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PERUGIA: LOOKING TOWARDS ASSISI.

A LITTLE PILGRIMAGE IN ITALY

BY

OLAVE M. POTTER

AUTHOR OF 'THE COLOUR OF ROME.'

WITH 8 COLOURED PLATES AND
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
YOSHIO MARKINO

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FOREWORD

One morning of high summer three pilgrims met together in the City of Genoa to sally forth in search of sunshine and the Middle Ages.

At least that was what the Poet said, for sunshine and Ancient Stones were the passions of the Poet's life.

The Philosopher insisted that we went in search of Happiness.

It is no matter. But in fact we did meet one July day of sweltering sunshine in Genoa, the Western Gate of Italy, which is a city of grateful shadows, whose narrow streets defy the brilliant sun.

This is a book of simple delights, a chronicle of little pleasures, so I shall not talk much of Genoa, although to my mind she is the most Italian of all the great cities of Italy. Nor shall I speak of Florence, or Naples, or Venice, or Rome. Doubtless, like me, you have loved them all.

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A STREET IN GENOA.

If you come with me I shall take you away from the great cities where your feet are bruised on the stony streets and never feel the soft warm earth beneath their soles, where mountainous walls of brick limit your vision to smoke-clouded strips of sky, where you never smell the fragrance of the night. If you come with me I shall take you to the hills, the deep-bosomed rolling hills, with their valleys and their plains and with towered cities riding on their crests. You will lie with me under the olives and stone-pines, where the warm earth cushions your limbs in luxury, and the sunlight flickering in the green shadows lights on a wealth of flowers.

Then, if you will, come back to your haunted streets.

But I am persuaded that if you go there you will find a great content among the little cities of great memories which stand knee-deep in flowers upon the hills of Italy, or in those nobler towns, —Siena, who belongs to the Madonna, and Perugia, whose name is as a torch to light your feet into the Valleys of Romance. In their streets you are seldom shut away from the mountains and the sky; and little gracious weeds and grasses have spread a web among their stones as though an elfin world sought to entrap a monster and pull him down to ruin.

Our little pilgrimage took us to many shrines, and haunts of peace and beauty. We made our discoveries, saw much, learned not a little philosophy. And, most of all, we caught a glimpse of

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the heart of Umbria—Umbria of the saints. We watched the gathering of the golden maize in the plain below Assisi while we walked with St. Francis among the vines and olives; we saw the vintage being brought home with song and thanksgiving at Orvieto and Viterbo. We dwelt among beautiful simple-hearted men and women, living in little farms far from the toil of the modern world, who still worship God in the gladness of their hearts and the spirit of the ardent thirteenth century; who toil and spin and bear children and lie down to die, not with the stupidity of animals or the self-satisfaction of the bourgeoisie, but full of a beautiful content, moved by a beautiful faith. We dipped into Tuscany too, into Lombardy, into the March of Ancona, into Lazio, but nowhere else was the world as perfect, as unspoiled as in Umbria. If you are travel-stained with life, if the sweat of a work-a-day world still clings about you, if you have lost your saints and almost forgotten your Gods, you will cure the sickness of your soul in Umbria.

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GENOA: THE HARBOUR.

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AREZZO

We came to Arezzo in the cool of the evening. It had been a breathless day. Even at Genoa the air hung heavy with the sirocco. We found Pisa in a mirage, and the white hills of Carrara glistening like the lime rocks of a desert.

It was good to be in Tuscany again—Tuscany with her grey farms and lichened roofs, her towered horizons, her blue hills, her vineyards, and her olive-gardens. We could hear the song of the cicadas vibrating in the sunshine above the jar of the train; near at hand the hills swelled up, clothed with the tender mist of olives or linked with vines; stone-pines floated darkly against the sky, and cypress spires climbed the hillsides in a long procession like souls on pilgrimage.

Perhaps it is because Arezzo, little Arezzo, with her ancient history and her tale of great men, was the earliest of our hill-cities that we loved her at first sight. Coming from London and Genoa, with the noise and dust and heat of long train journeys still hanging about us, she seemed very cool and sweet among her vineyards and olive-gardens. She has left her hill-top now that she needs no more the walls which Sangallo built in the fighting days of the Popes, and has trailed down to the railway in the valley, leaving behind her wide piazzas which she has filled with shady trees, and benches, and statues of her great ones. Her paved streets, steep and clean, climb up the hillside between grey palaces, green-shuttered, with wide Tuscan eaves, whose fantastic outlines, seen in échelon against the sky, bring back a score of memories of other clean-swept Tuscan towns. [2]

Now that we were threading her byways, Arezzo, though she had looked imposing from the valley, dwindled to a little brown city, full of memories, and frescoed churches, and ancient houses in which the labourer dwells in his poverty to-day where the rich citizens of Arezzo once held great state. Capers and all manner of pensive creepers grew out of the rough walls; fig-trees, roses, wistarias, and oleanders in full blossom poured over them, so that the air was full of fragrance. And there were flowers in the upper windows of thirteenth-century houses, for your Tuscan is fond of flowers, and will have his *garofani* upon his window-ledge. Through the low-browed gateways we could see women spinning in arcaded courtyards; and the shoemakers and basket-weavers worked at their humble trades as they sat on the steps of weather-beaten Gothic houses.

And often as we wandered through her narrow streets we paused to look down upon the calm beauty of the Tuscan plain, which stretched from the vineyards below her walls to the blue mountains of Chianti. Nor did it require any effort of imagination, while we were walking in those mediaeval byways between the Borgunto and the Via di Pellicceria, to people the rich valley with the pageant which Dante witnessed while he was staying in Arezzo with the elder Petrarch, both exiles from Florence. [3]

'It hath been heretofore my chance to see
Horsemen with martial order shifting camp,
To onset sallying, or in muster rang'd,
Or in retreat sometimes outstretch'd for flight;
Light-armed squadrons and fleet foragers
Scouring thy plains, Arezzo! have I seen,
And clashing tournaments, and tilting jousts,
Now with the sound of trumpets, now of bells,
Tabors, or signals made from castled heights.'^[1]

A common sight enough, heaven knows, in the Middle Ages, when every little city sought to rule itself, and the populace and the petty lords alike cloaked their ambitions under the old war-cry of Guelph and Ghibelline!

There is an air of gaiety in Arezzo, a simple, almost pastoral, joy. The philosopher felt it at once.

'We are like flowers,' he said, as we sat on a bench outside the inn after our first breakfast in Tuscany. 'In London our roots spread in the ground, and they get knotted and twisted in the darkness. Here we shoot right up into the sun.' [4]

And, indeed, Arezzo is a happy place, whose charm, it may be, owes its origin to an earlier civilisation, which has left so many broken fragments of its art scattered on the neighbouring hillsides. They are garnered to-day in the museum among the relics of Arezzo's history, of which they are the chief glory now that the bronze Chimera and the magnificent Etruscan statue of Minerva have gone to swell the treasures of Florence. There is not a vase or *patera* unbroken. The entire collection is composed of fragments, moulds and casts in low relief. But every piece is exquisitely beautiful; each one is like a shell cast by the tides of fantasy upon the shores of a work-a-day world. And though the streets of Arezzo are nearly always empty and silent, I think the flutes and lyres and dancing fauns, with which the artists of Arretium delicately graced their coral-coloured bowls and cups, are not silenced yet upon this Tuscan hill. Perhaps the spirit of the slim-limbed girls and youths, and merry little loves, whose forms are beauty, and whose fragile feet seem scarce to bruise the ground, dance still to their forgotten songs about the vineyards of Arretium. It is as though the dream of some Attic poet, for I cannot think that the heavy-eyed people of Etruria imagined such gods, lingers on in this little Tuscan town, and the echo of its ancient music vibrates in the stillness of the museum like the murmur of waves in a shell. Or perhaps it is a magic in the air, the subtle air of Tuscany, that poets sing of, which has inspired more genius than we can find in all the rest of Italy. [5]

For Arezzo, like Florence, has been the mother of great men. Michelangelo, himself born but a

few miles from Arezzo, wrote to Vasari, 'Giorgio, of myself I have no power. I happened to be born in the subtle air of your *paese*.'

Poets and artists, sculptors and musicians, have issued from her walls. All the world knows that she bred Maecenas and Petrarch, but only those who pause to read her chronicles know how many of her sons have walked with History in the corridors of Time—Margheritone, the Spinelli; Leonardo Bruni; Carlo Marsuppini, and a host of other humanists; the fighting bishop, Guido Tarlati; Vasari; and Guido Monaco, the Benedictine monk, born in the closing years of the eleventh century, who was the inventor of our modern system of musical notation.

Whether Arezzo occupies the site of Arretium, the city of the Etruscan league, which is unlikely, or whether it rose like a phoenix from the ashes of its ancient necropolis, or grew from a Roman colony of that name near the Etruscan settlement, is not for me to say, since antiquaries are undecided. In any case there is little of either Etruscan or Roman antiquity outside the museum to-day.



AREZZO: THE PRISON.

It is the Middle Ages which have set their crown upon Arezzo. Knowing her courage, and how it outweighed her strength so that she dared to offer battle to her great neighbour Florence through many stormy centuries, it is a marvel that anything of value should be left. And in fact Arezzo boasts few civic buildings—the palace of the Podestà or del Governo, now the prison, whose façade is covered with the *stemme* of her many rulers, and the Palazzo Comunale or dei Priori, with its picturesque clock tower, are all that remain of the mediaeval city, except some streets of fifteenth-century dwelling-houses. But she has several noble churches—the Gothic Duomo, majestically simple within and without, which crowns her hill-top; the Pieve, Santa Maria di Gradi, with its wonderful Pisan-Romanesque façade, hoary with antiquity; the great bare church of San Francesco, enriched by Piero della Francesca's Story of the True Cross; and Santa Maria delle Grazie in the vineyards outside the walls.

It is the same all over Italy. What little town is there, however broken, but has ancient churches and palaces to crown its hill and keep troth through the ages with its vanished greatness? Arezzo is particularly rich. The most expectant pilgrim to Italy's shrines of art, even though he come straight from Florence, will be thrilled by the golden church which soars from the crest of Arezzo's hill between the gracious old Palazzo Comunale and the public gardens, gay in July with the flame-coloured pennons of a flowering tree, which Mr. Markino tells me is called Urushi in Japan. For the Aretines have lavished wealth upon their cathedral, and the Ark of San Donato, which is one of the most beautiful mediaeval shrines in Italy, a rival to Orcagna's masterpiece in Or San Michele, is alone worth the long hot climb. The exquisitely wrought marble is yellowing with age; it is as finely carved as Oriental ivories; the trefoils and the edges of its panels are set with lapis lazuli. And here we have the reverence of the Trecento, with its rude handiwork redeemed by its ardent sincerity. For the sculptors saw nothing strange or irreverent in filling their scenes of the lives of Madonna and San Donato with all the incongruous details of their own day, so that we have at the same time jesters and angels, knights a-horseback and heavy-headed saints, and the queer beasts of mediaeval imaginings.

Close at hand is the tomb of the splendid old fighting Bishop of Arezzo, Guido Tarlati, who crowned the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria with the Iron Crown of Lombardy in defiance of the excommunications of John XXII., and who led his people to battle against the Pope as readily as he led their prayers to God. A great man this, who has a worthy tomb, for Agostino and Agnolo of Siena carved the history of his stirring life below his recumbent form when he was laid to rest, and have shown us incidentally the life of the Trecento in all its vigour and humour. Two angels

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draw back the curtains of his bier, revealing him as he lies asleep, with folded hands and an air of extreme piety and humility, belied by the long recital of his little wars, and the story of his triumphs, from his Consecration as a Bishop to the Coronation of Lewis, and his death in 1327.



A STREET IN AREZZO.

There are many other treasures in the Duomo, besides the column upon which San Donato had his head cut off, 'without any regard for the axe,' as the custode explained, pointing out a deep gash in the marble to remove the lingering doubts of any sceptic; there is an exquisite relief by Rossellino in the Chapter House, and many Della Robbias have set their seal of piety and graciousness on altar and tomb in the Chapel of the Madonna. But it was not any of these things which claimed our thoughts the first time that we entered the dim aisles of Margheritone's soaring Gothic church. After the glare and heat of the piazza, where the sunlight reflected from the yellow walls of the cathedral dazzled our eyes, we found the darkness of the nave, illuminated by a solitary altar lamp, and threaded with shafts of jewelled light filtering through painted glass, as grateful as the shade of some primeval forest formed by the interlacing branches of giant trees. For, within, the Cathedral of Arezzo is like the Gothic churches of the north, and it may be that the grim Margheritone, whose agonised crucifixions adorn so many chapels in Tuscany and Umbria, was himself inspired by northern architecture. He returned to his native town from Florence in the train of Gregory X., fresh from the Council of Lyons; and Gregory, who left 30,000 *scudi* to the Comune for the erection of the new cathedral, may well have made some suggestions as to the style of architecture which was to be employed. He died in the neighbourhood some months later, early in the year 1276, and his beautiful thirteenth-century tomb by Margheritone is one of the chief ornaments of the cathedral which he helped to endow.

In Arezzo we were fortunate to find a real country inn; a clean, cool place, with floors and stairs of red brick, and an alfresco dining-room in the garden.

I remember how gay we were, how our burdens of care slipped from our shoulders as we sat to eat below the trees on those first nights in Tuscany. Were we not on the road again, knowing nothing of the morrow, forgetful of everything but the joy of yesterday, dining when we were hungry, sleeping when we were tired, with no thought but for the beauty of the ways which opened out before us, no care but that we might pass unwittingly some of the quaint and lovely fragments of art and architecture with which our path was strewn?

'Peregrino, quasi mendicando,' said Dante, bitter in his exile, but we did not want for the luxury which money cannot buy. It is only Italy of the little towns that can make you forget the work-a-day world. Nowhere else can you be so content with what is often meagre fare, so careless of the morrow, so full of the joy of to-day, as you are in Italy.

At night we sat at rough trestle tables in the little garden of the Albergo della Stella with the star-strewn canopy of night above us, and an electric light hanging like a fire-fly from the branches of an acacia tree. The level note of night crickets singing in the ilexes made an accompaniment to the distant clatter of dishes and the snatches of talk from other tables behind the tall bamboos. The food was simple—*minestre*, perfectly grilled steaks, fresh fruit, and

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generous *fiaschi* of the good red Tuscan wine, for which the vineyards of Arretium were praised. And here we lingered, talking of the wide-eaved Tuscan house in the Via del Orte, where Petrarch, the first of the great Italian humanists, was born, and Dante came to visit the elder Petrarch, who had been exiled from Florence by the same turn of the political wheel as himself; of Vasari, who filled his niche as a biographer so much better than he ever filled it as an artist; of Piero della Francesca and the vigorous young world he pictured on the bare white walls of San Francesco; and of San Bernardino who, like St. Francis, purged Arezzo of its devils and laid the foundations of Santa Maria delle Grazie, that exquisite church outside the city walls which Benedetto da Maiano, Andrea della Robbia and Parri di Spinello enriched with the sister arts. For it was San Bernardino who, coming to Arezzo, and finding that the citizens were in the habit of practising pagan rites for an oracle, which they imagined dwelt in a wood outside their gates, preached such a fiery sermon from the pulpit of San Francesco that they wept before him like little children. But he, insisting that they should do penance, gave orders that on a certain day a great wooden cross should be brought to him, and that the people should come in solemn procession to exorcise the demon. That week the citizens of Arezzo went about their work with fear and trembling, and some of them cast doubtful looks down to the valley where the oracle was hid. But on the appointed day, though I doubt not that many did absent themselves, a great company followed the saint, carrying the cross, down to the hateful wood.

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It is not hard to picture to-day—the Mystic chanting as he walked at the head of the procession; the hot and dusty way through the vineyards below the city walls, for San Bernardino was loth to start until all the people were met together; and the fear of the crowd as they drew near and heard the music of the oracle-haunted spring. But Bernardino, whose heart was ever with the angels, caused the fountain to be cast down and the trees to be felled, lest by any chance some evil might yet lurk in the wood. And, knowing the heart of the people, that where a man has once worshipped he will worship again, even though it be to other gods, he built a little chapel to the glory of Our Lady of Mercies, and he begged Messer Spinello to paint the Virgin for an altarpiece.

But not every one who comes to Arezzo visits this lovely church down in the vineyards, in spite of the marvellous beauty of Andrea della Robbia's 'cornice,' which frames Spinello's Madonna delle Grazie as she stands among the stars, like the Mother of the World, with strange, sad eyes, and shelters in her cloak the little people of Arezzo, humbly kneeling in penitence at her feet.

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CORTONA

Cortona! Not one of us but thrilled as we drew near her. For few cities bear so fair a name or seem as full of promise as Cortona. Although the world has long since passed her by, she loiters on her hill-top between the valley and the sky like a forgotten goddess who is loth to quit her great estate. Her towering walls encompass her about, those mighty walls built for a mighty people which Virgil sings of in the *Aeneid*; she frowns as though she were still girt for war, and had forgotten how to smile; her lean grey castle, stark upon the crest of the hill, points to the heaven like an avenging sibyl.

No wonder that her history is spare since the days when she and her great neighbours, Arretium and Clusium, joined the Etruscan League in 310 B.C.; for even to-day, with excellently engineered roads scaling her hill, she is difficult of approach, and her stout walls and impregnable position offered no inducement to invading armies, who were content with harrying her fertile plain, as they passed by to Umbria and Rome. We know she was a Roman colony in the time of the historian Dionysius, but scant mention is made of her under the Roman Empire; and although she was one of the earliest Episcopal sees, and is still the seat of a bishop, it was not until the thirteenth century that the chronicles of Cortona began to take a place in mediaeval history. She is still withdrawn from the world upon her mountain; her houses are still huddled together in the shelter of her great walls, built by the Unknown People; she still hides her poverty from the eyes of the careless traveller as he rushes past the foot of her hill on his way to Rome or Florence.

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After the motor-omnibus had deposited us in the Piazza Signorelli, and we had deposited our luggage in a rather dreary-looking inn whose only claims to notice were its exquisite views over the Tuscan plain to the inland sea of Thrasymene, we sallied out full of anticipation to see the legendary birthplace of three such widely different characters as the mythological Dardanus, founder of Troy; Brother Elias, the erring and ambitious follower of St. Francis; and Luca Signorelli, that courtly gentleman and great painter of the fifteenth century.

But we were disappointed. Cortona, notwithstanding her lovely name and her ancient and picturesque site, is a dirty little place, with unsavoury streets and a baroque cathedral. She has treasures, of course. What little town in Italy has not? Her tumble-down palaces are built of warm red brick; her churches have some fine pictures; her Palazzo Pretorio is covered with the escutcheons of the princes who were her overlords, but she has no charm unless you catch her unawares before the sleep is shaken from her eyes early on a summer morning.

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CORTONA FROM THE PIAZZA GARIBALDI.

We found so little to detain us in her dingy, unkempt streets that we decided to push on the next day to Perugia. We tried our tempers in the inn, the most lethargic inn that it was our misfortune to visit, endeavouring to get some lunch, and after waiting an hour and a half we found the *gnocchi* stale and the coarse meat uneatable. So we went out again into the siesta heat, determined at least to see the great Etruscan lamp which is the pride of Cortona's museum, and the pictures which Luca Signorelli painted for her churches.

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Cortona was asleep. She was as still as a lizard on a sunny wall; even the tiresome children who had followed us all the morning, agape for soldi, had vanished; the air was vibrant with the tremolo of the cicalas; the sunlight stretched like a shimmering veil across the valleys. And in a moment all our vexation vanished. Italy the Beautiful came out to meet us, smoothing away all disagreeable memories as a cool hand laid on the forehead will smooth out pain; we forgot the hatefulness which had been piling itself up all day—the dust, the smells, the too-glaring sun, the stupid inn with its bad-tempered maid-servant, the screaming children, the baroque cathedral!

In the cool grey church of San Domenico, which stands in the flowery public gardens of Cortona, we found not only one of Luca's great pictures but a pageant of Quattrocento saints and Madonnas in richly gilt Gothic frames over the three altars which fill its eastern wall. In the Gesù,

a little ancient church which clings to the hillside close to the cathedral, we discovered an Annunciation by Fra Angelico, almost as beautiful as that exquisite picture which he painted on the wall of his monastery-home in Florence. It is very like the fresco in the corridor of San Marco. The Madonna is sitting in the same light and airy loggia reading in some little book, as the Angel Gabriel, with his iridescent wings still poised for flight, alights at her feet, filling the air with glory. Outside, the grass is starred with the flowers which Angelico loved to paint; and far away, silhouetted against the sky, we see the Angel with a flaming sword driving Man and Woman from their Garden of Paradise, whose gates not even the coming of Christ could reopen on earth.

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And then, remembering the story of Filippo Brunelleschi, we went into the Duomo to see the famous sarcophagus which legend claims to be the tomb of the Consul Flaminius, and which the great architect of the dome of Florence Cathedral walked sixty miles to see. For one morning when he was discussing antique sculpture in the Piazza of Santa Maria del Fiore with Donatello and some other artists, Brunelleschi heard of a Roman sarcophagus in Cortona. Straightway he left his companions, and fired by his passion for the works of antiquity, 'just as he was, in his mantle, hood and sabots, without saying a word of where he was going,' came to Cortona and made a drawing of it, returning at last to Florence where he showed it to the astonished Donatello, who had not been able to guess where his friend had disappeared.

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But it was in the early morning, as I have said, that we discovered the nameless charm of Cortona—that same charm which we found in a different guise in all the little towns of Umbria and Tuscany. Our inn, though it towered more than a thousand feet above the valley, was at the bottom of the city, for Cortona in the immemorial Etruscan fashion hangs from the crest of her hill. Even the ambitious motor-bus could not climb higher than the Piazza Signorelli, because nearly all the streets above it are so steep that they are built in shallow steps. And they are so deserted that in one of them we found rabbits contentedly nibbling the grass which grew between its paving-stones. So the next morning, very early, while the day was cool, we climbed up to the great church of Santa Margherita, which stands with the ruined Fortezza on the crest of Cortona's mountain.

To me it is always rather strange that this harsh Tuscan citadel should ignore the name of Brother Elias, that great and restless spirit who sought to wed Love not to Poverty, as Francis did, but to Ambition. His name is hardly spoken in Cortona, but the body of Santa Margherita, whom some call the Magdalen of the Franciscans, because they love to draw comparisons between the life of Christ and His humble follower, is enshrined upon the hill-top like the light that cannot be hid. Her church has been restored, and there is little of the ancient building left except her beautiful fourteenth-century tomb, the silver shrine which was the gift of Piero da Cortona, and the lovely rose-window which is preserved in the modern façade. In the aisle are the flags and ship-lantern of some knight of Malta, who prayed to Margherita in the hour of peril, and was saved by her intercession.

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Yet it was not for Santa Margherita that we climbed Cortona's hill at dawn, but to see the rich plain of Tuscany in its amphitheatre of blue hills, each with a towered city for its crown—Chiusi, Città della Pieve, Montepulciano, and a host of others to which we had not learned to give their names. It was a panorama of surpassing beauty which opened out before us. Fold on fold the mountains lifted their heads above the mists of the valley, rising always towards the mighty crest of Monte Amiata, which was to loom upon so many of our horizons while we were journeying through the heart of Italy. And far away the sunshine lightened the opal waters of Lake Thrasymene, lying like a forgotten sea in the bosom of the Umbrian hills, with the towers of Castiglione del Lago rosy in the dawn.



CORTONA FROM THE PORTA S. MARGHERITA.

Even here the Rocca stood above us on its scarp, the key of the strong citadel which claims descent from Dardanus of Troy. On either side of Santa Margherita the mighty walls, including many courses of Cyclopean masonry, climbed down towards the peaceful plain. We passed through a gap which had once been a gate, and saw them plunging down the hillside holding the crumpled brown roofs of the little shrunken city in their elbow. So was Cortona of the Unknown People fortified; so was the city of the Etruscans girt about, and Hannibal and Flaminus have looked upon these walls as they passed by to battle upon the reedy shore of Thrasymene.

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Up on the hillside men and girls were reaping in the shadow of the ancient wall. 'And the reapers, reaping early,' quoth the poet softly to himself. Their laughter floated down to us. Every now and then a girl would straighten her lithe figure, stand upright curved scythe in hand, and sing, her clear notes soaring like a lark's in the crystal air. At our feet Cortona nestled in the embrace of her great wall, and far below, the plain of Tuscany rolled away to the hills where the sunlight fired the towers of other mountain cities.

So in the dawn we grew to love Cortona, for the fantastic beauty which is her own, and for her aloofness. As we passed down into her steep-paved streets we paused a moment in San Francesco, where Brother Elias lies buried with his hopes and ambitions; where, too, is kept the ivory case with a fragment of the True Cross which the Patriarch of Constantinople gave to Elias when he visited that Court as Nuncio of Frederick II. And we lingered in little San Niccolò, which, with its loggia and cypress-garden, is the loveliest of Cortona's churches; and which, for all its poverty, treasures three pictures by Luca Signorelli, who belonged to its confraternity.

