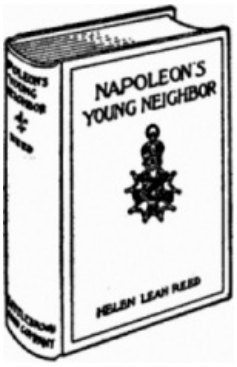

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Transcriber's Notes

Minor changes have been made to correct typesetters' errors; otherwise, every effort has been made to remain true to the author's words and intent.

Page 16, added the word "to" ("the seat next to Uncle Jim").

Page 74, changed "Wilful" to "Willful" ("Willful as ever").

Page 159, changed "Lief" to "Leif" ("earlier than our Leif Ericson").

Page 165, changed "Domenchino" to "Domenichino" ("I loved Domenichino's Sybil").

Page 202, changed "see" to "seen" ("you are disappointed that we have not seen")

Page 234, added the word "in" ("Katie looked in defiance").

Page 257, changed "Guiliano" to "Giuliano" ("and of Giuliano, with Day and Night").

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