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Down in the Piazza Signorelli we found the motor-omnibus already waiting to take us to the station. The narrow streets were crowded with black-browed Tuscan peasants selling fruit and vegetables, and doing a thriving business in skinned frogs strung on wooden skewers. These looked particularly unappetising in pails of not too clean water, and the atmosphere was putrid after the freshness of the air above. Again we had the sense of stifling heat and odour, and again the swarms of dirty children who had tracked us yesterday rose, as it were, out of the earth. We were glad enough to leave Cortona, but not until we had experienced many vexatious delays. For when we had fetched our luggage from the inn and settled our account with the rather difficult landlady, the driver of the omnibus was not forthcoming. And when at last we persuaded him to leave the shelter of the cool Palazzo Comunale, a glazier took the ill-chosen opportunity of mending two of the broken windows in the omnibus. We had given up all hope of catching our train when half an hour later we swung out of the town and began our perilous descent down to the plain.

After all we had some minutes to spare, though I should not care to make the journey again, for we took more than one corner of that switchback road on two wheels. But the driver was confident of our approval. 'Ecco signore, the train has not yet arrived,' he cried triumphantly. *Facilis descensus Averni!*

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PERUGIA: DETAIL FROM THE CHOIR OF S. PIETRO DE' CASSINENSI

PERUGIA

'For bodiless dreams through double gateways go
Of horn and ivory, from night's realm forlorn;
And those that through the ivory gate are borne
Deceive, and what they tell is unfulfilled;
But those that issue through the polished horn
Fulfil themselves for mortals to whose sight
They issue.'

J. W. MACKAIL'S Translation of the *Odyssey*,
xix. 562.

'Look!' said the chronicler, 'there is Perugia. Perugia, whom I have loved so long for her name alone.'

The poet sighed.

'I could almost envy you because you do not know her. See how her loggia'd towers frame the heavens, and how she stretches out her lovely arms to welcome us!'

We came to Perugia from Cortona. In an hour we slipped from that austere Tuscan citadel into the heart of an enchanted land—Umbria Mystica—the home of saints, where Beauty and Romance walk in the valleys with the gentle Gods of Arcady; where brooding peace hangs in the luminous air, and on whose aerial hills great memories dwell in the little cities full of dreams that men have built for them. We skirted the enchanted shores of Thrasymene, the spell-bound lake which lies like an opal in the bosom of the Umbrian Hills, and found ourselves among vineyards and olive-gardens, where the Madonnas of Perugino and Raphael are living their beautiful and simple lives in the fields, and the great-eyed oxen draw Virgilian ploughs below the olives, or roll along the dusty roads with scarlet fillets on their milk-white heads.

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Perugia is the queen of this enchanted land, the crown of Umbria. Think of her name—Perusia Augusta the Romans called her; was there ever a more lovely name, or one which History enriched with more poetic legends? For Felice Ciatti, that brilliant scholar of the seventeenth century, in summing up the Greco-Trojan tradition and the popular belief that Noah, the Patriarch, was the founder of the city, thought nothing of addressing the Perugians, in one of his Lenten sermons, in these stirring words—'No marvel is it if, to-day, ye Perugians possess the justice of the Armenians, the wisdom of the Greeks, the prosperity of Augustus, and the sanctity of Noah, for ye are descended from them all.'

And if these legends leave you cold, think of the Carolingian tradition in which such great names as Oliver the Paladin, and the puissant knight, Count Roland, 'the Falcon of Christendom,' and the tyrant Orgoglioso, play their parts with the lovely lady Prossimana. Or, if this does not stir you, would you rather learn romance from the nomenclature of her ancient gates? Here, long since vanished, was the Portal of the Sun, the gate through which blind Homer thought that dreams entered into a city from the east. It still gives its name to a whole quarter of Perugia—the Rione della Porta Sole—and though no man can point to the actual Porta Sole, when the wind blows coolly through any of Perugia's eastern gates, and you look across the valley at Assisi, it will be strange if you do not think of Dante's words:

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'There hangs
Rich slope of mountain high, whence heat and cold
Are wafted through Perugia's eastern gate:
And Nocera with Gualdo, in its rear
Mourn for their heavy yoke. Upon that side,
Where it doth break its steepness most, arose
A sun upon this world, as duly this
From Ganges doth; therefore let none, who speak
Of that place, say Ascesi; for its name
Were lamely so delivered; but the East,
To call things rightly, be it henceforth styled.'^[2]

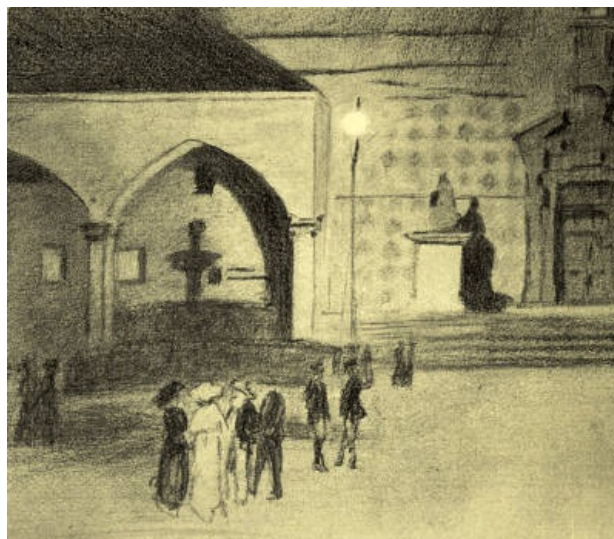


PERUGIA: ARCO DI AUGUSTO.

Here, at the end of a winding street of mediaeval houses, is the Porta Eburnea, the Ivory Gate through which Homer thought that False Dreams were expelled from a city; and close to Sant'Ercolano is the Porta Cornea, the Gate of Horn, whence issued all True Dreams. The Porta Eburnea was, indeed, the gate of False Dreams, for it was by that way, so Matarazzo tells us, that the Baglioni, that strange and beautiful and ungodly race who lived and died by violence, always passed out to battle. Of the others the Porta Augusta, the greatest of the Etruscan gates, once bore the proud name Porta Pulchra, because of its beauty even in a beautiful city; and another was named, and is still named, after the God of War. Is it not irony that all the rest should bear the names of saints, for Perugia, a city of turbulent desires, has ever bred more warriors than saints? Even to-day there are few monks or nuns in Perugia; it is the military who are in evidence, and not a few churches and cloisters have been despoiled to house them. In fact Perugia, notwithstanding her mediaeval monuments, is a gay and much begarrisoned city, not provincial like Siena, but really the capital of a state. I have never seen so many smart and pretty women in any Italian town of the size as I found at Perugia in high summer, nor so many soldiers. The Corso is full of them, both morning and evening. They promenade up and down, 'wearing out the pavements,' in the phrase of the immortal and energetic Fortebraccio; or they sit at cafés gossiping after their siestas. At night they become an army. It seems as though the entire population congregated then in the Corso and the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, where there is a band and a mushroom growth of tables and chairs. On Sundays they promenade in the cathedral in just the same gay and careless fashion, except that the boys doff their hats, and that here you see shaggy-haired and devout peasants kneeling among the beautifully-dressed Perugian ladies.

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PERUGIA: PIAZZA DEL MUNICIPIO.

Perugia is not a religious city. It is true that she furnished the most ardent disciples of the thirteenth-century Flagellants;^[3] and that Fra Bernadino of Siena, preaching to her from the little pulpit outside the cathedral of San Lorenzo, brought her to such a passion of repentance that not

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only did she burn her vanities in the piazza before this ardent Flame of God, as the Florentines were to do later for Savonarola, but she built in his memory that exquisite oratory covered with reliefs in terra-cotta by Agostino Duccio, under the shadow of San Francesco. Yet for the rest it seems as though she has not forgiven the papacy for grinding her under its heel in the stormy sixteenth century, when Paul III. built his fortress on the ruined palaces of the Baglioni; although, on the Feast of the Ring of the Virgin, which, for all her air of cynicism, she still counts as one of her treasures, we saw the peasants who had climbed her hillside in the dawn worshipping with the simple faith of the Middle Ages.

Matarazzo has told the story of this Ring, and how it was stolen from Chiusi, where it was held in great veneration, in the thirteenth century by a German priest, and brought by the intervention of the Holy Virgin to Perugia. It is shown in San Lorenzo in a finely-wrought casket thrice a year; otherwise it is kept in an iron chest, whose seven keys are in the custody of different citizens. We arrived early enough to go into the loft, where the chest is lodged, above the Altar of the Sacrament, and see the Ring being put *sans cérémonie* into its place in the gold casket before the red silk curtains were drawn back and the holy relic lowered to the altar. A short mass was said, and the casket was placed on a table in the centre of the chapel for the people to pass one by one in front of it.

It was a sacrament, a holy and beautiful thing, to watch them as they passed, these peasants with their broken dusty hats and rugged faces, who had come up from the valleys with their Madonna-like wives. They pressed their lips to the glass, and held up their rosaries and rings to touch the shrine. All had some special sign of love and reverence.

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PERUGIA: THE RING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

I watched them till my eyes were filled with tears because of the beauty and the pathos and the blessedness of it all. One by one they passed. First, an old woman, her white hair hidden beneath a gold kerchief, and a smile of rare peace on her gnarled face, pressed her lips to the casket and handed up her rosary that it might touch the shrine. She passed down with bent head. Next came a girl of the splendid Umbrian type, deep-chested and straight-limbed, her head carried high. She kissed the glass and lifted up her ring, maybe her wedding ring, then crossed herself, and passed on with trembling lips. Old men there were who touched the shrine with shaking fingers, and stumbled away into the cathedral to pray. Children were lifted up to kiss it. And there were others besides the kerchiefed women and their peasant husbands—people of the town, complacent burghers and their stout wives, and the dainty white-robed girls of Perugia. And nearly all passed out with uncertain lips as if they had been strangely moved.

Across the nave is the Miraculous Madonna which Giovanni Manni painted on a column. She is in a gilt frame, set about with silver hearts, which gleam in the darkness of the aisle like the smiles of those who have found joy in her. I do not wonder that the people of Perugia love this Madonna, for she is very beautiful. Her hands are raised in blessing, but to me her tender eyes are full of wonder, as though having no belief herself she marvelled at these worshippers for their faith, and loved them exceedingly because of it. We always found some poor, rough-headed peasants kneeling in the great ugly church before her, and ever she blessed them, and wondered at them, and seemed to give them peace.

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THE GRIFFON OF PERUGIA.

Perugia is a mediaeval paradox. When you stand upon her ramparts in the clear shining of the morning, and look across the hills and vales of Umbria, you wonder that the hot breath of war and the scent of blood should have reached her. For she stands at the head of two wide plains full of enchanted silence—the Valley of Spoleto with its many little cities starring the green hills, and the Valley of the Tiber which sweeps from the gates of Perugia southwards to Rome. The mountains, which close them in, are clothed with vines and olives, and swell softly like the many bosoms of Diana of the Ephesians. The valleys are a garden, and the hills roll softly to the horizon till they grow aerial in the distance and hang upon the heavens like fantastic clouds. Little white cities crown them or clamber up their slopes, and rivers wind down the valleys, with sunlight glinting on their waters, between the tall poplars swaying on their banks like girls who gather flowers by a stream. The high brown shoulder of Subasio, made sacred by its memories of Umbria's greatest saint, shuts off the bleak and hungry Appennines which clasp Gubbio and Gualdo and a hundred other little cities to their barren breasts. But here you have the landscape of the Quattrocento artists with the clear pale light and blue aerial hills which are the hall-mark of the Umbrian masters. Nor can you ever tire of watching it, for every day and every hour some subtle change sweeps over the face of this immortal loveliness; and it is always beautiful, whether you look across the sunlit mists at Assisi in a blue veil of cloud-shadow or see her smiling and rosy in the sunset, or whether you stand at night under the scented laurels of Perugia's *passeggiata*, and see the lights of distant hill-cities riding like ships upon the dim horizon of a soundless sea. It became a custom, almost an act of worship, to congregate upon the bulwarks of Perugia before the sun slipped behind the western hills, to watch the light pouring into the plain like liquid gold into a bowl of translucent glass, tinted all the colours of the prism. Even when night had drained this ancient chalice of the golden wine of the sun, and the lights of lonely farmsteads were twinkling on the hillsides, we were loth to leave it. [32]

Yet these fair valleys have been drenched with blood and scorched by fire; Hannibal and his Gauls and Africans gave battle to Flaminius, the maker of roads, by the lake of Thrasymene; they have been devastated by Goths and Lombards; the German Kings of Rome have harried them, and the history of Perugia itself has been one long tale of battle and murder. It is as though the Griffin of Perugia, the strange Etruscan beast which is to this day the device of the city, has never sheathed its talons in anything but human flesh. [33]

From the beginning Perugia fought fiercely for her freedom. Octavius wrestled for seven months outside her gates, and when he entered them was cheated of everything but honour; because a citizen, rather than yield his city to the first emperor, set fire to it, and stabbed himself in the holocaust which followed. Totila would not rest until he possessed her, and all through the Middle Ages she fought like a termagant with her neighbours; and the name of that griffin's brood, the Baglioni, was a terror throughout the Umbrian vales.^[4] [34]

It was Paul III. who brought her to her knees, and forced her to build his great fortress upon the palaces of her princes, and not long since she turned and rent it stone from stone, seeking to wipe out the old insult. [35]

But it is not only in the marvellous and peaceful beauty of her setting that Perugia is a paradox, for how is it possible to reconcile the pictures of Perugino and his great pupils—Raphael, Lo Spagna, Pinturicchio, and Eusebio di San Giorgio—with the awful deeds of the Oddi and the Baglioni; or the wailing of the Flagellants with the great soldiers who ruled this turbulent city—Biordo Michelotto, foully done to death by the wicked Abbot of Mommaggiore, and Braccio

Fortebraccio, the idol of the people? Paradox again! For the bones of Braccio Fortebraccio, which, to satisfy the vengeance of Martin V., were buried in unconsecrated ground, lie in a wooden box in the museum, and sigh to posterity through their melancholy inscription:

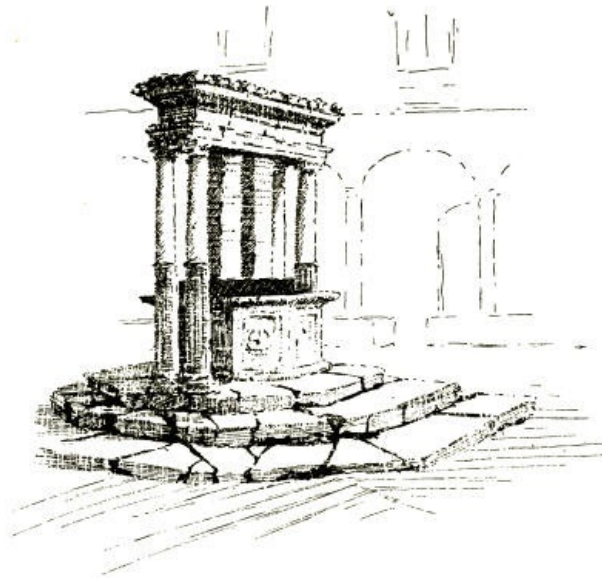
Hospes lege et luge.
Perusiae natum Montonium me exulem excepit,
Mars patriam Umbriam et Capuam mihi subegit.
Roma paruit; Italia theatrum; spectator orbis fuit.
At Aquila cadentem risit quem patria lugens brevi hac urna tegit.
Eheu! Mars extulit, Mors substulit.

Abi.

In the days when Perugino and his pupils were painting their calm-eyed Madonnas and saints with the blue Umbrian hills as the background to a world of ineffable peace, Perugia was drenched with blood daily, and every man carried his life in his hand. Yet hardly any of the artists of Perugia painted war, though here and there in their blue distances you see a little band of knights pricking out on the plain. Bonfigli, the master of Perugino, was the only one who cared to speak the truth; dear Bonfigli, who loved Perugia so well, and painted her with such naïve joy upon the walls of the Palazzo Comunale!

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FOUNTAIN IN THE CLOISTER OF S. PIETRO DE' CASSINENSI.

Trace Perugia in his frescoes, and you will wonder that it should be so little changed to-day. There is the slender minaret of San Pietro de' Cassinensi, and the great Gothic window of San Domenico, whose cloisters are to-day a barrack, and Sant'Ercolano soaring up beneath the city walls beside the ancient Porta Marzia. Here you see the Palazzo Comunale, one of the most sublime Gothic palaces in Italy, with its curving front and delicate fourteenth-century windows and majestic portal, and the loggia which Fortebraccio built by the cathedral. It is all much the same to-day as it was when Bonfigli painted his primitive wars, except that the citizens no longer dress in scarlet and fur, and that there are fewer towers in the city, and none at all on the circuit of the walls.

San Pietro de' Cassinensi is still the gracious church Bonfigli loved. We walked there one evening towards the hour of sunset. A little rainstorm, like a petulant burst of weeping, overtook us as we drew near, and we saw the yellow sunset and the cloud-shadows in the valley through a web of silver threads woven by the rain under the acacias. Inside, it was too dark to see the pictures with which the walls are covered, but we gathered an impression of space and dignity and richness. In the dim light we marvelled at the beauty of the choir-stalls, the intarsia, and the carving in which Stefano of Bergamo, and some say Raphael himself, gave free rein to fancy, and dreamed of delightful mythical beasts, and sphinxes with lovely faces, and a wealth of flowers and fruit and joyful little children. A mad world!

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Then the old monk, glad that we loved his treasures, opened the doors of the choir, so that we might see their exquisite workmanship in the fading light; and we looked down upon the incomparable Valley of Spoleto, with Assisi and her sister city, little Spello, on the skirts of Monte Subasio, and Foligno and Trevi rising out of rosy sunset mists. There is a small round hill below San Pietro, just such a little hill as Pinturicchio loved, encircled by a winding white road, and shadowed with slender trees. We almost looked to see his gay horsemen in red and blue and shining steel pricking down into the plain. There were still storms abroad, and the clouds drifted like great birds across the heavens, casting their shadows on the valley.

'This is the work of a great artist,' said the philosopher, with a little sigh of complete content. And indeed it was a worthy picture to be framed in those exquisite doors.

Night overtook us before we reached Sant'Ercolano, which looked more like a mosque than ever with its soaring arches in the twilight. We climbed up the steps beside it, and passed into the city through the Gate of True Dreams. At night Perugia of the Middle Ages awakes. As we wandered in her dark and silent streets, ill-lit and bridged with gloomy arches, our ears were tuned to catch the voices of the past.

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We divided our evenings. Sometimes we took our coffee and vermouth in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, where there was a band or music of sorts. At other times the poet had his way, and we visited a humble café opposite the Palazzo Comunale, and afterwards plunged into the dark and mysterious alleys of the mediaeval city. These were the evenings that I loved the most. In the distance we could hear the faint beat of music, and up and down the Corso flowed the gay tide of promenaders, which always turned before it reached us. Above us loomed the great Palazzo, which is justly Perugia's pride. In the gloom its brown and bulging walls would have been as forbidding as a fortress's but for the delicate tracery of its windows and its fantastic Gothic door, with the Griffin of the City gazing down hungrily into the night. The lovely fountain on which the Pisani and Arnolfo di Cambio lavished their genius was nothing but a beautiful silhouette against the loggia which Braccio Fortebraccio put up to shield his beloved citizens from the sun; and on the steps of the gaunt cathedral the statue of Papa Giulio III., with raised hand, blessed his careless people.

For Perugia is careless, beautifully and graciously careless. She has forgotten her woes, she has almost forgotten her old enemies; she has certainly forgotten to finish her cathedral. And yet when we sat at night in this romantic spot, where the art of four hundred years is garnered, we noticed a little yellow lamp flickering unsteadily above the cathedral door, no brighter than a glow-worm in comparison with the flare of electric light close at hand. The passers-by told us its history: how the people of Perugia, feeling the iron hand of the Farnese Pope, turned for help to Ridolfo, the last of the great Baglioni Princes. How Ridolfo failed them, and how in their extremity they turned to Christ, and besought Him with cries and sobs, tearing their garments and beating themselves like the Flagellants of the thirteenth century, to defend them against the terrible Paul III. They placed the crucifix above the door of San Lorenzo, where the light shines every night, and laid the keys of the city below the tortured feet of the Saviour. We know that their prayers were of no avail, yet every night in Perugia, that city of beautiful and romantic memories, they still light the little lantern over the cathedral door, where the crucifix was placed, when they crept with fear and trembling to the feet of Christ to ask for help against his Vicar, because Ridolfo Baglione, forsooth! had failed them in their necessity.

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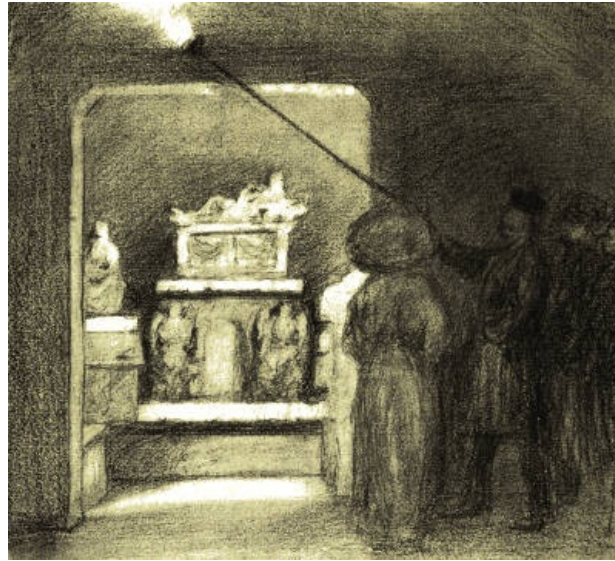
PERUGIA: PORTA EBURNEA.

A step from here and we found ourselves in the dark and memory-laden streets of the old town, with their vaulted passages and their blocked-up Doors of the Dead—those pitiful defences against the Common Enemy, in which Japan as well as Italy put faith.^[5] Of them all I loved the Via Vecchia best, with its air of mystery and its many arches linking the grim old palaces together. At night it was so gloomy there that we could barely find our way past the ancient Canonica in which so many of the Popes snatched a holiday from Rome; and as we went down the hill, always between great palaces, the darkness closed round us. Here and there a feeble light illuminated the steep path, but for the rest there was only the starlight to guide us until we came to the great Porta Augusta, which spanned the road majestically, full of the dignity of dead Etruria. Seen thus against the stars, with its graceful fifteenth-century loggia faintly illumined by a yellow light within, it was as impressive as the pylon of an Egyptian Temple.

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Or, if our steps took us another way, we passed the grim towers of mediaeval mansions, and presently found ourselves at the Baglioni's Gate of Dreams, or the Porta Mandola, as the Etruscan gate is called. Here, of a certainty, we would hear music, for whenever I have passed through that ancient gate at night, the silence has been broken by gay songs. Sometimes I have sat there far into the night, dreaming of the Baglioni and listening to the careless music of I knew not what laughter-loving house. For no one can live long in Perugia without being fired by the memory of those strange men whose strength and beauty was famous throughout Italy, and whose lovely names alone fit them to be the heroes of romance—Grifonetto, Astorre, Gismondo, Sermonetto, Morgante. If we believe their adoring chronicler, who though he traced their downfall could not speak of them without the stately prefix 'High and Mighty Lords,' their beauty was the beauty of the ancient Gods of Greece, and their courage was the courage of the Heroes. And who of us but has wept over the Great Betrayal, and the passing of the beautiful Grifonetto, forgiven at the last by Atalanta? And who has not loved the young Astorre in his Cloth of Gold bringing his fair young bride back to his home; and thrilled to read of the Homeric death of Sermonetto, 'so strong and gallant while he lived that tongue of man cannot tell the worth of him. One, in very truth, who never in all his days knew what fear was, and till the last word died on his lips ever showed himself the greater-hearted, as though he were not vanquished, but victor of his foe.'

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PERUGIA: THE TOMB OF THE VOLUMNII.

Early one hot and cloudless August morning, while the farmers with many cries of 'per la Madonna!' were urging their oxen up the hill to market in the shadow of the old grey University of Perugia, we drove down into the Valley of the Tiber to see the wonderful Etruscan tomb close to Ponte San Giovanni, which was the burial-place of the Volumnii. It is of special interest not only for its excellent preservation, but because it belongs to the Roman-Etruscan period, and forms the connecting link between the old Etruscan tombs and the famous Roman sepulchres a mile or two outside Rome on the Latin Way.

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A short descent took us into the subterranean vault at whose portal, cut out of the tufa rock, lay the ancient stone door, set aside now for a modern gate of iron. As we passed into the dark antechamber the chill damp air was cold as death after the cicala-haunted sunshine of the fields above. But while we strained our eyes to pierce the gloom the custode turned on an electric light hidden behind the cornice, and straightway we forgot everything in the wonder of the scene before us. In an inner chamber, resting upon their carved sarcophagi, we saw the inmates of the tomb grouped round the urn on which reposed the head of the house above two finely sculptured furies. On the coffered ceiling a gorgon's head, very terrible, with knotted snakes on its temples and horror in its face, stared down upon the dead. And as our eyes became accustomed to the dim light we discovered the strange symbolism of Etruria all round us. From the ceiling of the ante-chamber, on whose benches the relatives of the deceased reclined, to feast or watch beside their dead, little genii, exquisitely beautiful and light as butterflies, were hanging by the leaden chains by which they were suspended more than two thousand years ago. Over the doorway was a sun-disk, springing from the waves—fit emblem of the immortality of these Etruscans, springing from the waves of oblivion which for so many centuries washed over them. But there was none of the colour which makes beautiful the Tombs of Egypt, and there was hardly the same air of eternity. In the long corridors of the Royal Tombs of the Pharaohs there is an archaic defiance as of a life long since forgotten and lost in the dust of centuries. Here the life is of yesterday; we could almost hear the heart of Greece and Rome beating gaily in a young world, and the languid tread of the effete Etruscans, whose curious symbolism at once repels and mystifies, with its red lascivious serpents, its demons and furies, its beautiful and reluctant Medusas, and its solemn mockery of the feasting dead.

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TODI

When I think of Todi the first things that I remember are the golden tassels of the corn against the sky, and the blue chicory which starred the dusty roadside as we drove to her from Perugia across the young Tiber. For little Todi, enthroned on her steep hill, has no railway within thirty-three miles of her gates; and if you do not wish to ravish the leagues which separate her from the world by motor, you can only reach her after many hours spent in the exquisite and touching beauty of the Umbrian Vale. She is one of those forgotten cities which are still to be found on the hills of Italy. The years have trampled lightly within her ancient walls; she has no trains, no jangling trams, very few motors except the grey automobile from Perugia which bursts noisily into the heart of her every day. She is a charmed city, whose name is painted on a signboard outside the gates lest the traveller should pass her by unwittingly. Within her walls we shook the dust of a work-a-day world from our feet, and forgot its turmoil in the music of her bells, which tell the passing hours with the loving persistence of those grown old in labour. [46]

To many people Todi is a mere horizon of towers on the crest of a distant hill. To me she is the dwelling-place of happiness. And because I am a little jealous for Todi, and would have you love her as I loved her, having watched her grow in beauty as the miles decreased between us, I beg your patience while we thread the plain between Perugia and Tuder of the Umbrians.

It was a day of sun and shadow, an ideal morning for an expedition into Arcady, and we found the beauty of a young world down in the Valley of the Tiber. The jangle of harness-bells called us early from our breakfast, and the air was like wine cooled with snow as we drove down Perugia's four-mile hill, past her great churches, and on to the long white road where the vines are linked together for miles in festoons of archaic grace. The only people that we met were peasants toiling barefoot in the sun. Their olive skins were deepened to pomegranate; they had lithe figures; their finely moulded heads were set on long, slender necks; and when we saw them working under the olives, or coming towards us along the dusty road from some village fair, leading the milk-white oxen whose horns were bound with scarlet fillets, we knew that these were the ideal shepherds among whom the Gods of Greece were content to dwell. Their white homesteads rose from fields of maize and corn, and among the vineyards and olive-gardens were crops of tomatoes and hemp and pumpkins, and always figs and mulberries, for Umbria is the land of plenty, the home of Maia, and of Hermes,^[6] her light-hearted son. The vines which linked the mountains to the plain had the beauty of a classic frieze, and when our eyes turned from the dappled hills we saw flowers weaving a multi-coloured web on the loom of dusty grass by the roadside—purple loosestrife and scabious, blue chicory, sugamele and rare borage, poppies and pink veronica, yellow spanocchi, dandelions, and golden broom. All the dyes of the East were woven there; and brambles and blossoming clematis stretched out long swaying arms towards the little shrines with which the fields were strewn, or twined a crown of flowers and thorns about the rust-worn symbols of the Passion on a lonely crucifix. [47]

Little cities which had been hidden in the folds of the valley grew into our horizon—Torgiano, towering on our left, Deruta and Ripa Bianca. Our road, which had run in a straight line across the plain from the foot of Perugia's hill, crossed the Tiber on a bridge with a fifteenth-century gate-tower, and turned along the banks of the river. Tall Lombard poplars lingered on its brink, and peasant women in gay kerchiefs were washing linen in its green water. Across the valley we could see Perugia, most beautiful of all hill-cities, smiling in the sunshine, already far away; and in front across a sea of lesser hills rose Todi, perched on her mountain like a city in a fairy-tale, which surely could be reached by no other way than on the wings of a genie! [48]

We rested our horses at Deruta, and clambered up into its precipitous streets. It is a mere hamlet, though a great deal of majolica has been made here for the last three hundred years, and it is extremely picturesque, perched high over the Tiber. Deruta is like a piece of its own pottery. It is built of gray stone, much the same colour as the unglazed plates which we saw drying on the walls, and its people dress in bright colours like the pigments on the finished ware. Every one goes barefoot here, and the old women toil up the steep stair-streets with their sandals slung over their arms, and huge bundles of sticks or fodder on their backs. And apart from its picturesqueness Deruta is well worth a visit for the sake of a beautiful fresco by Caporale in Sant'Antonio Abbate.

After Deruta the Umbrian Valley was all vineyards and olive-groves and fig-trees and acacias. Sometimes the Tiber was close beside us like a blue ribbon dividing us from the plain as we jangled through the cicala-haunted woods on the hillside; at others we could only trace it among the vineyards by the tall reedy poplars which followed its winding course.

The day grew hotter; the song of the cicalas swelled up like an anthem, and the butterflies drowsed upon the flowers. Presently we came to a wayside fountain, where a lovely girl with a jar of water poised on her head was talking to a young herdsman, beautiful as an Apollo, who was watering his oxen. There was a garden of ancient olives on the hillside above, and a welcome shade for our horses in the road. And because we had seen Todi on her hill, and that she was beautiful, we ate our lunch and took our siesta there under the olives in the scented air. Near at hand a boy was singing like a lover at his work; there were flowers at our feet, and cicalas fluting in the silver foliage overhead. The great white oxen were still drinking at the fountain, and their bells made pleasant music; sometimes a woman with a water-jar on her head came from the village, or a peasant rode by on his mule. It was a magic day. We had had so many hours of joy, so many hours of sun and wind and beautiful primitive things, that we had left care behind us. As we lay there on the soft earth and watched the cloud-shadows sweeping over the hills, we forgot the toil of life; we no longer heard the world throbbing its soul away in its great cities. The voice [49]

of the wind mingled with the shimmering music of summer—the insects, the song of the boy at work, and the bells of the oxen, in a paean of joy. For Umbria is like that garden in which Siddârtha dwelt with Yasôdara, shut off from all ugly and painful things. If you look deep enough you will assuredly find death, even as Siddârtha did—the hawk preying upon the small bird, the small bird upon the gnat, and you will see the sweat upon the oxen as they strain in the sun. You may find the world as sad a place, as full of pain and toil as he did, or you may find it just such a mirror of God's Love as did Francis, the chief of Umbrian saints. Here the butterflies seem to dance more gayly than they do elsewhere, the trees grow free, the flowers stretch upwards to the sun; no questions vex you when you see a wayside shrine. In the garden of Umbria there are only God and Nature, the Soul of Things is at ease.

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So, with our hearts attuned to her simplicity, we came to Todi on the top of her hill, with her towers and walls, and her winds and clouds. We caught her asleep in the siesta hour. There was no one astir when we drove into her beautiful golden piazza, where the Middle Ages have never been forgotten: even to-day it is full of mediaeval grace, with its two great palaces and its exquisite cathedral. But if we had come to her in the busy morning stir of the market we could still have found the Middle Ages there, for the peasants ride in on the old leather saddles picked out in brass and scarlet that we see in fifteenth-century frescoes; the asses bear on panniers barrels, or huge bundles of rough wood; the mules are harnessed with bells and tassels, three abreast, so that they straggle across the narrow road as they strain up the hill, and all the women carry their marketing on their heads. The cathedral of Todi is one of the gems of Umbrian architecture. It is a great golden church with beautiful and very ancient doors, and an ornate rose window; it soars above the piazza on a wide flight of steps which not even a gigantic cinematograph advertisement can rob of dignity. Below its southern wall is a row of shabby little shops where the people sit at work in their doorways, but the northern side has flying buttresses and a cornice of fantastic heads of men and birds and beasts; and there is a pleasing baroque arch with shallow, grass-grown steps leading down to the piazza.

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DETAILS FROM THE APSE OF THE CATHEDRAL OF TODI.

Like her cathedral Todi is full of quaint and beautiful things. She is an artist's city, solitary and beautiful, unexpectedly rich and frankly poor. Once away from her stately piazza with its three great buildings, which are like three jewels in the crown of King Cophetua's Beggar Maid, we found her humble and out of elbows. Her old brown houses bulged out over the steep little streets, or towered like lean fortresses on her city wall, with all manner of green things, even fig-trees, growing out of them. From below they seemed to be piled up one on the top of the other like children's bricks. The vineyards and olive-gardens, which swept up the hillside, forced entrances at every point; and on the crest of the hill among her palaces was one slender cypress spire, soaring up as though Nature herself must climb through this clear air to heaven. She had long avenues of acacias and flowering laurels, and ancient gateways like the Porta Aurea, through which we had a vista of mediaeval towers, and a Perugino landscape of green valleys with a river winding away to the amphitheatre of blue hills. Here and there in her walls were courses of splendid masonry, Umbrian perhaps, and on the eastern side of the town were four gigantic niches of a Roman basilica. But as in most Umbrian cities, it was the Middle Ages that left Todi her chief treasures, her stately palaces and her cathedral; and further down the hillside, on a flight of earthquake-riven steps, San Fortunato, which was the home of the Antipope Nicholas v. in the days when rebellious little Todi was a thorn in the side of the papacy, and Lewis of Bavaria made her his headquarters. Fra Jacopone of Todi, the author of *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, is said to be buried in this church, but though we looked for it we could not find his

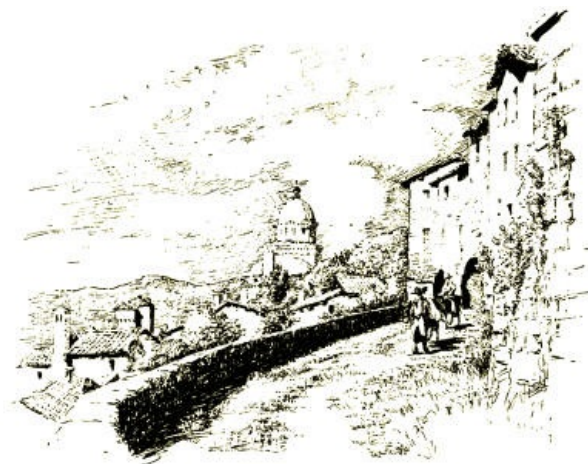
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tomb.

All these things count as nothing in the eyes of the Todesi, for Todi boasts a pilgrimage church; and a pilgrimage church, albeit of the sixteenth century, is an acquisition not to be despised by any city however ancient and picturesque. But in truth Santa Maria della Consolazione is a lovely church, a *capolavoro* of architecture, and it soars up like a great golden gourd ripened to perfection on the green hillside. We came to it through the Porta Aurea along an avenue of flowering laurels, and its fair proportions gave us a complete sense of satisfaction. As we drew near, its clustered domes dwarfed the amphitheatre of hills. Inside it was airy and gracious, a bubble of light; but its sixteenth-century paganism, which is always the paganism of secular buildings rather than of temples, and its overgrown apostles in the niches that were meant for gods, spoilt its appeal, to the Protestant mind at any rate, as a house of prayer. What is it, I wonder, that makes it easy for the Protestant to worship in Gothic or Romanesque churches, and to respond to the appeal of basilicas like Santa Maria Maggiore or San Clemente in Rome, while sixteenth-century churches still remain the ideal ecclesiastical building to the majority of Roman Catholics? Is it that they all bear the image of St. Peter's and the Vatican in their minds? They argue that at least under the spacious cupolas of the renaissance they have light and space. And it is logic, for Gothic cathedrals are dim and full of shadows. But I could say my prayers more easily in the baths of Caracalla, where the sun slanting over the broken walls has a trick of making mist like floods of incense, and the birds chant all day long, than in St. Peter's, for all its fragrant services. And I doubt if any Catholics could be moved to such an ecstasy of worship in the dusk of Milan Cathedral, when the organ throbs through the aisles at Vespers, as we have seen them in many of the late pilgrimage churches of Italy, like Santa Maria of Todi or the great basilica of the Casa Santa at Loreto.

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TODI: S. MARIA DELLA CONSOLAZIONE.

Like all the hill-cities of Umbria, one of Todi's chief charms is the beauty of her views. Below my bedroom window in the Hotel Risorgimento the old brown roofs of Todi clambered so eagerly down the slope that each one was at least two stories below the one above. Here and there were little gardens full of tamarisks and oleanders and morning glories. To the left rose San Fortunato, high on its broken flight of steps, like a grim fortress; and below it was the bastion of the public garden, with its round acacia trees which were always vibrant with the song of cicalas. In the deep valley were grey-towered farms with loggias and outside stairways, and a great fortified convent with the stations of the Cross climbing up to its gates in a cypress avenue. Through the midst the Tiber wound very slowly like a ribbon, and now the sunlight caught it, and we could see the blue water, and now we could only trace it by its tall Lombard poplars. But always it turned towards the distant hills which rose the one behind the other, fold on fold, and full of changing lights, towards Rome. At night it was still and mysterious. The steep hillside was wrapped in darkness. There was no moon, and though the sky was powdered thickly with stars they gave no light to see the valley by. Far below I could hear the humming of the night crickets; they sounded sleepy too. And up above, San Fortunato loomed almost transparently in the heavens, and the Milky Way shone like a mist of stars.

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We found Arcady again down in the valleys as we drove back to Perugia across the Umbrian plain. There had been a fair at some neighbouring village, and the road was full of peasants coming back with cortèges of white oxen and calves, which had bells on their throats, and collars of scarlet and brass, and crimson fillets.

Perugia lay before us all the way, with her towers and majestic walls and the slim campanile of San Pietro, which looks like an obelisk from the plain. As we drove along the straight white road we saw the cities of the Valley of Spoleto rising like stars upon their hills. At each turn fresh mountains were disclosed with fresh cities on their skirts, pink in the evening sun. We were tired after the heat of the day, and silent. The harness-bells and the clipping sound of hoofs made an agreeable accompaniment to our thoughts. We climbed up slowly through the sunset, looking now at the hills, now at the olive-gardens that stretched away from the road, their leaves as silver as a flight of butterflies in the sunlight; now idly watching the long-legged shadows of the horses on the flowery bank. And all the way the cicalas were singing by the roadside, and we bore the memory of fragrant sunlit hours in our hearts. Half unconsciously, and like a message from the eternal hills, St. Paul's words came into my mind: 'Whatsoever thing is good, whatsoever thing is pure, whatsoever thing is lovely, whatsoever thing is of good report, if there be any virtue or if

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there be any truth, think on these things.' They were like an answer to the riddle which all men ask of Fate. But indeed in this Umbrian garden they are the text of everyday life, for in its byways it is easy to catch the spirit of St. Francis as he passed, barefoot and meanly clad, singing the praise of God and all His creatures.

As we drove up the last steep incline the plain was filled with light. Overhead the clouds were growing rosy. Assisi was a city of gold. And to the horizon rolled the Umbrian hills, purple and blue, and very far away like jade, airy and transparent, in the luminous space which Perugino loved to paint.

SIENA AND THE PALIO

It was the poet who persuaded us to go to Siena to see the Palio run in honour of Our Lady of Mid-August. We were still in Perugia enjoying the languid Umbrian summer, when he announced his intention of leaving the next day for Siena.

'What *is* the Palio?' asked the philosopher. 'August will be very hot in Siena, and nothing could be more beautiful than this'—he waved his hand towards the white walls of Assisi, and the great dome of Santa Maria degli Angeli, floating like a lotus bud above the morning mists, which filled the valley between Perugia and Monte Subasio.

'It is so difficult to define,' said the poet. 'When you say, "What is the Palio?" you give me the wherewithal to write a book. If I told you that it was a race in honour of the Virgin Mary, ridden bareback round the chief piazza of Siena, by jockeys in mediaeval costume, who try to club each other off the course, you would probably prefer to stay here in Perugia. If I told you that it was a pageant you would be sure to say that you have seen better at Olympia.'

He was silent for a moment.

'But it is more than that. Imagine a city of Gothic palaces, a little flushed hill-city, sleeping among vineyards and olive-gardens, sleeping and sleeping like a girl bewitched. And then imagine the soul of her awaking for a few hours—a day perhaps—in the summer of the year. That is Siena, dear gay Siena, with her indomitable spirit and her fickle careless heart, with her pageants and her saints, and her allegiance to Madonna. For first and foremost Siena is the city of the Virgin Mary. There they think of her not only as the Mother of God, but as their own liege sovereign; even the Standard of the City, the black and white Balzana, is emblematic "of the purity and humility of the Virgin, or of those joyful and sorrowful mysteries whereby, as she told St. Bridget, her life was ever divided between happiness and grief."

'As for the Palio, if you would appreciate it you must understand something of the religion of the Middle Ages, which was at its best an inspiration, capable of producing St. Francis and St. Catherine, and at its worst of superstitions which found vent in wild orgies of penance, and countenanced the crusade against the Albigenses. You must have thrilled to stories of wild games, like the Florentine *Giuoco del Calcio* or Perugia's *Battaglia de' Sassi*, in which the players lost their limbs and not infrequently their lives. And lastly, you must appreciate the intense patriotism which the men of Siena feel for their *contrade*, or divisions of the city, which I can best describe as parishes; though it is difficult to say whether, in the first place, the boundaries were parochial or military.

'It is not merely a pageant, though as a pageant it is superlative; it is the last flicker of the spirit of the Middle Ages. And for my part I love it, because the Sieneese are still so mediaeval at heart. And that is why there is no city in Italy more fitted to be illumined by the torch of the Middle Ages than Siena. For Siena, notwithstanding the fact that she bred some of the greatest Renaissance popes, was comparatively untouched by the wave of paganism which swept over Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She still has whole streets of Gothic palaces; her saints are still revered with the almost child-like simplicity of the Middle Ages; she still boasts the special protection of the Blessed Virgin; and in the midst of all her fervour she still nurses her old feuds, not only with her ancient enemies, the Florentines, but between her own *contrade*.'

It was dark and the heavens were full of stars when we bade good-bye to our kind host of the Perugian inn, and boarded the electric tram that was to take us down to the station. We had chosen an early train so as to avoid travelling in the heat of the day, but we found the car already full of thrifty Italians bent on making hay before the sun shone.



SIENA: BANNER-HOLDER.

We left at dawn, in the clear pale light which floods the Umbrian plain when the world is yet a little grey, and Perugia is nothing but a lovely outline on the crest of her hill. This is the light that Perugino loved, the shadowless herald of the day, full of the mystery of the morning. The world woke slowly from her pale slumber in the arms of night; the sky deepened from beryl to gold. We found Thrasymene illumined with rosy morning fires, her hills empurpled, and the towers of her little cities aflame with sunrise. It seemed as though immortal memories, great desires, and burnt-out passions struggled for utterance there. How Hannibal's tired eyes must have ached to possess so fair a land! Yet it is likely that he never saw the passionate dawn wooing the lake with plumes of rose and gold, as we did; for we know that on the fateful day when he waited to give battle to Flaminius by the shore of Thrasymene, the mists which did him such signal service filled up the hollow like a curtain hung from one range of mountains to the other.

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So we came through Tuscany to Siena, and found her all agog with excitement for the Palio, with pennons flying and music echoing down her streets, and her inns already full to overflowing.

Ah, Siena, with your gaunt red palaces and your lily tower, and your ineffectual walls which thread the vineyards like old men dreaming life away in memories, it is you who are the heart of Tuscany! You are not pale and beautiful like Florence, not such a great lady; nor have you the silent grace of Pisa, but how lovable, how intimate you are! Their dignity would ill become you with your stormy and undignified past, of which De Commines said: 'La Ville est de tout temps en partialité, et se gouverne plus follement qu'aucune Ville d'Italie.'



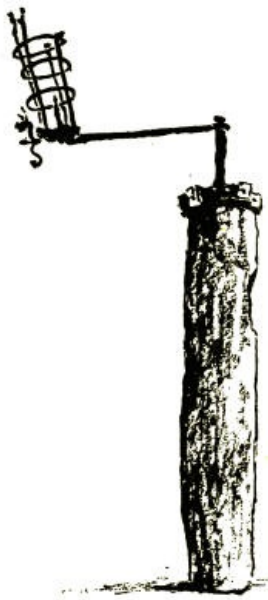
SIENA: TORRE DEL MANGIA.

But in no other place is the traveller welcomed with such song and laughter as in Siena, when she holds high festival. I, who have only seen her in her Palio days, cannot think that life is ever dull or languid in her streets and *piazze*. I have peopled her with mediaeval ghosts since that day in mid-August when I woke and found them in possession. At every sound of music I look round for silken banners, and pretty boys in doublet and hose escorting steel-clad warriors, or the gay spendthrifts of whom Folgore of San Gimignano sang. For on that day I caught a glimpse of the Middle Ages, with their knights and pages and their companies of men-at-arms. I heard the brave music of their drums, and saw the old Siena, ruddy and black-browed, clamouring loud-voiced in the Piazza del Campo—a happy child one moment, and the next a bundle of conflicting passions, remembering century-old grievances, and raking up dead feuds to make a Tuscan holiday.

It was in the Piazza del Campo, or to give it its modern name which does not please me half as much, the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, that I grew to know Siena best. Here she was the city of the Quattrocento, of which I love to dream, fantastic and beautiful, with untold possibilities lurking behind the walls of her tall red palaces. The Campo lies in the hollow where the three hills of Siena meet, and its shape is an irregular semi-circle. I can best describe it by saying that it is like an enormous cockle, slightly concave—rose-coloured, for it is paved with red brick—and with ribs or flutings of grey stone which converge towards the deepest hollow in front of the Palazzo Pubblico. Encircle this by a wide, flagged roadway, and ring it round with noble palaces, many of them of great beauty, with Gothic arch and lancet window. At the deepest hollow of the shell build up a palace for the rulers of the most unruly republic in the whole peninsula. Fashion it of exceeding beauty with a façade which follows the curve of the piazza. Build it of Siena's red brick; break its long lines with Gothic windows cloven by slender columns; grace it with magnificent arched doors; decorate it with scutcheons and crests; and high on its wall place the golden monogram of Holy Flame which Bernardino, Siena's gentlest saint, identified with his life.

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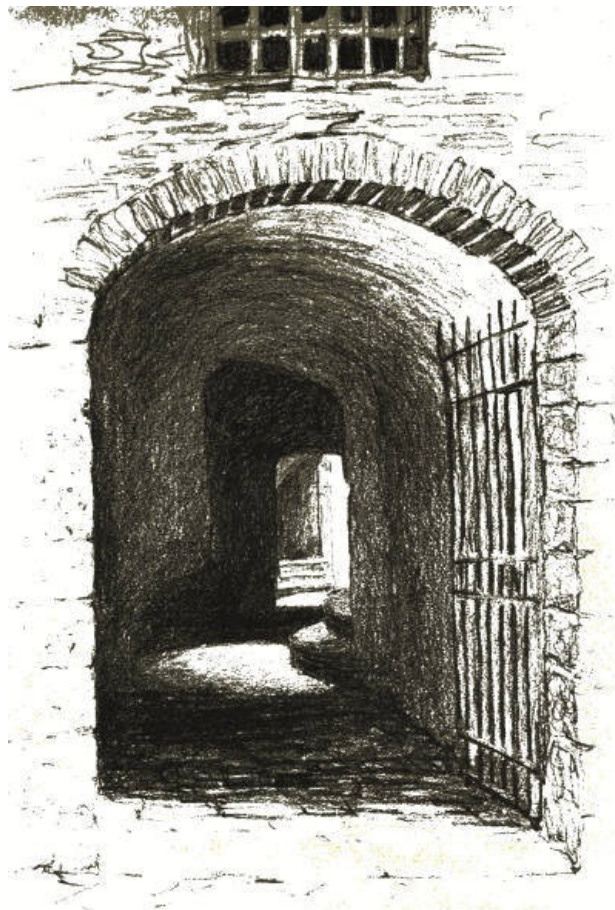
SIENA: TORCH-REST.

up to the stars more like a lily than ever with the moonlight silvering its machicolations. And we remembered that in the morning we had seen it with its head in the drifting clouds, and the sunlight below.

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But it was not only for its mediaeval beauty that we loved the Campo. This is Siena's heart. Here she has fought and loved and hated and rejoiced, ay, and died too. And if her stones have been too often stained with blood in civil warfare she has gentler memories—here Provenzano Salvani, the victor of Monte Aperto, cast all dignity aside 'when at his glory's topmost height,' and begged for alms to ransom a friend who languished in some foreign prison; here Bernardino preached so eloquently of Divine Love that he almost moved the unregenerate young Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, afterwards Pius II., to repentance. And here, while the armies of Spain were beleaguering their city, and they were faint for food, the youths of Siena came to play their games till they were called back to guard the city walls, to the joy and amazement of Blaise de Montluc, the French Governor, who never tired of praising the Sienese for their chivalry and the courage and beauty of their women.

Here, too, in a few days' time, came Siena and all the strangers that were within her gates to see the Palio!



A STREET IN SIENA.

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The *Prove* were run first. Early in the week a sandtrack was prepared, and as if by magic an amphitheatre of seats sprang up round the piazza. There are six of these *prove*, or trial races, for the selection of horses for the Palio; and they are run on the evening of the 13th, the morning and evening of the two following days, and the morning of the 16th of August.^[7] The Palio festivities really begin on the 13th of August, for although the Sienese do not attend the *prove* in great numbers there are generally some thousand spectators who shout themselves hoarse with excitement; and feeling sometimes runs high when there is rivalry between ancient enemies like the *contrade* of the Oca and the Torre.

On that morning, too, the streets are full of peasants driving their white oxen in pairs before them to the annual fair, which is still held outside the Porta Camollia in honour of our Lady of Mid-August. It has dwindled considerably from the seven days' *fiera* which marked the occasion in the Middle Ages, but it is still a picturesque sight. The peasants drive standing up, like Roman charioteers, behind their milk-white steers, whose heads are bound with scarlet fillets, and their soft dewlaps girdled by a bell. The sellers of water-melons do a thriving business with the thirsty drovers, and the piazza is a sea of tossing horns and smooth white backs from the battlemented city wall to the column which marks the spot where Leonora of Portugal met her betrothed, the Emperor Frederick III.

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On Sunday Siena was comparatively quiet, although there were *prove* in the Piazza del Campo both morning and evening, and a general air of merriment throughout the city. We heard mass in the cathedral where the banners of the various *contrade* hung from the piers of the nave; and the wonderful graffito pavement which, according to a seventeenth-century custom, is covered with boards for the rest of the year to preserve it from injury, was laid bare. And then we went down to Fontebranda to see how the *Contrada* of the Oca, Saint Catherine's *contrada*, was preparing for the Palio. We found it delightfully confident of victory. The sacristan of Saint Catherine's house took us into the chapel which was once her father's workshop, and would not let us go until we had heard the history of the many Palii which the victorious Oca had won in past years—assisted no doubt by the prayers of Santa Caterina in heaven to the holy Mother of God.



SIENA: S. DOMENICO AND THE VIA BENINCASA.

The philosopher loves Fontebranda. To him it is the most romantic spot in Siena. It is certainly one of the most picturesque, whether you stand at the head of the steep Via Benincasa and see San Domenico's gaunt red walls towering above its houses, or whether you look towards the city from the church. A winding road leads up through gardens from the Valley of Fontebranda to the city gate. Above the wall tall, green-shuttered palaces rise tier on tier to the cathedral, whose

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delicately arcaded dome and tower crown the hill. To the right the loggia'd houses of the tanners sweep down the Via Benincasa to Fontebranda's mediaeval fountain; and the keen, unpleasant smell of the tanneries, which was one of the first things we noticed in Siena, is everywhere. Fontebranda is changed but little since the days when Saint Catherine lived there with her parents. Then as now it was full of tanneries, then as now the men worked half in their dark windowless shops and half out in the street: in her day the loggia'd houses were here; the yellow skins were drying in the road; and San Domenico, up whose hill she toiled to prayer, was the same grim fortress-church as now.

But I do not love Saint Catherine, her warlike spirit notwithstanding; nor do I love Sodoma's frescoes of her in the great church on the hill. And the Sienese themselves, though they give her great honour, do not seem to love her as they love the simple Bernardino. Splendid as her chapel is, magnificent as are her festas, she seems to be less in the imagination of Siena than Saint Bernardino, whose gentle life followed closely on hers as though the *genius loci* dared not trust her unruly people through that stormy century without a guiding spirit. See on how many houses is his seal of holy Flame! And how brightly it burns on the Palazzo Pubblico, especially towards nightfall, when the setting sun gilds the façade and fires the sacred monogram.

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'Respect is what we owe, love what we give.' And so I would leave the philosopher to St. Catherine and his Fontebranda, and come to San Francesco and the little chapel beside it where San Bernardino prayed. The Sienese have lavished lovely things upon this oratory of the ardent boy, who forsook all and followed Francis in the love of Christ. Sodoma, Pacchia and Beccafumi have glorified it, and peopled its walls with the beautiful and mystic-eyed women of the Renaissance. But though they have enriched it, I am glad that circumstance has kept St. Francis' great church as it was first conceived—a bare and solemn building—a church for the followers of the man who loved poverty and simplicity, because through them he saw the way to God. Even now I would have it cleared of its black and white Sienese stripings; but its wide empty nave, the noble chapels of its transepts, its ruined islands of fresco, its stillness and its great simplicity, make it beautiful.

San Francesco stands on the southern spur of the city, and from the ancient Porta Ovale in the valley below, a country road leads through gardens and cypress-woods to the Convent of the Osservanza, in which Pandolfo Petrucci the Magnificent, one of Siena's great failures, lies buried. The brother who took us over the church showed us the cell of Bernardino with its ancient wooden door nibbled almost to destruction by ardent pilgrims. And from a window in the old monastery we looked across the valley of pines and cypresses to Siena, painted against a glowing sunset sky. Seen thus across the fruitful Tuscan vale she was still the City Beautiful which inspired San Bernardino to a passion of eloquence on that long-distant summer day, early in the fifteenth century, when he climbed up into a tree and addressed the astonished multitudes 'in words so inflamed with divine love, that while many wept, there were some that deemed him mad.' Then as now her towers, though there were many more in Bernardino's city, were like the hands of suppliants held up to heaven; then as now the great dome and Campanile of Santa Maria Assunta set the seal of Madonna over her troubled people.

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We looked long. In the church overhead the monks were intoning, and the song of the cicadas floated up from the fragrant cypress-woods as though they too were praising God. The sun went down, and little white wraiths of mist rose from the valley. The air blew chill. When we departed the monks had long ago ceased chanting, and the insects had folded their wings. But as we hastened through the vineyards where the mists fled from us like pale ghosts, the lights of the city twinkled a welcome to us through the gathering dusk. And so we came again into the warm heart of Siena.

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Boom! Boom! Boom!

It was different from any other sound. At first I thought it was a part of my dreams, for it vibrated over the city like an orchestra of bells.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Then I remembered, and sprang out of bed. It was the 16th of August, the day of the Palio, and that deep music whose echoes were throbbing round the countryside was the voice of Siena waking from her long slumber. It was the first time that I had heard it, and my heart beat faster, for the tocsin of La Mangia is nearly always silent now, although it played such a great part in the mediaeval history of Siena when it used to call her citizens to arms in the name of God and the Virgin Mary!

My window looked down on a silent street winding between tall shuttered palaces. As a rule it was empty except for the milk-woman going from door to door in her big straw hat, and a worn-out Comacine lion which grinned sardonically at me from an ancient tower opposite. But to-day peasants were pouring up the hill—the men in their black wide-awakes and Sunday clothes, and the women, old and young alike, in their silly Tuscan hats which frivel with every breath of wind, and are never as becoming as the lovely head-kerchiefs of the Umbrians. They are worn on the backs of the heads; the soft brims, which are not wired, form an aureole of pale-coloured straw, and present a deliciously incongruous effect when they frame withered faces wrinkled like walnut-shells. I love the bent old women of Siena who look as if they had forgotten to be old with their ribbons and flowers and their coquettish young hats!



SIENA FROM THE CONVENTO DELL' OSSERVANZA.

Yes, Siena was awaking from her slumber. I even fancied that there was a glint of suppressed laughter in the eye (he had only one eye, the other was filled with lichen) of my Comacine friend across the street. Already the city was like a hive, and the sound of a distant crowd was like the humming of many insects. Every inn had been full for days, and the people were still pouring in from all directions.

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At nine o'clock we went to see the last of the *prove* from the balcony which we had hired from that very agreeable haberdasher, Signor Tizzi, who has a shop almost opposite the Palazzo Comunale. It was hot, and the people down in the piazza were crowded together in the shade of the Torre del Mangia, which lay across the square like the shadow on a sundial. The whole scene was more like a dream than a real happening. In the dark cortile of the Palazzo Pubblico we could see the jockeys in fantastic parti-coloured suits, waiting for gun-fire; and the fierce white sunlight beat on the piazza, empty except for the chattering, gesticulating belt of humanity in the shadow of the Mangia.

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Bang! went the gun. And with a rattle of drums the *fantini* (jockeys) came out to run their mad race, to the accompaniment of the thunder of iron hoofs on baked sand, and the ceaseless shouting of the good Sienese.

After the excitement had subsided somewhat we pushed our way through the crowded streets to the cathedral. It was empty to-day, although yesterday, on the Festival of the Assumption, it had been full of glorious living colour. Then the Palio was hanging from the arch of the transept, and a great throng filled the aisle. Then, too, the miraculous Madonna delle Grazie, she to whom the distracted Sienese dedicated their city on the eve of Monte Aperto, was shown to the people; and the peasants, ever the last to lose faith, knelt at her shrine all day. As a rule I do not love the cathedral of Siena, notwithstanding its glorious pavement, and rich carving, and the Pisani's exquisite pulpit whose equal is not to be found in Italy. The great church's black and white stripings within and without make the eyes ache, and the over-elaborated façade is only beautiful by moonlight. But when High Mass is being celebrated with mediaeval splendour within its walls, and a great press throngs the aisles, it is bewilderingly rich. And we found it easy to forgive even the zebra stripings when we saw the poor people of the campagna praying to their miraculous Madonna behind the veil of sunlight which poured down from the clerestory and made a Holy of Holies of the Cappella del Voto.

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That morning we paid another visit to the famous Library of the Duomo, which Francesco Piccolomini commissioned Pinturicchio to paint in honour of his uncle Aeneas Sylvius, for we could think of no better preparation for the Palio than studying this Quattrocento pageantry. We are told that in his contract Cardinal Francesco inserted a special clause, insisting that the Umbrian artist should use a certain quantity of gold and ultramarine and crimson in his decorations. And truly Pinturicchio has lavished colour on this splendid monument to the glories of the Humanist Pope, who was a typical expression of his age in everything, except in his great revival of the Middle Ages, when he tried to lead a crusade against the Turks. The room is full of sunlight and the sheen of gold and precious stones, and Pinturicchio seems to have caught the world in its morning, with gay youths and maidens walking on the flower-starred grass, and swift wild-geese high on the wing through the clear blue heavens. But except in the exquisite panel where the young Emperor meets his beautiful betrothed outside the Porta Camollia, he is not such a poet here as he is in the Appartamenti Borgia at Rome, though he is much gayer. All the more suited to Siena, whose art was summed up by Lanzi as 'lieta scuola fra lieto popolo'; forgetting, so it seems, the many Massacres of the Infants scattered by Matteo di Giovanni through the Sienese churches, which are revolting in their cruelty and ugliness!

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By noon-time Siena was in a state of wild excitement. We had been warned that the Porcupine had a good chance of winning the race because its *contrada* had drawn the horse which won the July Palio. So after lunch we drove down to Santa Maria dell'Istrice, which is a tiny church with a picturesque Renaissance belfry in the Via Camollia. There were flags in the Via Cavour, and the great Palazzo Salimbeni was hung with banners, and had velvet cloths embroidered with the crest of the Montone hanging from its Gothic windows. The torch-rests and banner-holders in the public squares each carried the proud silken banners of their *contrade*, and the whole city masqueraded under their different emblems—now the Giraffe, scarlet and white; further on the Caterpillar, green and yellow and blue; then the Dragon and the Wolf; and, at last, the Porcupine.

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SIENESE YOUTHS IN PALIO DRESS.

In the chapel we found three men at arms and two *alfieri* in parti-coloured hose and jerkins of magenta velvet, slashed with black and white. Orestes, the *fantino*, was padding his helmet in the little cupboard of a sacristy. He was a tall, blue-eyed man, and looked superb in his bravery of velvet and satin and lace, with long-toed velvet boots and shining helmet. He showed us the heavy wooden jockey cap with painted colours which he was to wear in the race, to protect his head from the blows of the other *fantini*; and, as he told us with a shrug, he expected some, because, thanks to Saint Anthony, his horse was undoubtedly the best, and every one expected him to win.

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The poor Captain who was to head the cortège was in a wretched plight. He was being girded into his armour, and it was not a dignified process. The day was hot, and the chain mail would not meet. Eventually some one lent him a boot-lace or a piece of string, I forget which, and we left him, to see the *alfieri*^[8] tossing their banners out in the street.

After a long delay the knight appeared, looking as dignified and composed as if he had been wrestling in the spirit rather than in the flesh before the altar of his chapel. And while the procession was forming up we drove on to San Pietro della Magione, where the Horse of the Porcupine is always blessed. The Via Camollia, although it is one of the main streets of Siena, is so narrow here that we had perforce to drive past La Magione to the city gates, where it widens out into a piazza, before we could turn and so drive back again.

La Magione has a flight of steps leading up to a terrace. It is a very ancient church, brown and shabby, and many a Templar's horse has champed at the foot of these same steps while his master prayed within; and, it may be, shared his blessing before they started out on the crusade.

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With a rattle of drums our friends of the Porcupine came up the narrow street. Everything was done with such natural grace and pomp. First the tossing of banners round the ancient well-head before the presbytery, and then the little service which ended in the Blessing of the Horse. The animal was led to the foot of the steps, and the old priest after saying a prayer sprinkled him with Holy Water. He was a dear, intelligent beast, and behaved to the manner born. He pricked his ears at the prayer, and though he tried to walk up the steps, and sniffed inquisitively at the censer, he did not even sneeze while lie was being sprinkled. Indeed I have seen the part played worse by many a Christian.

Then the cavalcade formed up again, the drummer and the *alfieri* leading, the knight on foot with his five pages, the *fantino* on horseback, and behind him a man leading the noble beast^[9] he was to ride in the Palio. With a rattle of drums they went off to toss their banners in another piazza.

By this time Siena was alive with mediaeval processions, and the music of their drums was borne in upon our ears from every side. On our way to the Piazza del Duomo, which was the rendezvous of all the *contrade*, we met many a gay company coming up the dark alleys; or heard the stirring music of their drums as they paused to fling their banners below the decorated windows of fifteenth-century palaces. But the Piazza del Duomo was the culminating point. The air was thick with silken banners, and at every moment some fresh *contrada* came up the hill, till it seemed as though the square could hold no more. Was it by chance, or to spite the other by

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diminishing his glory, that the Oca swaggered up at the same moment as his ancient enemy the Torre? The *alfieri* flung their silken banners high into the air, catching them as they fell, and made them flutter like a carpet round their feet, or between their legs, or about their necks, in honour of the Virgin. And, in faith, how could she be otherwise than pleased to see these pretty boys with beating drums and fluttering banners doing her honour so merrily in the sunshine before her house!

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SEEN AT THE PALIO.

From the Gothic windows of the Bishop's Palace the Cardinal, who yesterday had blessed the people in the cathedral, looked down upon the scene. Once, when the *alfieri* of the Wave tossed their blue and white flags thirty feet into the air and caught them again, he clapped his jewelled hands. The press thickened, but always the silken banners clove the sunshine, and the drums sounded merrily, now in the narrow street leading up between the vescovado and the ancient hospital, now from the Via del Capitano. We saw knights on horseback mingling with the crowd, and little children of the Quattrocento, and Pinturicchio townsmen in scarlet and green and orange and blue with fur-edged tunics and peaked caps. It was the Pinturicchio of the library come to life again; or rather it was the old light-hearted Siena who, even in the horrors of the Spanish siege, would have her games, though she had no bread. The gay drummers of the different *contrade* seemed to have caught the rhythm of her joyous heart-beats.

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When we reached our seats the police were already clearing the course, and the centre of the piazza was a seething crowd, with fans which fluttered like butterflies over a field of wheat. What a gay scene it was! The sunlight gilded La Mangia, and flamed from Bernardino's monogram on the Palazzo Pubblico. The amphitheatre of seats all round the course was filled, and every window and balcony was peopled, and hung with scarlet and crimson cloths. Up the steep Via Casato we could see the massed banners of the *contrade*, and hear their impatient drumming as they waited for the signal to enter. The voice of the people was like the roar of waves on a distant shore.

At last every one seemed to have been driven behind the barrier except a few sellers of beer and lemonade. A patrol of horse carabinieri galloped round the course. Bang! went the gun. La Mangia gave voice. To the fanfare of trumpets and the dull roar of the people mediaeval Siena swept into the piazza.

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Slowly and stately they came on. First a horseman in scarlet and blue bearing the great Comunal Banner of the city, followed by trumpeters in the livery of the Palazzo, and then the companies of the ten *contrade* who were to compete for the Palio. As each one entered the piazza the whole procession paused for them to toss their banners. Then with a blare of trumpets they passed on—knights in burnished armour with drawn swords, pages in silk and velvet with flowing cloaks and waving plumes, *alfieri* with proud banners, *fantini* riding slowly with their racers led behind.

Victorious Montone, the winner of the July Palio, came first, waving and tossing its red and yellow banners; then came the gay Giraffe, scarlet and white; and then the Snail, who looked depressed because he had drawn a sorry white nag more fit for tilting at windmills than racing. The Tortoise followed him, yellow and blue and red; and then the Wave, in pale blue slashed with white; and next the stately Goose, St. Catherine's *contrada*, wearing the red and white and green of United Italy. Behind them marched our friends the Porcupine in their brave purple velvet and

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shining armour, and the splendid Golden Eagle and the Blue Men of the Nicchio, and the *Contrada* of the Wolf. Still they came on, with many pauses while the *alfieri* waved and tossed the silken banners, now carpeting the ground with the fluttering folds, now whirling them round necks and under arms and legs, or tossing them up before the Casa Nobile, till the course was like a bed of flowers. And still the Mangia's deep voice acclaimed, and still the trumpets blared and the drums rolled, till the procession stretched all round the Campo, and the great banner of Siena at its head was furled before the Palazzo Comunale.

Then came the Palio itself, borne on the great *carroccio* decorated with the banners of Siena and her *contrade*. How the people yelled as the enormous waggon, so splendidly mediaeval with its poles and banners and its four heraldic horses, rumbled round the square. Before it went two rows of children, little Quattrocento children in striped jerkin and hose, scarlet and green and black, linked together with long festoons of laurel. And round the car rode knights in jousting helmets, clad in velvet and cloth of gold, on richly caparisoned steeds with jewelled reins. Just so did the victorious and exultant Sieneſe bring back the *carroccio* of the Florentines which they had captured in the bloody fight of Monte Aperto when they trampled the lilies of Florence into the dust. And there, below the black and white oriflamme of Siena, was a great banner of crimson velvet and gold—the colours of the famous banner of the Florentines, which was brought back to Siena more than six hundred and fifty years ago!



SIENA: THE PALIO.

Although the tiers of seats erected for knights and pages below the Palazzo Comunale already looked like a bed of tropical flowers, more banners came fluttering down the Via Casato—the *comparsa* of the seven other *contrade* who were not to take a part in the race. They fluttered round the course to gay mediaeval music, and joined the parterre of colour below the Palazzo beside the great *carroccio*.

And now everything was ready. Two ropes were stretched across the course at the starting-point—one the whole width of the track, the other leaving a gap through which the horses could pass into line so as to get as fair a start as possible; though every one knows, and the *fantino* as much as any one, that the start has little to do with the race. His great object is to try and place himself out of reach of the *nerbate* of his special enemies, but even this is hopeless if two or three have come to an arrangement to hold a mutual enemy back until some outsider has carried off the prize.

Down in the crowded square the man who was to give the signal of gun-fire had his fuse already lighted. In the dark courtyard of the Palazzo we could see the *fantini*, no longer in their bravery of velvet and silk and burnished steel, but clad in the colours of their *contrade*, and wearing on their heads painted wooden caps to guard their skulls from the blows of the *nerbi*.

Bang! There was a rattle of drums. Out came the *fantini*. They moved slowly to the starting-point, and a great shout rent the air as Siena with one voice acclaimed them. In the crowded square, on the housetops, from the windows and the balconies, men waved their hats, and women their scarves and handkerchiefs. Even little children forgot their toy balloons, clapping their hands and shouting while their erstwhile treasures floated away unnoticed.

They edged their horses between the ropes. Some blows were exchanged; a horse reared, and one *fantino* almost lost his seat. Bang! went the *mortaletto*. Down went the ropes.

They were off!

From the start the Oca never had a chance. As for the Snail, the whole field passed it before it had completed one round. The Porcupine made a good effort, but the impetuous and dashing *fantino* of the Nicchio headed him off at the difficult turning of San Martino. As they came up the hill for the last time it was a race between the Tortoise and the Nicchio. The Tortoise was leading, but the Nicchio overhauled him as they mounted towards the Via del Casato, and as they came into the straight they were neck and neck.

How the people yelled! How they called upon the Virgin and St. Antony to come to the assistance of their *contrada*!

There was an indescribable confusion.

Bang! They had passed the post.

It was the Tortoise won the race!

In a flash the crowd had burst through the barriers and flooded round the horses. The

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carabinieri came at a double to the rescue of the Victorious Tartuca, for the men of the Oca were attempting to mob him. The horse had already been spirited away lest it should come to harm. The great mass of people swayed and roared.

Rattle-tap-tap; rattle-tap-tap. Through the crowd, with an escort of stalwart troopers, came the waving banners of Tartuca with the Palio in their midst, and away they marched with it to get the blessing of Madonna.

It was all over, though the Mangia was still ringing overhead, and the people were still shouting themselves hoarse.

'Or fù giammai
Gente si vana com'è la sanese?^[10]

SAN GIMIGNANO DELLE BELLE TORRI

'And far to the fair south-westward lightens,
Girdled and sandalled and plumed with flowers,
At sunset over the love-lit land,
The hillside's crown where the wild hill brightens
Saint Fina's town of the Beautiful towers,
Hailing the sun with a hundred hands.'

SWINBURNE.

We left Siena to her merry-making, and stole away early in the morning to San Gimignano delle Belle Torri. From Poggibonsi we drove right into the heart of Faery-land. Were we not bound for Tuscany's most mediaeval city, which is still caught in the web of beautiful thoughts spun round her towers by poets from Messer Folgore, the thirteenth-century San Gimignanese, to our own Swinburne? Our way lay through the rich Val d'Elsa, 'smiling in the sweet air made gladsome by the sun.' Little hills ringed round with the slender conventional pine-trees which Gozzoli loved to plant in his Gardens of Paradise rose from the billowing plain. The vines were linked from tree to tree in great festoons, heavy with grapes; the plummy tassels of the maize were taller than a man; the roadside was full of flowers—bright pink cloves, crimson wild peas, chicory and Canterbury Bells. Indeed it was a veritable Paradise, a Promised Land, not flowing with milk and honey, for milk is sometimes very difficult to obtain in Tuscany where there are no pasture grounds, but heavy with wine and corn, and the manifold fruits of the earth.

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THE TOWERS OF SAN GIMIGNANO.

Long before we reached San Gimignano we saw her towers rising up above the festooned vines like those Giants in Dante's *Inferno*, which from a distance he took to be a city of many towers. He must have been thinking of San Gimignano as he had seen it more than once when he rode across the Tuscan vales from Florence, for it looks ridiculously like a city of giants striding among miniature houses. Its thirteen square towers of uneven heights massed on the top of its little hill make the most fantastic sky-line in Italy, and if the chroniclers speak truth the city to which Dante came as Ambassador in the year of grace 1300 boasted no fewer than seventy-six of these ambitious towers.

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San Gimignano is like the Enchanted Princess in our childhood's fairy tales. I think she must have fallen asleep one summer day, wearied with waiting on her little hill for the Prince who was to wed her. Perhaps she watched them jousting in the plain, those petty princelings who tried to win her hand and always proved themselves unworthy of her beauty and her ancient lineage, and I know she sickened to hear their battle-cries as they issued by night from their towers to plunder and slay. No laughing Tuscan princess this, but a grave-eyed dreamy girl who loved to think of saints although she blushed and trembled at a poet's tale, and dreamt of queening it over the valleys which rippled from her old brown walls to Volterra, or the fair city of Certaldo where Boccaccio was born. She fell asleep in the fourteenth century when she yielded up her keys to Florence, tired of waiting for the prince who never came; and she dreams on among her flowers, very beautiful, and happy at last with her poets and her saints, wearing the threadbare garments of her ancient glory as befits a queen, and at rest now that the faithless Salvucci and the unhappy Ardinghelli no longer wage their useless warfare under her towers.

San Gimignano is a city where one could dream the world away, and count its loss as nothing compared to the fragrant memories in which she dwells. I think the people of San Gimignano do really dream. They are very gentle and grave, and occupied with simple tasks—the men working in the vineyards, and the women sitting at their spinning-wheels outside their fourteenth-century palaces, or plying their distaffs on the steps of the ancient well in the Piazza del Pozzo, whose wall is worn into grooves, the width of my hand, by the ropes of seven hundred years.

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Flowers and grasses grow from her ancient towers, and white doves nest in the narrow windows whence men-at-arms kept watch upon the streets. It is as though the spirit of gentle Saint Fina lingers still in the old grey town which gave her birth. The sweet-smelling flowers 'called of Saint Fina' run riot on its walls and towers, and her name is ever on the children's lips when they meet the traveller at their city gates.

Let us go then to her chapel, for they will not let us rest till we have seen it: they can find no beauty in their ragged palaces, and no appeal in their gaunt grey towers or their lovely broken walls. And we soon found that we must pay our respects to Fina first if we would have peace to look elsewhere.

It was Domenico Ghirlandaio, in his way as great a poet as Botticelli, whom the San

Gimignanesi commissioned to paint the story of their beloved Santa Fina; and in no other picture, save his great 'Nativity' in the Accademia of Florence, did he reach such a high poetic standard. He has chosen only two scenes from the life of the little girl saint of San Gimignano—her vision of St. Gregory, who appeared to her some days before her death and warned her of her approaching end, and the miracle of the healing of her old nurse Beldia as she lay in state awaiting burial.

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With what simplicity and charm has he depicted the apparition of St. Gregory! The Blessed Fina lies on her wooden plank in a little white room which is empty of ornament or furniture—except for a long, low settle bearing a plate, and a dish of pomegranates, and a flask of wine covered with a napkin of fine linen. The door and window both stand open to the sun and wind, and through the casement we see the Tuscan landscape, soft with the green of early spring, with a towered city crowning a hill, and little white clouds on the clear blue sky. Two women in wimples sit beside her, the old nurse Beldia supporting the child's head on her hand, for the chronicler tells us that, notwithstanding, 'the strength of her body lessened and waned even to swooning, yet, withal, she suffered exceedingly from within her head.' The other woman, obviously a neighbour who has looked in to see the sick child, sits on a chair beside them. Her hand is raised and her head turned towards the open door, as if she has been startled in the midst of speaking, or is listening to some unwonted sound. But Saint Gregory in cope and mitre, in a glory of cherubs, has floated in at the door and is speaking to the saint, who listens with rapt attention and hands folded in the attitude of prayer.

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There is no reference to the horrible corruption of the Holy Fina's fair body which her hagiographers insist upon. 'She was palsied all over, and in no wise could she rise from her couch, nor yet move hand or foot. And as God willed that she should be thus afflicted she would not that her body rest upon any soft and yielding thing, rather laid she herself down to sleep upon a plank of wood; and because one side of her body was afflicted with the sickness and wearied her greatly, she slept upon the other; and during the space of five years she did so lie upon that side, neither would she allow any one to move her or yet change her raiment. For so many a long day lay this holy virgin upon her one side only, that the flesh became corrupted and the plank begat vermin which devoured her flesh. Moreover, because of the corruption of these things, the rats gathered together and devoured her flesh.'

Ghirlandaio could read no poetry into this perverted moral. He forgot the rats and vermin and the sore corruption, thinking of her only as the fair maiden, so goodly to human eyes, whose claim to saintship rested on her holiness and chastity and patience. Listen once more to the words of Fra Giovanni her chronicler. 'Whilst yet a little maiden she withdrew herself from all converse that could imperil her soul, forswearing those pleasures in which her like often indulged; such as to gambol and frolic, and such-like frivolities and pleasantries, and the setting fast of their hearts and minds on fine raiment and worldly joys.... She avoided all frivolous comings and goings as being harmful to her peace of mind, and if peradventure she walked abroad, she first made treaty with her eyes that they should look always upon her feet; lest by their vain outward glance they should tempt her guileless spirit. And whilst it pleased God that she should possess a fair countenance, be of tall stature, and all things in her were goodly proportioned; yet in no fashion would she adorn her face, willing only to please God and not to gratify the sight of worldly men.... And she worked unremittingly with her hands in the calling of women folk; but all these acts she would perform, not for the great need she were in, but to eschew idleness, which the Holy Scripture saith is a snare for the feet of the Lord's servants. Likewise, when not in prayer, she laboured steadfastly, following thus in the footsteps of our Mother the Virgin Mary: as of her it is spoken in the Epistles of St. Jerome, that she earned each day the wherewithal for the sustenance of her body.'

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Nor does the artist give us any hint of the miraculous fragrance which pervaded her chamber and her person, and of the flowers which blossomed from the board on which she lay. Unless he meant to represent them by the sweet spring sunshine and fresh air, scented by the breath of flowers grown without, which fills her white room.

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On the other wall we see her lying in state on a bier of gold brocade, clad in fine silk, her poor fair head at rest on a rich cushion. Round her stand the bishop and the choristers with candles and banners, and behind them are the stolid citizens who, in the usual manner of Quattrocento burghers in frescoes, pay no attention to the little ceremony. A small, tearful child is kissing the dead saint's feet. It is the moment of the healing of Beldia, who stands grief-stricken beside the bier; and Santa Fina, 'lifting her arm as though she were yet quick,' has taken the afflicted hand in her slender fingers. The artist has forgotten nothing—in the background he has painted the towers of San Gimignano whose bells, 'each one and severally, not being pulled by hands of mortal men, were set to ring with sweetest unison and melody.' Even the little angel who set them ringing is there, flying in haste from tower to tower with the sunlight gilding his wings.

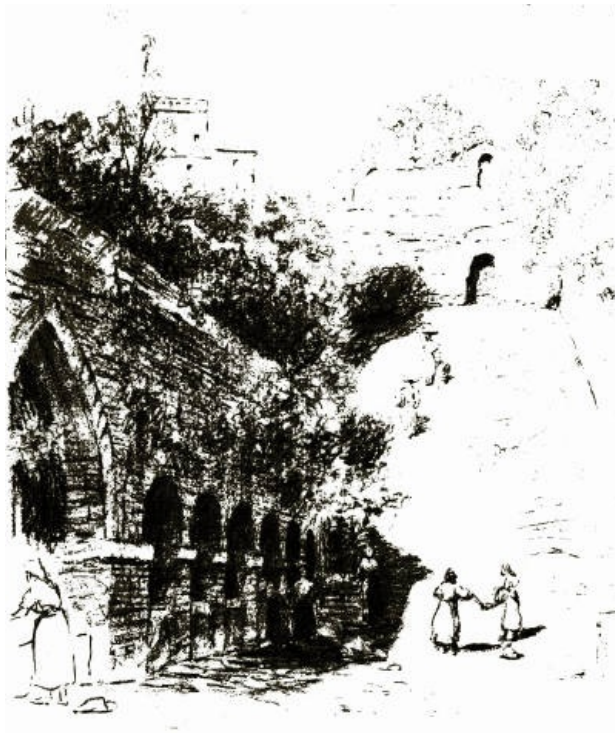
It is small wonder that the people of San Gimignano are proud of their Cappella della Beata Fina, for besides the frescoes of Ghirlandaio it contains the exquisite shrine which Benedetto da Maiano wrought of white marble, finely gilt, to hold the bones of the saint.

San Gimignano was the home of saints, and it is to them that she turns now in her poverty and simplicity, glad of their ancient sanctity which has survived the years, and has not vanished in memories like her dreams of glory. From the beginning she was beloved of saints. Is not her very name an echo of the legend of St. Geminianus, the Martyr of Modena, who appeared before her walls during a siege and routed the barbarians of Attila? Until that day the city had borne the enchanted name Castello della Selva—the Castle of the Wood—because of the great oak forests which clothed the hillside and the plain, where now the olive sheds its silvered shade. But when Attila, who, like Totila and the other invading barbarians, was often defrauded of legitimate victory by patriotic saints, retreated from the citadel, the people changed its name to San

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Gimignano in memory of the martyred Bishop's timely appearance.

Putting aside this legend she had four saints: the Holy Fina; the Blessed Bartolo, whose life was spent in humble service, and who for twenty years was a victim of leprosy which he caught from the plague-stricken people to whom he devoted his life; the hermit San Vivaldo; and Saint Peter, who was one of the first in the brotherhood of St. Francis to suffer martyrdom.



SAN GIMIGNANO: THE WASHING PLACE.

After Saint Fina it is the Blessed Bartolo, 'the Angel of Peace,' whom the San Gimignanesi venerate most. Like Santa Fina he has a noble shrine by Benedetto de Maiano; and he lies, as we are told he wished to do, in Sant'Agostino, the great bare friar's church on the hillside, which is a treasure-house of mediaeval art.

If all the towers of San Gimignano were chimneys belching smoke, and all her mediaeval palaces were ugly modern houses, the world would still visit her to see Gozzoli's inimitable frescoes of the life of Saint Augustine. They are so fresh and unspoiled, so stately and human, so full of quaint imaginings. For he was a great humorist this pageant-painter of the Renaissance, and his naïve pictures are the ideal illustrations to the naïve Confessions of that very human saint, Augustine!

Gozzoli came to Sant'Agostino from his work in the Riccardi Chapel at Florence. There he had slipped beyond the monastic conventionalities of his master, Fra Angelico, and adventured into the gay Florentine life of the fifteenth century with its sports and pageantry. Here he has wandered further from his gentle instructor, and does not hesitate to reproduce with genial wit the humour as well as the pageantry of the age in which he lived. For it goes without saying that his Augustine is transplanted to the Quattrocento, and his life pictured in Gothic cities where Gozzoli himself and his gay compatriots all play their parts. From the beginning, if we except perhaps the first of the series in which the saint is being spanked by his schoolmaster for some small misbehaviour, Augustine is a charming and dignified figure, whether we see him a thoughtful youth setting out in state for Milan through a typical Gozzoli landscape, or he wanders disconsolately in the monastic habit upon the shore, and is rebuked by the little child making mud-pies there, in the immemorial fashion of childhood, for trying to probe into the mysteries of the Trinity.

This great church has many other treasures, frescoes and tombs, such as Gozzoli's San Sebastiano or the effigy of the Augustan brother who fell asleep in the worn pavement so many years ago; or, best of all, the tomb of Fra Domenico Strambi, the grand old monk who commissioned Benozzo Gozzoli to paint his choir, and who lies below a fresco which Mr. Gardner aptly calls 'a masterpiece of municipal sentiment.'

San Gimignano is extremely rich in frescoes, considering that she had no native school of painting, but drew her artists first from Siena and later from Florence, when she had yielded her freedom to that city. The Pieve or Collegiata is like an ancient missal full of illustrations. Besides the frescoes of Ghirlandaio in the Cappella della Beata Fina, and his Annunciation in the Oratory of St. John,^[11] the walls of the nave are covered with the quaint and primitive frescoes of Taddeo di Bartolo and Bartolo di Fredi; and many other painters besides Piero Pollaiuolo and Benozzo Gozzoli have added their quota to this ancient scroll of art. The choir of Sant'Agostino, as I have remarked above, is a masterpiece by Gozzoli; and the museum in the Palazzo Comunale boasts a fine collection which includes two beautiful pictures by Pinturicchio and Filippino Lippi.

Of all the Palazzi Comunali of vanished republics San Gimignano's is the most forlorn. It seems

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to have fallen asleep like the rest of the city, and forgotten to do anything but flower and be beautiful. Its faded fourteenth-century courtyard has an outside stairway leading to a rafted loggia; grass grows in its brick pavement; and tall grey towers, fringed with flowers, rise above its walls. Without the Tuscan sunshine to beautify its stones it would be a little desolate, all faded fresco and broken plaster. And this, mark you, although it is the *nuovo* palace of the Podestà. The *antico* Palazzo, facing the Pieve, so picturesque with its loggia and tower and municipal clock under its wide Tuscan eaves, is older and more ruinous still. It is not battlemented like its neighbour, and it has no processional staircase; nor is its tower, which 'marked the limit to which noble citizens might build their private towers,' as lofty as the Torre del Comune, for this bestrides a street and is the giant of the city, a monument to the vanity of the San Gimignanesi, being built with the money contributed by magistrates who wished their arms to be fixed to it when they went out of office.

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We went up the steps which have seen so many municipal pageants to try and learn the history of San Gimignano from the threadbare splendour of her garments. How like they all are to each other, these little cities of United Italy, with their smug municipal dignity sitting in the midst of tatterdemalion glory! Here, in this very chamber where to-day Lippo Memmi's great fresco of the Virgin and Child, enthroned among the angels, looks down on office chairs and ink-stained tables covered with American cloth, came Dante in the year of the first jubilee, 1300, in all the splendour of Florentine embassy! Here he spake to the lords of San Gimignano, and invited them to send representatives to the election of a captain to lead the Ghibelline League of Tuscany. Here, where all the petty business of a little town is ratified, the men of San Gimignano were wont to deal with their affairs of state, to settle wars, and speak of popes and emperors. We read the story of it round the walls—Memmi's fresco with its proud baldachin of armorial bearings surmounted by the Ghibelline eagle has effaced the greater part of it, but under the timber roof are the arms of the noble families of San Gimignano; and below them jousting knights tilt at invisible combatants, long ago lost in plaster; and huntsmen chase their vanished prey; and the Guelphs and Ghibellines fight out their everlasting warfare in dim distemper.

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The sunset was gilding the towers of San Gimignano when we came out again, and all the bells were ringing for evensong. Already the streets were bound in shadows, so we wandered out among the olive-trees to the little ruined church of the Templars. From here we passed out of the city by an ancient gate, and down the hill to the Gothic washing-pool, where the women of San Gimignano wash and wring their linen in the cool of the evening. The delicate afterglow of Tuscany filled the sky, and the tall poplars whispered and shivered in the sunset wind. Up and down that steep and stony hill under the old Gothic gate went the women, with their snowy linen piled in baskets on their heads. The sound of their voices and laughter floated back to us, mingled with the music of bells from the city above. In the hollow below the road a little waterfall babbled to the stones as it leapt over them to the plain. Between the whispering poplars a white road wound up the hill like the roads up which Benozzo Gozzoli's stately young men rode to their Gothic cities. And below, stretching far away to the east where it was lost in rose and purple mists, billowed the vast Val d'Elsa.

Seen through the magic of a summer evening—when the poplars were making music in the breeze, and the shadows were sweeping across the Tuscan plain; when the women, having folded their linen under the silver olives and piled it on their heads, climbed the steep hill into their tower-girt home—the world and all its doings were as beautiful as a sacrament. Here, at least, in these dim forgotten *paesi*, 'glory and loveliness have not passed away.'

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But, after all, it is at night that San Gimignano is most beautiful. Then she is a city bewitched, unspeakably lovely and romantic. Her silent streets are thronged with memories; her shuttered palaces are given back to ghosts; her proud old towers loom up against the star-lit sky like mediaeval giants.

A silver moon was riding low in the heavens when we left the doorway of the Leon Bianco and passed through the Arco de' Becci, the great gateway of the ancient circuit of walls, which leads at once into the heart of San Gimignano. It was velvet-black under its ghostly tower, and the Gothic palaces of the Castello Vecchio within seemed to be holding their breath as they watched the shadows creeping over the pale stones of the piazza. How silent and deserted it was! The lovely grave-eyed children, who had been our guides all day, had vanished with their gentle mothers, whom we had seen spinning in their doorways through the sunny hours. Where had they gone? There were no lights in any of these silent palaces, and the narrow streets were empty except for the shadows of the towers, grim as bloodstains.



SAN GIMIGNANO.

A white owl, soundless of wing, sank on to the parapet of an ancient palace. Imagination plays strange tricks in this city of ghosts, in whose streets an August moon, more than five hundred years ago, bore witness to the greatest tragedy in the vendetta of the Ardinghelli and the Salvucci. Was it a bird, or did I see a scrap of paper flutter from the window of that dark tower? No. It was only a piece of broken glass glittering among the stones—fit emblem of the broken hopes of those two hapless boys whom Benedetto Strozzi so foully did to death by the persuasion of the treacherous Salvucci. Their letter went astray, thrown from the prison tower, in the hope that a friendly breeze would carry it to the feet of an adherent of the Ardinghelli. And very soon afterwards they met their death, by the steps of the Palazzo Comunale, early on a summer morning, hurriedly, because Strozzi and the Salvucci knew that the messenger who was riding from Florence with their pardon would be delayed only a few hours by the rising of the Elsa. He came too late, as he was meant to do. The Salvucci had already reaped their bloody harvest—the heads of Primerano and Rossellino, the flowers of the noble house of Ardinghelli, had fallen to the sickle.

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It was late, and the sleepy porter of the White Lion yawned reproachfully as we passed him on our way to the Porta San Giovanni, whither we were bound to view the city and rid ourselves of shadows. If tragedy lurked within the narrow streets and byways of San Gimignano, we found nothing but beauty without. The moonlight, flooding her broken walls and picturesque old gates, transformed her into a city of pale jade, crowning a gloom-dark hill. Her diadem of ghostly towers seemed enamoured of the sky, and soared towards the heaven like young Endymion, stretching out his arms to his enchantress. Down the hillside poured her palaces, white as marble, rising in terraces from their dark gardens, and far away we could hear the plaintive cry of the city watchmen as they went their solitary rounds. At our feet a sheer cliff, filled to the level of the road with trees, fell into the night. From its mysterious depths ascended the fragrance of wet earth and the bell-like chant of frogs. And beyond, and all round, lay the broad fields of Tuscany, filled with a sea of moonlit mists, from which the fantastic outlines of little hills rolled up, like shadowy waves, with towered farms and slim black cypresses upon their crests.

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MONTE OLIVETO MAGGIORE

Austere and terrible, barren as the Valley of the Shadow of Death, is the desert of Accona, where Bernardo Tolomei founded the monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore.

At Asciano we left behind us the fruitful gardens of Tuscany, rippling with vines, and rich with maize and olives, and embarked upon a sea of pallid hills. It was as though a blight had fallen. The naked earth was parched and rent with gaping fissures; the tamarisks and sparges and the drab grass which fringed the roadside were old and dry. The smiling valleys fled to the north and the south as from a land accursed, 'and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness.'

Our way lay along a bleached white road which seared the grey hillside and writhed among volcanic mounds and precipices. Here and there the drab monotony was broken by the clustered spires of cypresses round scattered farms; but their black foliage, like funeral plumes, only added a deeper note of melancholy. It was hot too. The August sun beat down upon us from a brazen sky, and the glare of the road made our eyes ache for cool green shadows. But when we reached the plateau a vision of surpassing beauty burst upon us. It was as though, after sojourning for many hours in the wilderness, we looked from Pisgah on the promised land. To our right, across miles of pale clay gorges and volcanic mounds, Siena lay rosy and smiling in her vineyards; on the other hand a wide valley full of precipices rolled away to the purple hills of Umbria, which hung like a mirage between earth and sky, with Monte Amiata lifting her proud head above them all. And presently, after we had passed through Chiusure, a shrunken little town in the heart of a green oasis, we caught our first glimpse of Monte Oliveto.

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Below the road the hill fell away in a deep ravine, whose tortured sides were torn and scarred by torrents, as though the pallid earth had bared an ancient wound. And in the midst of the grey desolation, with towering cliffs above, and wild precipices leaping down into the valley below, stood the Abbey of the Blessed Bernardo. Grim and forbidding as a fortress were its bare red walls, devoid of ornament, only redeemed from positive ugliness by their austerity and rugged strength. And yet, as we approached the monastery through the fragrant shade of cypress avenues, the scent of pine needles and the song of cicalas rose together like the voice of the wilderness and the solitary place which has been made glad.

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CHIUSURE FROM MONTE OLIVETO MAGGIORE.

For, indeed, S. Bernardo and his companions laboured to make this wilderness blossom like a rose. Early in the fourteenth century he put aside the vanities of life. At the height of his glory, when all Siena was ringing with his brilliance and prodigality, he left the city, fleeing, like Shelley, from the awful spectre of his veiled self, asking 'Are you satisfied?' And coming into the desert of Accona he dwelt here in poverty and simplicity, building a little chapel to Santa Scolastica, the sister of St. Benedict, and leading a life of prayer and meditation. We read that a great number of followers, many of them noble, came to him, and lived upon the hillside, striving by the sweat of their brows to transform the Tuscan desert into a garden. But in that day of Guelph and Ghibelline disorders the rulers of Siena feared that he was sowing the seeds of a rebellion; and, if we believe his legend, tried to poison him. It is certain that he was accused of heresy, and forced to make the long journey to the Papal Court of Avignon with Ambrogio Piccolomini, one of his earliest companions, and a scion of the noble house of Piccolomini. Nothing more is said of the charge of heresy. The Pope, John XXII., received them with favour and gave them letters to Guido Tarlati, the splendid old warrior-bishop of Arezzo, in which he asked that most unconventional of prelates to furnish them with a monastic rule. Here again the legend adds a picturesque touch, for it tells us that Tarlati had a miraculous vision, in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to him and commanded him to give the rule of Benedict to 'the pious solitaires' of Accona, to clothe them in spotless white, the symbol of her purity, and to give their

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hermitage the name of St. Mary of Mount Olivet.

So with their own hands Bernardo and his companions, no longer clad in the garb of penitents, began to build their church and convent on the spot where he had his vision of a celestial ladder stretching up to heaven, with angels leading his companions to the throne of Christ. But their work was stopped by news of the great plague which was spreading desolation throughout the country. Going himself to Siena, Bernardo sent out the brothers two by two to tend the people, bidding them depart with good courage, saying that they should all meet together in Siena for the Festival of the Assumption. He never saw his cloistered home again; he died in the stricken city with nearly all his companions, and other hands took up the building of his monastery; and, later, beautified it with frescoes by Luca Signorelli and Il Sodoma, and rare intarsia by Fra Giovanni of Verona.

But I was not thinking of the Blessed Bernardo or of his white-robed Olivetans as we drew near the monastery. Some touch of faery lingered in that cypress grove. We had come out to see a convent. And lo! a battlemented gateway rose before us, with drawbridge and portcullis, as warlike as a castle of the Sforzas. It was as though we had ridden like princes of old across the grey inferno of Childe Roland, where the grass 'grew scant as hair in leprosy,' only to wind our horns before the gate of an enchanted city. [110]

And the fancy grew. We passed without challenge under the portcullis, with a smiling Godspeed from its Della Robbia Madonna, into one of those enchanted woods of Italy, where stone-pines make a frieze against the sky, and cicalas sing their little hearts away in rapture. Two paths led through the flickering shadows. We hesitated which to take, and glanced behind us, half expecting some warden to issue from that ancient gate to ask our pleasure and direct our steps. No one was there. But, just as St. Mary welcomed us without, so from his niche above the arch St. Benedict, clad in the spotless robes of Oliveto, gave us his blessing. We went forward then, past a huge brick jebbia full of green water and down to the stables where we dismounted by a well, as Aeneas Sylvius and his brilliant suite of knights and choristers dismounted when they rode here from Siena and marvelled to find so fair a garden in that barren land.

Still no one came, and still the enchanted silence of the woods prevailed. We wandered round the old red walls, seeking to find an entrance, and since there was no one to say us nay, we went into the cool white monastery. How still and desolate it was! Our footsteps ringing on the flags dismayed us, and when we pealed the bell it echoed like derisive laughter down the empty corridor. Truly the spirit of the place has taken flight, now that the white-robed brethren no longer dwell in their inheritance. Not more than three monks live here to-day; and these, they told us rather sadly, as *custodes* only, for their order is suppressed nearly everywhere, and the state has made a national monument of their treasures. So the ancient law that to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath, is fulfilled. And I will confess at once that from the sentimental point of view my sympathies are all with the monks, for they are one of our most picturesque links with the past, and it was with their own hands that they sowed this harvest which another reaps.^[12] [111]

So there are only ghosts to people the deserted cells and chapels and refectories of Mount Olivet to-day. Time and the hand of man have robbed this sanctuary. Everywhere the eye sees frescoes fading from the walls; and Napoleon, who never saw any harm in robbing Peter to pay Paul, stole some of the exquisite intarsia stalls of the convent church to enrich the cathedral of Siena. Only in the great cloister, where Signorelli and Sodoma painted the life and miracles of St. Benedict, is the imagination fired. What does it matter that the story has been often told? That we have conned it in a hundred other frescoes? It is like the magic stories of our youth, which gained an added joy by repetition, because no two people ever told them quite the same. Here we could find inhabitants for all those empty cells; here we could fill the pleasant groves with white-cowled monks who knelt in prayer below the cypresses, or paced the shady avenues in meditation; here we could picture Bernardo himself, building his abbey, and see him sitting in the old refectory with Patrizi, and Ambrogio Piccolomini, and the other nobles who followed him into the wilderness. 'The series forms, in fact, a painted *novella* of monastic life; its petty jealousies, its petty trials, its tribulations and temptations, and its indescribably petty miracles.'^[13] [112]

And then, because it was long after mezzogiorno, and we were to sleep at Chiusi that night, we went back to the magic cypress-woods to eat our lunch and rest before we drove to Asciano. Our coachmen had prepared a place for us, which they explained was *molto arioso* for so warm a day, on a terraced slope in the wide avenue of cypresses leading from the monastery church to the little chapel which contains the cell of Bernardo. The bank was carpeted with pine-needles, and the air was fragrant with the scent of crushed thyme. We lunched excellently well off wine and bread, figs and peaches; and our smiling drivers brought us a great *fiasco* of sparkling ice-cold water—an acceptable addition to the meal, for we were thirsty, and good spring water is not found everywhere in Italy. And then we pillowed our heads on the soft bank, and lay in silence, entangled in a flickering web of sun and shadow. [113]

Surely it was an enchanted wood of cypresses that summer afternoon! As I drowsed I dreamt that I saw a boy come idly through the trees singing to his lute. His eyes were heavy-lidded, and long black love-locks lay on his shoulders. He was dressed fantastically in scarlet stockings, a silken cap, and a gay cloak, which evidently pleased him well, for at times he plucked at it and pulled it closely round him to admire its folds. A monkey with a gilded chain was on his shoulder, and a badger walked solemnly at his heels. Who could he be? I wondered. He was too gay and worldly to have thoughts of entering the Brotherhood, and as he drew nearer I could hear that his song was in the praise of love. Some poet of the Renaissance, perhaps, whose lord was resting in the monastery.

He drew nearer still, till I thought he must have seen me; and then, as though he was a little

weariness of his song, he dropped his lute and pillowed his gracious young head upon the flowery bank and drifted into sleep, lulled by the fragrance of the warm pine-woods. It seemed to me as if he dreamed, for he stirred, and turned his face away.

Was it I who dreamt the rest?

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I saw a lady moving towards him across the flowers as lightly as a butterfly upon the wing. Fair of face and form was she, fashioned very lightly, full of airy grace; with child-like laughter on her lips and a half-defiant, wholly-alluring challenge in her tender eyes. Her dress was blue and of so light a texture that it rippled from her rosy limbs like water, and scarce bruised the flowers. As she ventured near she laughed, and wantoned with some golden fruit. The sunshine and the breeze, greatly daring, played in her filmy yellow hair and fashioned the tender blue of her robe into little wings. Half a child was she, and half a woman, full of the joy of living and the joy of beautiful things; the very spirit of an azure butterfly who flutters through a summer day, dancing from sheer delight.

Who could have dreamt that I should find her here, on this bleak hillside, in this austere old house? These baked clay cliffs and desolations should have driven her away to gay Siena long ago, even if she outstayed the bitter winds which thrash the stone-pines round the forsaken monastery in winter.

She was standing by the poet now, and smiling down at him, pouting a little because he did not wake. Who could resist her, this happy butterfly fashioned so beautifully for love on a golden summer day?

A pine-cone fell into my lap and startled me. I moved. And in a flash the spell was broken. They had vanished, the beautiful lady and the sleeping boy whose dreams had conjured her. The yellow sunlight was slanting in between the cypresses, and from the stables came the sound of horses being harnessed. It was already time to go.

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And yet they say that Benedict sent her away with harsh words and admonitions.

And the youth who dreamed was not a poet but a painter; his name was Sodoma. You may see her picture in the cloister, and his own as well, in the gay clothes of which he was so proud, for they were part-payment for his work, and had belonged to a gentleman of Lombardy who took the monastic habit.

But it is still a miracle to me that I should have met her on this bare hillside.

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CHIUSI

Night had fallen when we reached Chiusi Junction. A full-blown harvest moon hung over the station-yard like a yellow lamp. It was late, and the lights of Chiusi were a twinkling bunch of fire-flies on a distant hill. We dined at the excellent station buffet, resolved not to spoil the propitious hour by arriving in an unknown city tired and hungry; and afterwards we climbed up to our mysterious destination at leisure, in the glory of a late moon, with the night insects singing by the dusky roadside.

They are among the little joys of Italy these late arrivals, on breathless summer nights, at hill-towns whose features you have only glimpsed heretofore from the windows of a flying train. A fig for the discomforts that you risk! They add a touch of salt to the adventure. The inn you stumble on may be the worst of all bad inns; the dinner will of course be long-delayed; and if you have inadvertently walked in upon a festa it may be difficult to find a place whereon to lay your head. But reckon against these things the charm of mystery—the complete sense of satisfaction with which you watch the ruby tail-lights of your train slipping away into the night, and hear the lessening roar of its engine till your last link with the familiar world is severed, and you are face to face with the unknown. And lastly, remember the joy with which you discover a new world in the morning.

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We started in a vettura which was never meant to carry passengers as well as luggage, but before long we slipped out one by one, for we were only going at a snail's pace up the long hill which leads from Chiusi station to Chiusi town, and we could see nothing of the magic of the night, half-buried in boxes, and with the stars shut out by tarpaulin. The driver did not notice, but the horses quickened their pace with the lightened burden, and soon we were left to find our own way up the hillside. It was not difficult. The bright moonlight, which flooded the plain below, turned the road into a band of silver, whose whiteness was barred by the shadows of giant cypresses towering black against the night. The chanting of the frogs and the song of the night cricket almost drowned the jangling bells of our vettura, and high above us we could see Chiusi, no longer a bunch of fire-flies, but a ghostly grey hill-city already wrapt in slumber, with a frowning rocca, and grim old walls. Its silence was a little desolate as we drew near, and it was a relief to see the hospitable yellow lights of the Leon d'Oro outside the Porta Romana, giving us a homely welcome into the mysterious moonlit town.

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CITTÀ DELLA PIEVE FROM CHIUSI.

I woke early in the morning. It needed but a glance to tell me that I was back in Umbria. Nowhere else are the dimpled valleys so full of beauty, or the blue hills so softly moulded; and nowhere else is that pellucid sky, or that strange clarity of atmosphere which inspired the landscapes of the Umbrian Quattrocento artists. It was as though I looked straight into the heart of one of Perugino's sacred pictures. There was the soft green valley melting in the distance into the azure folds of mountains; there were the slender trees cleaving the luminous air; there were the towered cities crowning the hills; there was the clear pale sky, the spaciousness, the holiness which Perugino and his school immortalised. But, after all, this rich plain, from which the waters of an inland sea have long ago receded, is peculiarly the land of Perugino. Is not that rose-red city on the crest of the wooded hill which bounds the southern horizon of Chiusi, Città della Pieve, the town which gave him birth? I half expected to see a band of saints walking in the vineyards, or to find Madonna sitting by the roadside with the Infant Christ. But another artist had usurped the landscape. Below my window was a peasant ploughing in his olive-garden. He sang as he bent forward to throw his weight on the wooden shaft, and his clothes were as blue as the heavens at mid-day. Two milk-white oxen moved slowly before him under the tender grey of the olives, and as they passed they left behind them shining furrows of freshly-turned earth. It was a poem of labour, as delicate in colour as a tone-etching, an inspiration for Millet with the poetry of life in his veins, or for the subtle Corot.

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Chiusi, the Clusium of Lars Porsena, the great Etruscan Prince who championed the Tarquinii after they were expelled from Rome, is a little self-contained city with an affectation of placing cypresses at becoming angles. She is rather a coquette this old town. She is not unconscious of the picturesqueness of her position as she rises above the shimmering olives which veil her hillsides; she knows the value of cypress spires when they soar above the bastions of ancient walls; she deliberately sets herself out to charm the stranger by filling the gardens of her *trattorie* with flowering gourds and purple morning-glories. Her picturesque old cathedral has been so cleverly redecored throughout with painted mosaics, that when we first stepped down into the cool dark nave we were deceived, and gasped to see such jewels outside Ravenna; and she has built herself a delightful museum, in the form of a classic temple, to house her Etruscan treasures.

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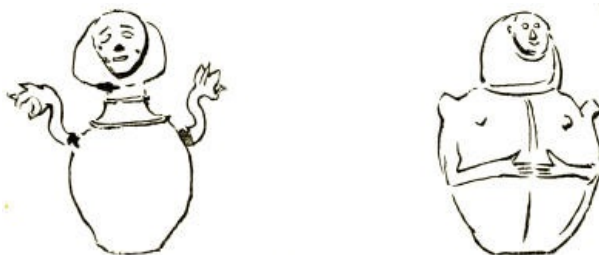
I think she has never ceased to congratulate herself upon giving the lie to Dante's ill-omened prophecy, when he quoted her as an example of a city falling into decay—

'Mark Luni, Urbisaglia mark,
How they are gone, and after them how go
Chiusi and Sinigaglia; and 't will seem
No longer new or strange to thee to hear,
That families fail when cities have their end.'^[14]

She may well have seemed a city doomed to him as he rode in haste through the pestilent marshes of the Val di Chiana, and saw her desolate towers above him stark against the evening sky, as he hurried from Rome to Siena to meet his fellow exiles and learn the story of his fall.

For eight centuries or more Chiusi was a plague spot, and the vapours of the maremma were more powerful to guard her from invaders than the strongest walls. So she has fewer mediaeval palaces, and fewer towers than other hill-cities, and these were long ago given to neighbouring churches to hang their bells in, and the ancient Rocca is a garden with a farm-house in its keep. [121]

I have a tender spot in my heart for Chiusi. She is a happy town. In herself she is not very picturesque: her houses are the plain, white-washed, green-shuttered homes of modern Italy; there are few traces of her ancient greatness to be seen except the scanty Etruscan foundations of her mediaeval fortifications, a quantity of *cippi* and reliefs built into walls, and the labyrinth of ancient sewers which honey-combs the hill.^[15] And in comparison with the other cities of Umbria she contains nothing of the Middle Ages, certainly nothing Gothic, if we except the exquisite illuminated missals and psalters by Bindo Fiorentino and Girolamo da Cremona, which are kept in the sacristy of the cathedral, and which came originally from the monastery of Monte Oliveto. To the antiquary she is of the highest interest, for she marks the site of Clusium, one of the five Etruscan towns which combined against the first of the Tarquins, and of the earlier Camars, which may have been a city of the more ancient Umbrians. Her history shows her to have been one of the oldest and most powerful cities of the Etruscan League; and the country for miles round her walls has yielded, and still yields, a rich harvest of antiquities from scattered tombs. [122] There is a slope to the east of the city which is called 'The Field of the Jewellers,' because so many *scarabaei* have been discovered there by the chance furrow of a plough.



ETRUSCAN CINERARY URNS.

But I am no antiquary. It is not for me to discuss the possible site of that improbable mausoleum of Lars Porsena with its labyrinth and pyramids and windbells, which Varro described as glibly as Herodotus did the marvels of the labyrinth of Crocodilopolis. I have not seen the great necropolis of Poggio Gajella on the hill to the north of Chiusi, which Dennis tells us is a hive of tombs. To me the charm of Chiusi does not lie in her antiquity, though like every one else who visits her I have spent happy hours in her sunny museum, poring over inscriptions and sarcophagi, and cinerary urns and household implements, and all the strange paraphernalia of a vanished race which have been garnered from the fields of Clusium. Nor are the painted tombs of Etruria as much to me as the wonderful beauty of the olive-gardens through which we walked to find them, in the golden sunset or the clear cool dawn. [123]

There are many tombs scattered round the hill of Chiusi. Some of them empty caves hollowed out of the rock, half full of water, abandoned to moths and bats; and others which have been opened and closed up again because the damp and thieves have robbed them of all interest. A few of the best are kept under lock and key to preserve them from wanton destruction, but even these are slipping reluctantly back to oblivion.

Such an one is the Tombe del Colle Casuccini, which is to be found in an olive-grove to the south-east of the town. It is hollowed in the rock, and is approached by a levelled path cut in the slope of the hill. The earth around is full of iris plumes and slender field flowers; there is a weather-beaten cippus over the lintel, and a solitary stone-pine which stretches out its branches as though Nature sought to render homage to the dead by yielding them a royal canopy. We had lingered so long in the silver olive-gardens that it was almost the hour of sunset when we reached the tomb. A melancholy evening wind moaned in the branches of the pine-tree, and rustled in the flowering yews which guarded the entrance of the passage.

Up and down the hillside we could see the peasants returning from their work in the fields, and the whole world was caught in the sudden glory of the setting sun. A woman came towards us with the key of the tomb; she had a baby in her arms, and on her head a great mottled pitcher, green and gold, full of spring water. The sunlight wove a halo round her till she seemed as radiant as one of Pinturicchio's Madonnas. [124]

The great doors of travertine groaned as they swung slowly open on their stone pivots, and a scorpion fled from the light. Dennis says, 'There can be no doubt of the antiquity of these doors; it is manifest in their very arrangement; for the lintel is a huge mass of rock buried beneath a

weight of superincumbent earth, and must have been laid *after* the slabs were in their place.'

This sepulchre, like most Etruscan tombs of importance, is divided into several chambers. Its roof is curiously coffered, and was at one time painted red and black. But it is the wall paintings which are of supreme interest here. Unlike the other tombs of Chiusi the sandstone walls have been whitened, and even so the figures are hardly distinguishable. But look close. It is worth the trouble, for as your candlelight drives the shadows back, the story of an ancient world unfolds itself. Here, to the right, three charioteers urge their archaic steeds to the winning-post; here are the wrestlers; here the musicians with their doublepipes and lutes, and here a dancing girl. On the other wall you can trace the progress of a banquet, and see the languid youths of Etruria reclining on couches, toying with wreaths and flowers, and holding out their *paterae* for the hurrying slaves to fill with wine.

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But they are very faded. They are a world of shadows; they vanish with the months. Another generation will look for them in vain; then the athletes will no longer run their silent races to eternity, the music will be hushed, and the feet of the dancers stilled. And then, I suppose, the wonderful old doors will be taken away, and the angry scorpions will be left in possession. If you would see these ghosts, come soon. For if you come ten years after, perchance you will find nothing on the cold stone walls; their pictures will have gone the way of all the other antique graces which have been lost in Time's devouring maw!

In Italy, especially in the small cities, you have to bow to local convention. In Chiusi it takes the form of Etruscan tombs. Every one from tiny children to the oldest inhabitant volunteers to be your guide. A stranger would say that the Tomb of the Monkey or the Deposito del Gran Duca were topics of burning interest in the town, for the people will not rest until they are assured that he has visited them. It was for this reason that the sunrise next morning found us on our way to the Tomba della Scimmia, which lies a mile or so to the north-east of Chiusi. At first we followed the highroad where the gay painted ox-carts of Clusium, with their picturesque high-curved shafts, were already rolling up the hill. But our way soon turned off into a rough path which dipped down into the chilly sweetness of the olive-gardens. The sun had not yet risen high enough to penetrate these dewy hollows, but as we re-emerged from them and breasted the little oak-clad hills beyond, it slanted between the branches and made a halo round some young peasant girls, barefoot and with uncovered heads, who were carrying great pitchers of water to their cottages from an Artesian well. We dipped into more valleys and circled other hills, plucking the ripe blackberries as we passed, and gathering the flowers which made a tangle round our feet. The only people that we met were peasants at work below their olives, and every one of them gave us a smiling *buon giorno a loro* as we passed. Presently we came out upon a wooded cliff and saw Chiusi, with her fair white houses and her grey ivied rocca, across the valley to our right, and on our left the little lakes of Montepulciano and Chiusi, like opals in the dawn. Umbria again! The flowers at our feet, the glint of water in the wide green valley, the purple hills, the soft blue sky, the breadth and depth, the holiness and peace of mystic Umbria.

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CHIUSI: THE PALACE OF THE BISHOP.

The Tomb of the Monkey owes its name to the painted monkey chained to a tree in the midst of the athletes who wrestle and ride and box and perform their Pyrrhic dances round the walls. It

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is approached by a deep cut in the tufa, in the style of the mummy shafts of Egypt, but the steps which lead down to the door, and the door itself, are modern. By the help of our guttering candles we were able to decipher the solitary spectator who sits, like Nefertari in her rock-hewn tomb of Thebes, with foot on stool and umbrella over head, gazing into eternity. But we did not stay there long. It was too cold. The damp had eaten almost everything away. Down in the chill dark of the tomb we knew that the wrestlers, their naked red bodies fading into the tufa, wrestled continuously, and the chariots drove silently into the shadows before the solemn audience of one.

But up above we could hear the bells of Chiusi on the warm, scented air. And there were the wind, the limpid sunlight, the song of birds, the wooded hills and valleys, the yellow earth with its flowers and its trails of bramble covered with shining fruits—everything of warmth and sweetness and pleasure to the eye and ear. In the plain below we could see the little blue lake of Chiusi, called lovingly of the people, the 'chiaro di Chiusi,' which in the olden days was yearly espoused with a ring by the chief magistrate of the town, in the same manner as the Doge of Venice wedded the Adriatic. And beside it the towers of Béccati Questo and Béccati Quest'altro, which were put up in the fifteenth century by the rival provinces of Siena and Perugia, still shout defiance to each other across the valley. [128]

After all, it was for her old-world charm that we loved Chiusi—the simple pastoral beauty of her *contado*, her forges glowing at night in deep caverns below her walls, her Bishop's palace with its ancient *cippi*, and its flowering agaves and cypresses. And most of all we loved the lichen-covered boy in the fountain of the Piazza del Duomo. For he was like the spirit of eternal youth, keeping the soul of things alive in this city of tombs. There were gold fish in the green shallows round his feet, the water spouted from his forehead, his arms were outstretched and his face upturned, as though he sang in rapture to the sun.

For it was in such little things as these that we found the hidden secret of Italy's charm. These little towns like Chiusi, perched each one on its hill, are sometimes commonplace enough in themselves, even though their foundations are inscribed by the years that have passed; but they look across valleys of unimaginable beauty to the mountains; they have genii singing in their springs; and the lives of their people have the classic simplicity of an older, unspoilt world.

HANNIBAL'S THRASYMENE

'Yea! sometimes on the instant all seems plain,
The simple sun could tell us, or the rain,
The world caught dreaming with a look of heaven
Seems on a sudden tip-toe to explain.'

'THE RUBAIYAT,' Le Gallienne's translation.

We came to Passignano from Chiusi, because we could not resist the beauty of Thrasymene. Most travellers in Italy only view it with passing admiration as they fly by in the express which takes them from Florence to Rome and Naples. It is to them merely another lovely incident in their journey through a landscape of surpassing beauty. Perchance they refer to their Baedekers, and find that it was the scene of Hannibal's great victory over Flaminius, and in a few minutes more their train is in Chiusi Junction, and the lake is lost behind the Umbrian hills. Others, who visit Perugia and Assisi, see more of its beauties, for when they leave the main line at Chiusi they have to make a semi-circular tour of the lake; and even from Terontola, the junction for Florence and Perugia, the line runs for miles along the lake-side, and crosses the actual site of Hannibal's battle-field.

Twice already, in the last month, we had traversed it, on the journey from Cortona to Perugia, and again on our way to Siena. Coming back we could no more resist it. Our intention had been to go straight from Chiusi to Assisi, but at Terontola the little philosopher put in a special plea for Thrasymene. He has a passion for lakes and rivers; no landscape is complete for him without them. [130]

'Let us go down to Thrasymene,' he said. 'Not for the sake of Hannibal, but for the pleasure of its beauty. For I am sick of the petty wars of hill-towns, and am wearied for the moment of Etruscan tombs and Gothic palaces and churches. Let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear and the pomegranates bud forth!'

So we came to Thrasymene and Passignano, which is a mere handful of brown houses pushed into the water at the foot of a rocky hill. Passignano has a flavour of its own. To begin with, its inn is different from any other albergo in Italy. It has an old-fashioned kitchen with a cowl chimney and rows of shining brass saucepans, and it opens on to the village street, where the people sit to gossip while the evening meal is cooking. Its low cottage windows look over the wide expanse of water to towered Castiglione, and the wooded islands of Thrasymene; but it is built so close into the hillside at the back that you can stretch your hand from an upper room and pluck the creepers which pour in a green cascade over the rocks. It is extremely primitive: the menu consists of soup, macaroni, eggs, fresh fish from the lake, and very lean chickens, supplemented by rough country bread, plenty of honey and fresh fruit, and cheese if the proprietor has lately been to market in Perugia. Meat there is none, at any rate in August, nor tea. But the rooms are spotlessly clean, with snowy beds, dainty white valances, curtains edged with hand-made lace, and the finest of linen towels; the daughter of the buxom landlady is as charming as she is elegant, and the serving girl is a beautiful Murillo. [131]

Passignano is full of beautiful women; they form two-thirds of the population of this little lake-side town. There are hardly any men in it except the old fishermen, and a few young lads, apprentices to bootmakers and saddlers. All the rest have drifted away to the towns, or have farms out in the *paese*. And the women, from the pretty French wife of Signor Arturo of the Albergo Balducci, with her freshly laundered cotton dresses, to the little bareheaded girls whose mothers call to them at night, bidding them bathe their dusty feet in the lake before they come to bed, are all lovely. They are noted for it.

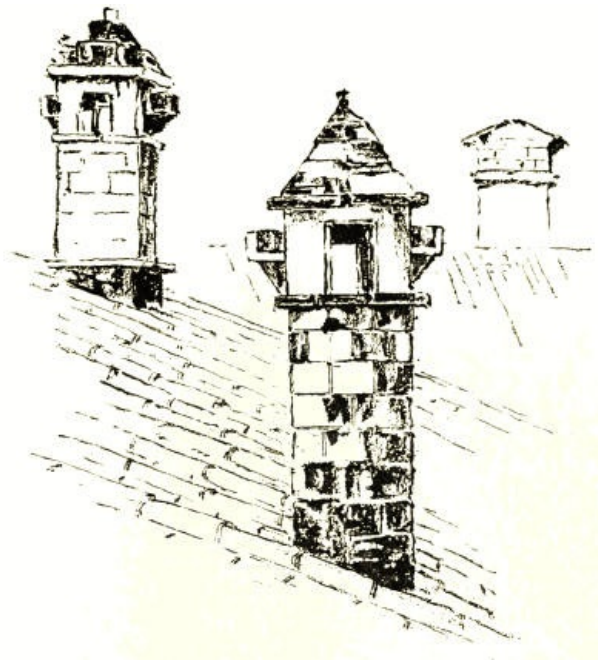
The only other visitor in Passignano that August was a young Apollo—so beautifully dressed in pale grey riding-clothes that he looked as if he must have slipped out of a George Edwards musical comedy. He was, according to the landlady, a student from the University of Perugia, spending his vacation in Passignano because the girls were so beautiful! Oh, young Italy! How natural and unaffected you are! I loved to see him strolling down the village street with a lordly air of indifference, running the gauntlet of eyes as the pretty girls, linked in groups like bouquets of flowers, passed him demurely; while their mothers, sitting on the doorsteps of their cottages, scanned the handsome boy with kindly humour. [132]

Everybody lives out of doors in Passignano. The women are always sitting outside their houses; and their children, half-naked in the summer heat, with halos of sunburned curls, pillow their heads on the rough cobbles of the hilly streets, and sleep after their play, as baby angels might sleep in paradise, tired out with singing. The stables and bakeries and workshops are open to the road, and above them the shabby brown houses clamber up the hillside to the Fortezza, which rears its shaggy head above the highest of their pagoda-like chimneys.

'If we stay here we shall prolong our lives for always,' cried the philosopher. 'Already I have forgotten the world!'

And he fell to imitating the song of the cicadas.

Indeed for us the world was standing still. We were caught in a mesh of beauty as in a summer daydream. The waves of Time seemed to retreat, leaving us like swimmers resting on a golden shore after struggle and turmoil. It might have been Lethe whose waters sang to the stones at our feet: for we forgot the world: its voice became a dream; we found ourselves content to watch the changing lights as the hours drifted away. [133]



CHIMNEYS AT PASSIGNANO.

We ate our meals in the unfinished dining-room which Signor Balducci is building out over the lake—a mere shell of white plaster with empty doors and windows through which the little breezes strayed. There were flowers on the cloth beside our plates, and a great bowl of oleanders, geraniums and white asters on the table. We breakfasted off golden bread and honey, and the pretty waiting girl brought tuberose with our coffee. Outside, the lake was a tender morning blue; its surface rippled to the cool breath of the mountains, and sparkled in the sunlight. The bent and twisted sticks of the fishermen cast fantastic reflections in the water, and were beautified, as all humble and work-a-day things are beautified in Italy, by the magic of the sun. Further out two men in a rickety sampan were hauling in their nets.

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It was a scene of infinite romance. The towers of Castiglione shone like ivory out of the violet mists, and many of the hills which rose above them bore turreted towns upon their crests. Behind them we knew lay Siena, Montepulciano and Chiusi, and to the right Cortona and Arezzo, and there Perugia, and Assisi there. History swept down upon us too. Thrasymene and its vine-clad slopes are full of memories of Hannibal, the stormy petrel who beat his wings round Rome in vain. Nor does it lack for gentler associations, for Saint Francis of Assisi, who had been preaching in one of the lake-side towns, was inspired, according to the author of the *Fioretti*, to spend Lent on an island in its midst. Which he did, in solitary prayer and meditation, eating only the half of one small loaf of bread, 'from reverence for the fast of Christ the blessed one, Who fasted forty days and forty nights without partaking any earthly food; but in this manner, with that half a loaf, chased far the venom of vain glory from him.'

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Towards the hour of sunset, when the shadowed hills grew blue and misty, and the lake was a mirror of pale gold, we walked along the reedy shore of Thrasymene. The wind rustled in the silken leaves of the maize, and made a music like far-off singing in the emerald reeds. We went down to the edge of the water where the gardens sloped to the lake, and we found flowers there and herbs—mint and thyme and rosemary that scented the air, and purple vetches and clover, and the beautiful cow-parsley whose blossoms float like butterflies over every hedge and waste ground. And there we waited while the sky glowed from gold to rose, and Thrasymene seemed aflame with Hannibal's desire for Rome.

We dined in our alfresco dining-room, and afterwards we walked again by the still waters, where the frogs were shrilling a chorus to the night-crickets, whose song in the grass is like the sound of a curb-chain being rubbed in the hand. Except for these the world was still. There were no lights along that mysterious country road except the stars, and rarely have I seen them brighter, even in Africa.

'In a town we never see such stars as these,' said the philosopher. We never do. The Milky Way stretched like a girdle across the heavens, and was reflected in the lake like a pale moon. We stayed to watch it, and to listen to the voices of the night.

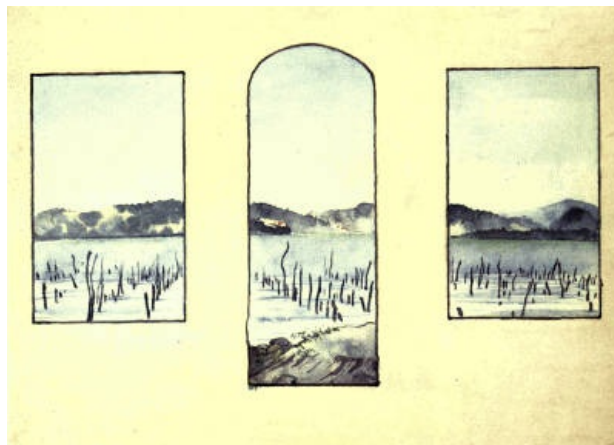
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A train glared out of the tunnel which pierces the hill below Passignano, and tore along in the darkness beside the road, lightening our starlit gloom for a moment before its meteoric tail of windows was swallowed up by the night. Then we saw a glow-worm in a hole below the wall, and because in Italy you are pleased with little things, we stopped to look at it, and watch it turn round like a light-house lamp, now glowing clear as a star, now an indistinguishable mass of phosphorescence. And all the time the sky was growing lighter, and the mountains darker in the east.

It was the moon.

Slowly it rose. The Milky Way grew pale in the lake, and one great star which had twinkled like a will-o'-the-wisp among the reeds went out. The light grew and gathered behind the hills, and at last the miracle of moonrise came to us as we waited in the scented darkness of Thrasymene's shore, as it came to the young world on the eve of its creation. First the rim, and then the pulsing globe leaping from the shadows. For a moment it hung upon the hillside while

two fantastic stone-pines, a fraction of an inch in height, swayed within its circle like neophytes bowing before Diana; then it rose into the heavens,—a stately ship steering among the stars.



LAKE TRASYMENE.

A miracle no less because our darkness has been lightened thus since the beginning of the world. There are so many miracles every day, if we but knew them,—the scent of flowers, the webs of spiders, the subtle fragrance of the earth, a wayside weed, and, most beautiful of all, the sunrise and the moon. For sunsets, though they may fill a grey world with rose and gold, and though they are always so magnificent that words are pallid pictures and artists' colours impotent, never have the beauty of the dawn. A sunset may turn our joy to melancholy, so tender is it, so pregnant with regret for the vanished day, so full of splendours. But we are always happy in the dawn. What of the night? It is over and gone. A new world lies at our feet; a new beauty fills our eyes; the breath of the morning in our nostrils is as a flower after rain. For in the dawn we step from the valley of the Shadow of Death on to the rosy mountains of Hope.

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And because you are in Italy you have time to notice these miracles of every day, time to be happy, time to watch things grow. The hours do not matter, for to-morrow is as yesterday, and to-day is but a little minute in a garden. If it should rain the butterflies will only seek their shelter, the cicadas will be still, and the pores of the thirsty earth will open. To-morrow the sun will shine again. Or the day after that.

Nor is Passignano devoid of interest for the sightseer whose pleasure is not to be found in green pastures or beside still waters. Magione, with its three mediaeval castles and its memory of the Baglioni, is within a drive. Picturesque Castiglione del Lago is well worth a visit. There is the island of St. Francis, with its ruined convent, now the villeggiatura of an Italian nobleman, and its exquisite views of Montepulciano. And lastly, there is the battle-field where Hannibal, the 'furious youth' of Publius Cornelius Scipio, defeated Flaminius, the maker of roads.

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We did not go to Magione, but we let two old men of Passignano row us to St. Francis' Island in their weather-beaten fishing-boats. In an acacia grove down by the water's edge they showed us the block of stone whose surface was worn into two hollows by the knees of St. Francis. So they would have us believe. '*Ma, è vero!*' they exclaimed, as though they feared that we should doubt them; and we could but smile as they told us an old legend of the saint sailing miraculously across Trasymene on his mantle, bearing a lighted candle in his hand, because the boatmen dared not put out in the tramontana which was lashing the waters to fury.

We almost missed seeing the battle-field of Hannibal, because we had left it to our last afternoon, and discovered too late that the only carriage in Passignano had been already commandeered.

It was Fortunato Rosso who came to our rescue, dear old man, with his dilapidated vehicle, which was no larger than a riksha, and so broken down that we expected the back to fall away every minute. The step did break when we tried to use it, and the axle bar was tied up with string. Fortunato Rosso is one of the characters of Passignano. He is a veteran of the Venti Settembre. As he has lost his teeth his conversation is difficult to follow, though he is an intelligent guide, having a soldier's eye for the possibilities of the land: his clothes are almost as dilapidated as his carriage, but he has a string of medal ribbons sewn across his scrupulously clean white waistcoat. The medals themselves are kept in a dirty scrap of paper in his pocket. He persisted in showing them to us before we started, and the villagers stood round and laughed indulgently. While he was eagerly pulling them out a cheap crucifix fell to the ground. A small boy picked it up, and pressed it to his lips as he handed it back, and Rosso himself gave it a resounding kiss before he put it into his pocket.

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The spot where Hannibal entrapped the Roman army is as distinct as stage scenery. There is a semi-circle of mountains coming down to the lake at each end. Passignano clambers into the water at the southern extremity; and on the northern spur, close to the lake, there is an ancient road climbing between bluffs in an olive-garden. It is below the modern strada; and Fortunato Rosso, who takes a delight in propounding the stratagems of Hannibal, insists that Flaminius must have entered the plain through this pass. Half-way between the semi-circle and the lake is the hill of Tuoro, on which Hannibal's centre was conspicuously drawn up.

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For the Punic general with his genius for guerilla warfare no better place for an ambushade could be imagined. The Consul Flaminius lay at Arretium some miles to the north; and Hannibal, knowing his impetuous temper, determined to draw him out by laying waste the countryside from

Cortona to Thrasymene under the very eyes of the Roman legions. As he anticipated, Flaminius, exasperated beyond endurance, left Arezzo and marched down to Thrasymene, paying no heed to the ill-omens which attended his setting forth. As a consequence his army had no enthusiasm. The name of Hannibal had turned even the heart of Rome to water, so that she spent her days in making sacrifices to the gods and consulting the oracles, but the fiery Flaminius would not allow his legions to make propitiation. 'Nay, rather,' said he with bitter sarcasm, 'let us lie before the walls of Arretium, for here is our country, here our household gods. Let Hannibal, slipping through our fingers, waste Italy through and through; and, ravaging and burning everything, let him arrive at the walls of Rome; nor let us move hence till the fathers shall have summoned Flaminius from Arretium, as they did Camillus of old from Veii.'^[16]

Everything befell as Hannibal desired. Flaminius entered the pass. Seeing the Carthaginian army on the hill of Tuoro he advanced to give battle, not noticing the Baliares and light troops posted round the mountains, and unconscious of the fact that the Numidian cavalry had blocked his retreat by holding the pass when the last detachment of his army had come through. To add to his discomfiture a mist rose up from the lake and enveloped the lowlands, while the hills were in the sunlight above, and the enemy could watch for the preconcerted signal of attack.

It was given, and they poured down upon the Romans from all sides, taking them by surprise, and terrifying them by the unexpectedness of the assault. Even so the day might not have been lost if Flaminius had not fallen early in the engagement. After that it was a slaughter. There was no order. Each man fought for his own life, and when the legions attempted to escape by water, the only way left open to them, they were either drowned, or cut to pieces by the Carthaginian cavalry which followed them into the shallows. A band of some six thousand did indeed force their way to the hills, where they waited for the mist to rise, not being able to see how the day was going. And when at last the sun pierced through to the plain, and they could view the slaughter, they fled, taking their standards with them, only to fall prisoners on 'the following day when, Maharbal, who had followed them during the night with the whole body of cavalry, pledging his honour that he would let them depart with single garments if they would deliver up their arms, they surrendered themselves: which promise was kept by Hannibal with Punic fidelity, and he threw them all into chains' (Livy, xxii. 6).

So much for the battle, but the old tragedy that was enacted on these vine-clad plains has been forgotten. Many of the peasants have not even heard of the name of Hannibal, nor dream that where they gather their purple vintage to-day the earth was reddened once by Roman blood. The broad smooth road led us between ancient olives. White oxen yoked to clumsy wooden tumbrils rolled on and on towards us in a mist of sunlit dust; peasants in gay kerchiefs and skirts were working in the bearded corn which rose higher than their heads, so that we looked at them through a veil of stalks; a herd of black swine were nosing the yellow earth under the olives, with a little girl-child to keep them. And when we reached the summit of the pass above the turquoise lake we could see the road to Arezzo in a gap of the mountains, across a sea of vines. There was nothing to disturb the air of peace; the mediaeval towers and castles which crowned the hills were farms; and the Sanguinetto, whose sinister name is the one memento of that day of slaughter, was a river of stones agape for the September rains.

'Far other scene is Thrasymene now;
Her lake a sheet of silver, and her plain
Rent by no ravage save the gentle plough;
Her aged trees rise thick as once the slain
Lay where their roots are; but a brook hath ta'en—
A little rill of scanty stream and bed—
A name of blood from that day's sanguine rain;
And Sanguinetto tells you where the dead
Made the earth wet, and turn'd the unwilling waters red.'

CHILDE HAROLD.

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ASSISI

Almost the first thing we noticed in Assisi was the Biblical simplicity of life. This little city, rose and white, upon the lower slopes of Subasio would be like a picture out of the Bible if it were not so Gothic. Its steep and rough-paved streets have grasses growing in between their stones; its grim and silent houses, built of Subasian rock, are as unresponsive as the East; at their barred gates stand mules and asses tethered, with clumsy wooden saddles on their backs, or sacks of grain thrown pannier-wise. It is not only Francis and his companions that you might see walking in this poor and humble town, but Jesus of Nazareth.

For Assisi still wears the thread-bare garment of her poverty, notwithstanding the great basilica on the hillside, which is rich out of all comparison with the poor little city of St. Francis. Long, long ago in the thirteenth century she dedicated her life to him, giving up her worldly vanities and espousing Lady Poverty, 'that Dame to whom none openeth pleasure's gate.' So that the story of the splendid young men of Assisi, whose magnificent equipages drew the eyes of Rome in the seventeenth century, comes as an echo of another place. I think she loved him from the first, when he was still gay Cecco of the midnight revels, Lord of Love, the boon companion of her merry youths. She listened to his songs—the soft Provençal songs which he had learnt from the lips of Madonna Pica, his mother—and smiled at his caprices, pleading his youth when others shook their heads. Later, when the world made a jest of the penitent, and his friends scorned him, and the hand of the people was against him, she wept for him, and gazed with wistful eyes down to the valleys where he ministered to her outcasts, and garnered in his soul that Peace of the Lord which passeth all understanding. She is like the bride of whom the poet of the Israelites sang, looking and listening for the voice of her beloved.

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'The voice of my beloved! Behold he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.
My beloved is like the roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth
at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.
My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the
turtle is heard in our land;
The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

But if there had been no Saint Francis to raise her to the foremost rank of shrines, and sanctify her with a special crown of holiness, Assisi would still be one of the most lovely cities in the garden of Umbria. She has grown like a fair white flower upon the brown slope of Monte Subasio, whose shoulder is a bulwark between the ragged Appennines and the soft valleys of Umbria.

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It is a sudden revelation, as though the landscape foreshadowed the history of Assisi, to stand on the windy height of her Rocca, and first to look down on the rolling Umbrian hills, clothed with the tender green of vines and olives, which have gentle streams meandering at their feet, and then to turn to the eastern slope of Subasio and see the brown and barren mountains ravaging away to the horizon, like an angry sea, now towering into broken peaks, now falling back with steep, scarred sides, red as wounds where the ruddy limestone has been torn from them. On the one hand there is that Peace of God which St. Francis scattered through the turbulent thirteenth century, and which has lingered in the grass-grown streets of his native city; and, on the other, the bloody wars and revolutions which racked Assisi from the day that Rome first put its yoke upon her, to the sixteenth century, when she surrendered a second time to the Imperial city, and yielded up her keys to Paul III. For her history is one long tale of disasters. She fell a victim to so many conquerors—Totila, Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa, and the condottieri of her enemy Perugia—Biordo Michelotti, Braccio Fortebraccio, and Niccolò Piccinino. And from the sack of the terrible little man, Niccolò, Assisi never recovered: to this day there is a spacious olive-garden between the Rocca and the town itself, on which the disheartened Assisians had not the spirit to rebuild their ravished homes.

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Assisi is full of forgotten charms. No other city in Umbria, except proud Spoleto, can boast as many traces of her Roman greatness. Though her amphitheatre has vanished underground, its lines are clearly preserved by the houses which are built above it; there is a wonderful Roman cistern below the cathedral; there are fragments of a theatre, and a drain of excellent masonry in the Canon's garden; and in the Piazza Vittore Emanuele is the exquisite portico of the Temple of Minerva, which, legend says, was built by Dardanus of Troy. Be that as it may, this temple of the Goddess of Wisdom, which was long ago dedicated to the Mother of Christ, and on whose steps St. Francis often stood to preach, is one of the most perfect Roman temple-façades extant, notwithstanding the mass of mediaeval buildings which crowd in upon it, or the foreshortening of its pronaos, half sunk below the pavement of the piazza.

It would be difficult to find a more completely Gothic place than Assisi. Except for the great hotels near San Francesco, the sixteenth-century church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, and the palaces of the Via Superba, in which the spendthrift nobles of the seventeenth century entertained Queen Christina of Sweden, there is hardly anything in Assisi that is not of the Gothic age. If all the bricked-up loggias and windows of Assisi were opened out, she would look like a city frescoed by Benozzo Gozzoli.

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And she has many treasures which the hurried traveller does not dream of. Who, for instance, ever remembers the ancient cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore, and the Bishop's Palace, where Saint Francis renounced his earthly heritage; or climbs the hill to see the cathedral of San

Rufino, with its wonderful Romanesque façade, mystic with strange carvings, and its font in which not only Francis, but the great Emperor Frederick II., was baptized? How many people have lingered to look at the little loggia of the Comacine masters at the foot of one of the stair-streets of Assisi, which seem to have been created by the imagination of Albrecht Dürer? Or the sunken loggia of the Monte Frumentario, one of the most ancient municipal buildings in Assisi, which still carries on its original business and makes loans of money and seed to the peasantry, so that they shall not be ruined in the lean years of agriculture? How many have seen the little Chapel of the Pilgrims, founded by the Confraternity of St. Anthony in honour of their saint as a hospice for poor pilgrims, though it is frescoed by Matteo de Gualdo and Mesastris of Foligno?



A STREET IN ASSISI.

There are few even who have visited the minor relics of St. Francis,—the Carcere; the cell in the garden of San Rufino in which the Miracle of the Fiery Chariot took place; the little parish church of San Giorgio; and the chapels scattered through the fields of Umbria in which he worked and prayed.

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It is San Francesco which most people come to see; San Francesco, one of the most inspired Gothic buildings in Italy, made sacrosanct with the body of Francis, illuminated with all that Tuscany could yield of art in the far-back thirteenth century. So all those dreams of poverty and humility which were the moving spirit of the Early Companions have come to naught. It avails nothing that when the hand of death lay heavy upon Francis, he yielded up even the coarse rough robe, his last possession, and but for his hair-shirt lay naked upon the ground, until a brother covered him with another garment, given 'as to one who has made himself poor for the love of God.' Nor does his humility count for anything, for though his petition to be buried on the Collis Inferni among the criminals and malefactors was granted, he was not given the humble grave he sought; and it is probable that Pope Gregory, who changed the name of the hill from that day to Collis Paradisi, only yielded to the saint's request because there was no other spot near the city walls suitable for the huge monument which he and Brother Elias were preparing to build.

There is a story that the irresponsible Leo, the constant friend and companion of Francis, whom he so lovingly called 'the little sheep of God,' broke the porphyry vase for alms and collections which Brother Elias placed outside the church that all might contribute to its building. But it needed more than the simple Leo's protest to stem the flood of innovations which the ambitious Vicar-General was introducing into the Order. Even in his life-time St. Francis could not hold it back. Who, knowing the pathetic story of his home-coming from the East, and his disappointment at seeing the sumptuous Convent of the Brothers Minor in Bologna, can think that this splendid basilica does not weigh heavily upon the bones of the little poor man of Assisi? But it was inevitable. He had more to combat than the ambitions of individuals; there was the papacy to reckon with, the luxurious and effete Court of Rome, which saw well enough the moral of the Rule of Francis, but had no mind to make a bride of Poverty.

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'Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves. And, as ye go, preach, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Thus, literally, did Francis, the splendid Idealist of the Middle Ages, whose faith in human nature was second only to his faith in God, follow the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Only once in a hundred ages does such a star arise in the East to illumine the darkness of the world and oppose the primeval laws of disaster. We know how much he achieved, what a vista of purity

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and love he opened to the thirteenth century, and how signally even this fervent age failed to respond to the voice of the Herald of God who preached repentance, and sang the praises of his Maker through the sunlit fields and gardens of Italy. So that there is much pathos in this mighty temple on the western rock of Assisi, which is the mausoleum of all the beautiful impracticable dreams of Francis as well as the shrine on which devotion, art and wealth have lavished every resource to make it a worthy resting-place for the Messiah of the Middle Ages.

It was the hour of sunset when we first climbed up the slope of Monte Subasio, and Assisi and her great church were rose-red, as though they glowed with inward fires. We left our vettura at the city gates, telling the driver to take our luggage to the inn, and we ourselves turned up the hill to San Francesco. As we approached it through the long arcades of the lower piazza the great golden church with its towers and gables, its buttressed sides, its jewelled windows and gracious portico, and the noble steps which lead up to the Chiesa Superiore, had something of the eternal beauty of St. Mark's at Venice.

We passed through a group of the clamorous beggars who besiege the pilgrim at the door of San Francesco, like a canker at the heart of a perfect fruit, and plunged into the gloom of the Lower Church. After the gold splendour of the sunset our eyes could distinguish little except the royal tombs which line the vestibule, and the great barrel arches which span the vault. But as we groped our way through the vast dim nave the world of Giotto, Cimabue and the Lorenzetti loomed on us through the shadows like a memory. The walls of chapel and transept were held in the bondage of shadow, but here and there some sweet familiar face looked down upon us with its golden halo fired by the last light of day. It was very dark. Vespers were over. One little lamp hanging in the Cappella San Martino only emphasised the gloom, but our footsteps were lighted by a faint glare radiating from the lowest tier of the altar. We could not imagine whence it came, shining so low in our path, until we drew near and beheld through the grille a lamp, suspended below the floor above the tomb of Francis. It was as though the luminous presence of the saint himself was guiding our feet through the shadows.

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ASSISI: THE LOWER CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO.

I have been many times to see San Francesco since the first night I climbed Assisi's hill, but I have never passed from the sunlight, which the little Poor Brother loved so well, into that shadowy vault without feeling something pulling at my heart-strings, for there is an atmosphere of sadness in San Francesco. Below all this splendour Francis is crushed out of thought just as his body is crushed out of sight by his massive tomb. It is Brother Elias, not Francis, whom we meet in these dim rich chapels; and the fabric of the great church and convent is a monument to human frailty rather than to individual holiness. But it is so completely lovely, so full of memories, with its unbroken chain of faith and prayer to link it to the thirteenth century, that I would not have one jot or tittle of it altered. It is one of the chief gems in Italy's crown of beauty, an inexhaustible treasure-house.

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Every day, although we were living at the other end of Assisi, our feet wandered down the hillside to San Francesco. Now it was to hear Mass in the dim Lower Church when clouds of incense veiled Giotto's canopy of allegories above the High Altar, and the peasants knelt humbly round the shrine of the little Poor One, who having nothing gained the whole world. Now to gaze upon the pitiful relics of the saint housed in the magnificent carved presses of the sacristy—the fragments of his death-clothes; the original register of Honorius III.; the Blessing of St. Leo in Francis' handwriting; and, most touching of all, the rough sandals which Saint Clare made with her own hands for the beloved Father, when his poor weary feet, with their sacred wounds, could no longer tread the stony Umbrian roads. Now we would wander through the chapels spelling out the frescoes of Martini and the lesser Tuscans, pausing awhile before the tomb of that forgotten Queen of Cyprus, who is only remembered for her priceless gift of ultramarine, presented in the porphyry vase which is still to be seen in the east transept; or by the shadowy tomb of Madonna Giacobba di Settisoli, the Roman lady who loved Francis, and ministered to him at the last, bringing him his shroud and the candles for his burying, and, pitiful and human touch, the little comfits which had pleased him when he lay sick in Rome.

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Nor did we ever weary of the small cloister of San Francesco with its faded grey of bricks and mortar, its cypresses and lichens, and the *stemme* of the nobles who lie below its pavement. It is a veritable home of peace. The walls are veiled in hanging creepers; there is a little box-hedge and a shower of sun-flecked acacias and lilacs from which the grey trunks of giant cypresses soar like the columns of a mighty temple. Dragon-flies flash through the warm, pine-scented air, and

in the heart of it there is a crucifix to turn the thoughts of the brothers to holiness, lest they should be distracted by the sight of so much beauty, as they walk in the garden before their Mass.



THE LITTLE CLOISTER IN S. FRANCESCO D'ASSISI.

And many a golden afternoon did we while away in the beautiful Gothic Chiesa Superiore, whose walls Giotto has illumined with the story of St. Francis. It would be hard to find two buildings in such strong contrast as the Upper and Lower churches of San Francesco. The Chiesa Inferiore, with its great barrel arches, its shadows and its dim frescoes, moves the world most, for it is full of the suggestion of beautiful unseen things; but the Upper Church has blossomed like the flowers of the field above the tomb of Francis. It is a miracle of light and spaciousness and colour, with rich stained windows and soaring arches; and the white cities of Giotto's frescoes, and the exquisite blues of his many heavens encircle the walls like a gay ribbon below the faded reds and yellows of Cimabue.

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Here at least we cannot but feel grateful to Brother Elias, for from the beginning the Franciscans were patrons of the art of painting, and they were among the first to encourage the independent school of art as distinct from the work of Byzantium. Giunta da Pisa clothed the walls of the transept, and Cimabue and his pupils were called in to complete the decorations of the Upper Church. Thus it befell that, while Cimabue was painting some of his masterpieces on the walls above, Giotto, serving his apprenticeship and working with the other pupils of his Master's atelier, stretched out his hand to snatch the greater laurel.

'Cimabue thought
To lord it over painting's field; and now
The cry is Giotto's, and his name eclipsed.'^[17]

Many years later, when his fame was assured, Giotto came back to paint his allegories in the place of honour over the High Altar of the Lower Church. What did he think of it all, I wonder, this Florentine, this lover of beautiful things, this shepherd who left his sheep and his poverty and lighted the difficult path of art by the torch of his genius? Did he too love the memory of Francis? Or was it beyond his understanding that a man should dream of giving up all the world to follow a vision of eternal life? Perhaps he shrugged his shoulders over the whole thing, and painted on, with little thought for the saint, but all his heart in his ambitions, and in the beautiful church which he was helping to adorn.

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Truly it is a temple of Art this Franciscan Holy of Holies, but pilgrims who are questing for the gentle spirit of St. Francis should come away, nor hope to find it in the other great shrine of Assisi, Santa Chiara, the resting-place of Clare. Santa Chiara is inside the eastern gate of Assisi, close to the ancient palace of the Scifi in which the saint was born. It is a bare and empty church whose frescoes, according to the sacristan, were white-washed by a seventeenth-century bishop, because so many strangers came to disturb the nuns! But this Goth, who is said to have been of German extraction, left untouched some exquisite gold pictures of virgin saints over the High Altar, nor did he deem it worth while to destroy the frescoes which cover the walls of the ancient parish church of San Giorgio. For which we should be grateful, because half-hidden behind the gaudy trappings of its altar are two expressive and beautiful pictures of the Madonna and Saint Clare.

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In this humble chapel where they keep the miraculous crucifix of San Damiano, we seem to draw a little nearer to Francis, who must have come here often to the old priest who gave him lessons in his childhood. Later, when the Assisians had begun to listen to him, he preached here until the press became so great that he was given permission to deliver his sermons in the then unfinished cathedral of San Rufino. Here, too, he lay in state while the people of Assisi wept and gloried over him, just as many years after they wept and gloried over St. Clare. It would have been a gentle thought if these two who had prayed and laboured together in life could have been sheltered by the same roof in death. Madonna Giacobba, who had the privilege of coming to St. Francis in his last illness, lies in San Francesco; but Clare, the Poor Lady of San Damiano, who had so humbly begged that she might once break bread with Francis, lies on the hillside far away from him.

We went down to see her tomb, the rock-hewn vault in which until fifty years ago she lay, just as the world had left her seven centuries before, with sprigs of wild thyme scattered by her mourning sisters still clinging to her robe. To-day she lies in a gilt and crystal chest, decked with

flowers and jewels and elaborate velvet cushions. Her strong and rather austere face with its delicate aquiline nose is outlined against her snowy wimple, and in the midst of the incongruous splendour of her resting-place she is clad in the coarse brown robe and black veil of penitence for which she cast aside the luxurious garments of her youth. Candles burn at her head and at her feet, and a phantom-like nun with a lighted taper in her hand glides from behind a veil to draw the curtains. It was so quiet that suddenly I could hear the ticking of my watch out of the stillness, as though time tried to mark the moments in that silent chamber where it had been as nothing for so long.

But how grotesque the wreath of flowers, the thin halo, the gilded bed! Why not have left that sunken figure resting on such hard stones as it chose for comfort in life?

It is only by going out into the highways and hedges as he did that we can find the real Francis;—in the little convent of San Damiano, in the Hermitage of the Carcere, that retreat on Monte Subasio beloved of the early Franciscans, and in the holy places scattered through the fields of Umbria in which he worked and prayed.



ASSISI: S. MARIA MADDALENA AT RIVO TORTO.

A faint odour of romance clings round the ancient stones of San Damiano, for there St. Francis laboured with his own hands to build a habitation of apostolical simplicity which was to be the spiritual home of Clare. This humble place, a mere chapel in the olive-gardens below Assisi, is pregnant with memories of the simple Francis and the saintly Clare. For it was here, as he knelt before a crucifix in the little ruined church, that Francis, the gay merchant-prince of Assisi, heard the voice of Jesus saying, 'Francis, seest thou not that my house is in ruins? Go and restore it for me.' It was just what he needed, this troubled boy. Here was an obvious work for his hands, and in the doing of it he might find relief from the fears and doubtings that had assailed him since he rose from his weary sick-bed and looked upon an altered world. With no premonition of his life-work, truly the rock on which the Catholic Church built up its power when it was in danger of being swept away in tidal waves of lust and avarice during the stormy Middle Ages, the ever-literal Francis bethought him of the letter of his miraculous command.

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It is such an old story that it is not worth retelling, how he sold the bales of cloth from his father's warehouse in the market of Foligno and brought the money to the priest of San Damiano; how the good man refused it, being fearful of Pietro Bernardone's wrath; how Francis flung it into the corner of a little window and would not touch it either; how his angry father renounced him; and how St. Francis, having yielded up his earthly goods, begged through the streets of Assisi for the stones with which to accomplish his work. There was no more fitting spot in all Umbria to be the home of the Second Order than San Damiano. But I think that Clare in her long life within its walls must have often wept, seeing the rough stones which Francis, with his tender unaccustomed hands, had fashioned into a house of God and a shelter for the Poor Ladies who had renounced the world to serve his Master.

I remember well coming upon it one evening, breathless with sirocco, when all the world was gray and silver. In the little cloister-garden the flowers were yielding up their fragrance to the night in perfumed sighs, and in the tiny vaulted chapel two brothers and a priest were singing vespers with a few peasants who had wandered in from the fields. A flight of steps led down into the dark chapel, so little altered from the church which Francis built. And here I rested. Every moment the shadows below the olives crept nearer, shutting out the distance. At my feet in San Damiano the altar lights grew brighter in the dusk, and the swinging censer glowed like a live coal in the dark choir. So I waited, thinking of another Clare, in England, who was lying sick unto death, but with peace in my heart, for it was very sweet to hear Vespers in this holy place while the curious shadows of night crept up under the olives. Presently the chanting ceased. The priest went away, and the peasants passed out into the soft dusk.

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I went down then into the silent chapel and saw the relics of Saint Clare; the little sacristy with ancient wooden seats, such hard uncomfortable planks, where she and the sisters heard Mass; the room she died in; the hollow in the wall through which she received her spiritual food; her yard of garden overlooking the wide Umbrian plain and Rivo Torto. How often as she stood here upon the convent roof must she have thought of the Seraphic Father toiling down in the valley, for I doubt not she loved him, even as Madonna Pica, his mother, and Giacobba di Settisoli loved him, and hungered over him, and grieved for his poor weary feet, and exulted in the purity of his soul.

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What memories of Francis and Clare, the true type of the brother and sister in Christ, are here! Francis indeed came seldom to the convent after the Poor Ladies were installed, for as he was not ordained, he had not the right to hear their confessions or administer the Holy Sacrament. But we know that he often sent to ask advice of the saintly abbess; and he stayed here before his journey to Rieti, when he was worn-out and sick, and almost blind, and took much comfort in her sympathy. Here, too, his body was brought, so that the sisters might look their last upon it before it was borne in triumph to Assisi. But Clare, whose cry of grief still has the power to stir our hearts to pain, lived on through bitter years to see the ideals of the little lover of Poverty shattered by Brother Elias and the Papacy before she followed him up the hill to rest.

The way up to the Carcere is steep and long. The path is a mere track of broken stones which radiates heat, and there is no shade to mitigate the pitiless August glare. And yet I would not have forgone that toil up the side of Subasio, if only for the pleasures of the way. Assisi lay behind us like a city of the Middle Ages, with Gothic towers and palaces grouped in échelon below her fantastic castle. On our right the hillside, veiled in the tender grey of olives, sloped away to the Valley of Spoleto, which was a vision of pure beauty, with mists clinging about the banks of its streams, and its many little cities, Spello, Foligno, Bevagna, tall Trevi and Spoleto, rising from the green folds of encircling hills. Above Subasio was barren except for some scanty oaks, but the bushes by the roadside were heavy with fruit, blackberries, and shiny red and yellow hips and crimson haws. Out of the parched stony earth grew clumps of broom, long-stemmed and slender, with a crest of golden blossoms like a flight of butterflies; and scabious, white and purple, rosettes for a fairy's shoe; and little Morning Glories smiling at the sky; and sugamele, and that wonderful blue thistle, which looks as though it had been soaked, leaves and all, in the rare dye of mountain mists at dawn.

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ASSISI: THE CARCERE.

We did not see the Carcere until we were actually upon it. It is completely hidden in a ravine of ilexes, in a fold, as it were, of the brown skirts of Subasio. Small wonder that the Poverello loved this place; it is so humble, so silent, so restful. Often and often while he toiled down in the valley, ministering to the lepers of Rivo Torto, or preaching to the hard of heart, himself beset with doubts and fears, he must have lifted his eyes unto the hills, and longed for the Peace of God, which he knew dwelt in this solitude. Far away on the spur of the mountain is Assisi, where he laboured to bring love; and further away still, beyond the peaceful vales of Umbria, are great cities in which men worked, and hated, and struggled, ay, and loved unceasingly. But here in this leafy ilex grove, in these tiny cells and chapels, there is a little world of dreams and tender memories.

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It is so small that a few minutes suffice to see everything—the courtyard with its miraculous well; the narrow cell and chapel of St. Francis, which is polished by the feet and shoulders of a multitude of pilgrims; the hole through which the exasperated devil vanished when he found that his temptations were of no avail; the lonely caves of the Early Companions in the hillside. It is a mere cluster of cells overhanging a mountain torrent; but it has a peculiar beauty as of a place set apart, dedicate to holiness.

And there is peace in the shadowy ilex wood in which St. Francis loved to walk, holding converse with his little sisters, the birds. Myrtle and cyclamens grow among the grey rocks, and the sunlight flickers across the mossy path. In the silence we could hear the song of Brother Wind

down in the glen, the humming of an insect near at hand, and, far away, a bird calling to his mate. And all the time the brother, who walked beside us, prated of the miracles of the saint. I hardly listened, for like an echo down the years I seemed to hear Francis, the troubadour of God, singing his canticle of the sun as he toiled up the barren hillside from Assisi.

'Laudato sia Dio mio Signore
Cum tutte le tue creature,
Specialmente messer lo frate sole,
Il quale giorna et illumina nui per lui,
Et ello è bello et radiante cum grande splendore,
De te Signore porta significatione.'

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On a day of never-to-be-forgotten beauty we went down into the fields below Assisi, and wandered in the footsteps of Francis and his brother saints. Our way led out of the town by the old Roman road below the ancient Porta Moiana, and there among the olives we came upon Gothic farms, tended by beautiful Umbrian peasants, and many a humble half-forgotten shrine, made holy in the thirteenth century, and fallen now into disuse. There are many such places round Assisi, within whose walls Mass is only said once a year, leaving them for the rest of the days to be store-houses or granaries or sheds in which to keep the wooden plough of the countryside.

Everywhere were snow-white butterflies dancing in pairs before us as we passed, or swinging on the slender flowers that starred the hedges. White doves bowed and sidled in the golden wheat, and wayside shrines rose from a tangle of flowers where the cross roads met. And here, as though it was a custom oft repeated, the milk-white oxen, which once were deemed a fitting sacrifice for Roman gods, paused in their rolling gait while their masters laid down their whips, and doffed their hats and knelt a moment in the dust before the symbol of the suffering Christ.

It was a world of great simplicity and faith in which we walked. For here in Umbria, down in these fields where Francis' 'Camp of the Lord' set up their wattle huts, faith is a real and potent thing. They do not doubt, these people, these rugged-faced men, these Madonna-like women—they never will doubt. To them the mysteries of the Incarnation and Ascension are accepted facts. In simplicity and faith they rise up in the morning and lie down again at night, never fearing that their prayers at dawn and evening, their hastily uttered petitions at a roadside cross, have not winged their way straight to heaven. I too would fain believe it when I am walking in their olive-groves and vineyards, for it is a lovely thing, as dreams are lovely, and young ambitions and young hope. And it is here perhaps that the secret of the intangible beauty of Assisi may be found—because it is a shrine; no matter of St. Francis, or of Jesus of Nazareth, or of the older gods. Out of the wreck of time the flame of worship and faith has been kept burning; the stones upon this altar have never darkened and grown cold.

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It was the season of the husking of the maize, and a happy harvest air hung over everything. Each farm had its pile of fragrant white husks outside its door ready to replenish the mattresses of the household, and the corn was spread out on the threshing-floors like a golden carpet. Sometimes we saw the family gathered there to shell the cobs, and sometimes we came upon them sitting below their olive-trees, separating the yellow corn from its white sheaths, and heaping them up on either side the gold and silver largesse of the Great Mother.

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It was in the midst of all this pastoral loveliness that we came to Rivo Torto, which is so bare and ugly and un-Franciscan in feeling. Poor and humble, but far richer in the spirit of St. Francis than the great church of Rivo Torto, are the two chapels of Santa Maria Maddalena and San Rufino d'Arce, which may mark the approximate site of the hut in which the saint dwelt while he was ministering to the lepers. We found Santa Maria Maddalena in a field of hemp, whose tall slender stalks and green tassels veiled the ancient apse and narrow lancet windows. Golden pumpkins were piled shoulder-high outside its wall, drying in the sun; and the interior, when at last it was unlocked, proved to be a potato store. Even more dilapidated is San Rufino d'Arce, which stands further from the road near the threshing-floor of a neighbouring farm. Nor could the lovely peasant woman, who brought its key and walked like a queen barefoot among her golden corn-cobs, tell us anything of its miraculous well in which, tradition says, a young boy saint was drowned.



ASSISI: THE PORZIUNCULA.

But now, as we drew near it, along the dusty white road which links Perugia to Rome, the dome of Santa Maria degli Angeli towered above the plain. This is the holiest place in Umbria, the Little Portion, beloved of St. Francis and his brethren, in which they lived and worked, and from which they issued forth to preach the gospel of love and repentance to the world. It is sanctified by miracles and the frequent presence of the saint, and is pregnant with the romance of the Franciscan order, which the writer of the *Fioretti* has set forth so admirably. But overmuch devotion has robbed it of simplicity and nullified many of its gentler associations. It is a pathetic sight to see the little church, consecrated by centuries of prayer, in the centre of the sixteenth-century Leviathan. It looks like an imprisoned thing, a dim unspoken reproach. I wish they could have left it in its fields, where the wild sweet wind would have sung praises through door and window, and the ardent sun have shamed the candles on the altar. But just as the papacy swept away Francis himself, so this great church has swallowed up the Little Portion which was all-sufficing for so many saints. A gentle, white-haired friar took us round the church. 'Here by this pier,' he said, 'Francis dined with Clare. And this is where he died. You know he wished to die here. He loved the Porziuncula better than any other place in the world.'

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And then we saw the thornless roses of St. Francis, and his cell, and the garden where he bade the brothers put cabbages into the earth upside down to test their obedience, and the fig-tree which the brothers lately planted at the request of two Englishwomen, to take the place of the tree wherein the cicala praised God continuously with Francis until the saint begged him to rest because he had edified him enough.

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He was a simple, dear old man, our guide, who told his stories smilingly and yet with reverence and faith, very different from the unkempt and cynical monk at Rivo Torto. And when he had finished he took us into the sacristy and gave us a little book he had written about Saint Mary of the Angels, and a rose sprig from the bush which lost its thorns when St. Francis threw himself into it. And so we parted, he to his prayers, we to climb up through the fields to Assisi.

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GUBBIO

I shall always think of Gubbio as I saw her first, in the magic sunset of a cold grey day, on which summer had been hidden by the jealous clouds, and the wind blew bleakly from the Appennines. September had come in the night before with storm and wind. When we left Assisi the sky was clear and rain-swept, blue as the heavens of Giotto's frescoes in the Upper Church of San Francesco, and there was a glint of sunshine lighting her Gothic towers between the racing cumuli. But all day the mountains of Nocera and Gualdo 'mourned for their heavy yoke,' hiding their crests in wind-blown veils of cloud; and the rocky stream-beds at their feet, which had lain mute and parched since the last rains of spring, gave voice in swirling torrents.

So we came to the heart of the Appennines, to the broad Valley of the Chiaggio, which is so rich with maize and vineyards. Here in the north three mountains lift their great heads to the sky, and in the hollow where their three slopes meet lies Gubbio, a fairy citadel such as poets dream of. Indeed, Gubbio might well be the home of dreams, for I can think of no place where their gossamer threads could be so lightly spun as in the long, fantastic arcade of the Mercato Vecchio, in the shadow of her Gothic palaces. [172]

As we drew near, the sun slipped from below her mantle of cloud, and in a seeming passion of desire bathed the whole world in flame. Seen by the ruddy torch of this wild sunset Gubbio was all rose, a city of fair dreams, unforgettably lovely. Her towers, palaces and loggias were illuminated, and the bare slopes of Monte Calvo were flooded with roseate light save where the folds of the hill made cobalt shadows. Even the peasants walking in the Piazza del Mercato were caught in the same radiance, which made a glory round the humblest implements of toil. It was so fair a sight that I stood as one enchanted and feared to take my eyes away from it, lest it should vanish like the fairy cities of our childhood, and I should find myself once more upon the bleak hillside of life.

O little town, with the name whose quaintness has made it familiar, do you still sleep at the foot of your mountains under the shadow of your holy houses? Can it be that I have dreamt of you, seeing some picture of a mediaeval city in a psalter? Or does your lamp-lighter still light your ancient swing-lamps in the dusk, with old-world grace and disregard of time, setting out on his slow rounds long before the sunset glow has faded from your brow? I must come back to see if it is true; if your barren hills have really blossomed into shrines and monasteries; if you have still the wistful charm that I remember; if you will greet me after the long journey with that same rosy blush at eve! [173]



GUBBIO: THE LAMPLIGHTER.

And yet, I do not know why I should question, for I have many gentle memories of Gubbio—of steep, quiet streets whose ends are closed by solemn mountains; of Gothic palaces and loggias; of ancient churches full of faded pictures; of saints and Madonnas brooding over city gates; of peasants streaming into Mass of a morning; of women in black mantillas or the graceful fringed shawls of Venice and the March. Nor have I forgotten the hospitality that she extended to us. Gubbio was always famous for her hospitality. There is a story that in the olden days the nobles of Gubbio fought so fiercely for the right of entertaining visitors to their town that to avoid the [174]

really serious conflicts which resulted from this rivalry a pillar was erected in the Mercato with rings attached to it, 'each belonging to some separate aristocratic house, and to whosoever ring a traveller chanced to fasten his horse, to him belonged the right of entertainment.'^[18]

Though our inn was humble, even rough, we were lodged in the ancient convent of San Marco, and we took our meals in a vine arbour full of hanging grapes, where the sunlight piercing the leafy roof flecked the snowy table-cloth with silver, and made the floor an arabesque of dappled light and shade. A few yards away among the vines the Carmignano foamed along its rocky bed. And here we were content with simple fare, but of the best—macaroni spread with pomodoro, *misto fritto*, golden eggs, fruit and honey, washed down with amber-coloured *vino del paese*.

Whatever may be the facts about the grandson of Noah, to whom local tradition loves to assign the foundation of Gubbio, there can be no doubt that she is of Umbrian antiquity. Unlike most of the so-called Umbrian cities Gubbio has ample proof of her importance as a city of the older race, which was displaced by the Etruscans; for besides the number of prehistoric utensils discovered in the caves of her mountains, and a short course of Cyclopean wall on Monte Calvo, which point to a remote civilisation, there are certain pieces of money in existence bearing the Umbrian name Ikuvini; and, most conclusive evidence of all, there are the world-famous Eugubian Tables.

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These tables of bronze, which have been of such inestimable value to the student of ancient languages, are Gubbio's greatest treasure. They are housed in her Palazzo Pubblico, in her little shrunken museum, which has so few precious things left to-day, except a solitary tazza by the immortal Maestro Giorgio. It would be useless for me to write of them at length, for it is impossible to treat of them scientifically in a short chapter, and only those who come to see them can gauge the romance and mystery which hang about them. There are seven tables in all, four written in Etruscan characters, two in Latin, and one partly in Etruscan and partly in Latin characters. Yet the language that they have immortalised is neither Latin nor Etruscan, but the tongue of that mysterious people, the Umbrians, who have left us so few traces of their civilisation, whose origin is lost in the misty ages.

Since the discovery of these tables in 1444 students and scholars have sought to read their riddle, and it is by the fruit of their labours that we know what an interesting clue they afford to the character of Gubbio. For these fine letters traced by the scribes of long ago are sacerdotal inscriptions, dealing with the religious rites of the Attidian brethren, who paid homage to a strange pantheon of gods—Umbrian, Roman and Greek—and whose headquarters, according to many students, were in the temple of Jupiter Appenninus, eight miles away, at Scheggia, on the old Flaminian way. M. Bréal, however, does not hold this theory, claiming that Jupiter Appenninus is not mentioned in the text; and urging the plea that as the tablets were discovered in a subterranean vault, near the ancient theatre of Iguvium, the college of the confraternity was likely to be found within the city itself.

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It would be difficult to say, for necessarily the reading of the tablets is but vague; the only point we can be certain of is that this ghostly echo of a vanished city is one of prayer and invocation, occupied with sacrifices and propitiations rather than with laws or ceremonies, as the inscriptions of Rome and Etruria have been. And this is typical of the city, for the real characteristic of Gubbio to-day is her gentle air of sanctity, just as the most vivid memories of her Middle Ages are concerned with saints and bishops. For the bishops of Gubbio, the saintly Ubaldo, whose name the people of Gubbio venerate in the yearly festival of the Ceri on the 15th of May, the blessed Teobaldo who succeeded him, and Villano, that man 'of pure and saintly life who was, besides, the friend of St. Francis of Assisi,' are only a few of the many holy men who steered her helm through the stormy waves of Time.

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GUBBIO: SAN FRANCESCO.

And here, as you remember, St. Francis came with song and thanksgiving, although he had been but a short time before stripped naked to the world, to see his friend Giacomello Spada, who clothed him and sheltered him, and whose garden covered the ground where the picturesque Gothic church of San Francesco stands to-day. Nor is there any more familiar story told by their nurses to the breathless children of the Latin countries than the legend of St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio, which is commemorated to this day in the little chapel of S. Francesco della Pace; built, so it is said, on the site of the cave wherein the wolf dwelt after he had been tamed by the brotherly love of Francis. It was to Gubbio Francis came in the first glow of his renunciation, for we read that he was confident of finding shelter and the bare necessities of clothing with his friends there, but I think there was another reason. Perhaps as he lay on the bleak side of Subasio he thought with longing of the gentle city of Ubaldo, cradled at the foot of its bare mountain, which soared towards the heavens, offering, as it were, upon an altar, the body of its saintly bishop.

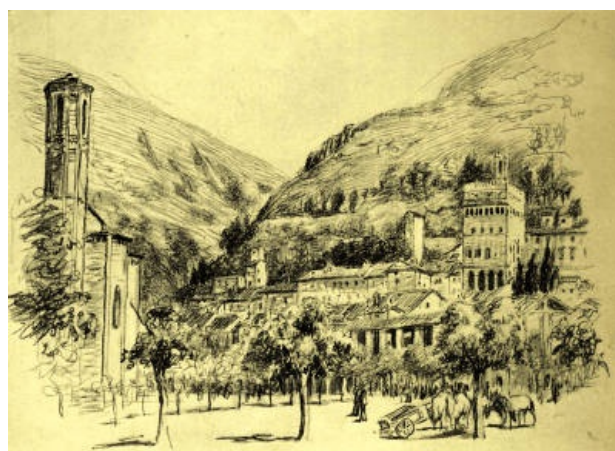
Gubbio is a city of vanished splendours, a ghost of her old glory. So that we were amazed on entering Santa Maria Nuova to see anything so brilliant and full of vivid beauty as the Madonna della Belvedere, which Ottaviano Nelli painted there. Like Sant'Agostino and San Pietro, Santa Maria has her share of faded fresco; but this Madonna in her splendid robes, in the midst of her gracious court of angels and saints and kneeling donors, is a vision of the glories of that Gubbio which once raised a proud head among the principalities of the Quattrocento. Yet not even Nelli has succeeded in colouring the past of Gubbio. For nearly all her treasures have been stolen from her, and her tired old walls toppling to their decay enclose more gardens and smiling vineyards than streets and squares. If she had not been so poor and so ready to sell herself for a few *soldi* to the passing stranger she might have been a museum of lovely things. As it is she has been stripped of everything which could be carried away, from the exquisite majolica of Maestro Giorgio (whose ruby glaze made him as much the glory of sixteenth-century Gubbio as Oderigi was of the city visited by Dante) to the intarsia cabinets in the Palace of Federigo of Urbino.

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How typical of Gubbio, the shrunken city, is the ruined palace full of lovely crumbling stones, where Federigo and his beloved wife Battista lived. It is fallen into decay; it has become a mere barrack; a more desolate spot could not well be imagined. And yet it is a fitting symbol of the house of Montefeltro; for Guidobaldo, the weakling son of the great condottiere, was born here, in the house which Federigo built so proudly in his birthplace among the loyal people of Gubbio. And it was the scene of a great tragedy. For here Battista died.

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After her death Federigo came here less often, for we read that he loved Battista very dearly. She had inherited the wit and ready sympathy of her great grandmother, Battista da Montefeltro; she was a scholar, and a woman of resource and courage, capable of defending the duchy while Federigo was absent on his long campaigns. And withal she loved him. It was for this reason, knowing his disappointment because she had given him no heir to succeed to his hard-won estate, that this great woman, the grandmother of Vittoria Colonna, listened for her lord's sake to an old wife's tale, and making a pilgrimage to Gubbio vowed to Saint Ubaldo that if a son was vouchsafed to her she would be willing to die for his sake. A curious story. But she did bear a son, here at Gubbio, whither she had come to be under the special protection of the saint. Federigo was away in Tuscany, gaining more laurels by his great victory over the Volterrans. He came back to her as soon as he could, riding swiftly through the Appennines with his honours fresh upon him. And here is the strangest part of the story. For when he was but a few hours away Battista, who had been progressing so well, fell ill, and died soon after his arrival, thus expiating her vow. Federigo's heartbroken letters to the Senate of Siena and the Pope testify his grief. Nor did her love and sacrifice avail him anything, for Guidobaldo was the last of his race to sit upon the throne of Urbino.



GUBBIO: PIAZZA VITTORIO EMANUELE.

But neither Time, nor the wanton hand of strangers, can rob Gubbio of her beauty. She is a dream-city within whose walls we grew forgetful of the world. It is not the imperishable grandeur of her mountains or her monuments which constitute her special charm so much as her Gothic grace and her gentle blending of art and nature. See what a fraction of old Iguvium is left—a theatre, with its memories of vanished pomps and vanities, and some broken tombs standing in the corn-fields, with twisted vines veiling their ragged cores, and brambles tossing wide arms over their crests. And yet I carry with me the memory of a golden hour in that ancient Umbro-

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Roman theatre of Iguvium, not so much for its importance as a monument as for its beauty; although the vandalism of the last century, which allowed the people of Gubbio to strip it of its marble columns, has left it many interesting fragments, such as a perfect doorway with its jambs complete, and the unspoilt sloping pavement of the wings by which the actors entered the stage. For we approached it through a vineyard below the city walls: its auditorium was a deep semi-circle of grassy steps, brodered with little flowers, and in its proscenium the apples dropped from neighbouring orchards.

We stepped through the vineyard gate on to the raised platform of the stage, denuded of everything except some stumps of masonry and some few feet of pavement. Three blocks of marble served as rough steps from the proscenium to the orchestra, and here a lizard sunned himself, and a happy golden butterfly fluttered, as though these old worn stones were their familiar playground. As we climbed up the seats where once the Romans sat, and perhaps the Umbri, for the theatre was repaired in the lifetime of Augustus, the scent of crushed thyme filled the air. It was very quiet. There were not even cicadas, only the distant bells of Gubbio calling her people to prayer. We sat on the highest circle of the mossy steps, and looked across the vineyards to the little city, asleep in the golden noon below her arid hills.

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The poet was deep in *opus reticulatum* and cornices and friezes, but I could only love the silence and the scented air, the little flowers which starred the ground, the grasses pencilled lightly against the sky on the chain of arches, the lizards sunning themselves on broken marbles, the butterflies dancing above them. And when I raised my eyes Gubbio lay before me with olive-gardens enclosed in her broken walls, and her old grey houses piled one above the other round her lovely Gothic Palazzo dei Consoli, which soars above the lesser roofs, arcaded and battlemented, a crown of beauty on the hillside. Behind rose her three mountains, Monte Calvo, Monte Ingino, and Monte S. Girolamo, barren of everything but lonely cypresses pointing the way to monasteries on high.

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GUBBIO: THE MEDIAEVAL AQUEDUCT.

Gubbio has the indefinably wistful charm of a city built in the shadow of great mountains, for though she has conquered the three giants which hem her in, and left her monasteries as outposts on their slopes, and solemn crucifixes as her ensign on their brows, she has not tamed their wildness. It needs only a few steps through the picturesque old Porta Metauro to prove this, for out in that rugged pass which leads to Scheggia, and the Old Flaminian Road, and Cagli, and Urbino we were hemmed in between the hungry mountains, whose sides are scarred by torrents, curiously seamed, and richly coloured.

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Along this road the Dukes of Urbino rode in splendid state. How little it is altered from their day! Here you are face to face with Nature, who changes slowly. The strata on the frowning cliffs are a little worn; the road is a little better, though it is a poor *strada* even now for motors; perhaps there was no wall then between the road and the deep gully where the green Carmignano stirs up its sandy bed. But the peasants rode up the hilly pass then as now with their women riding astride and a pillion on mules or donkeys, and the traveller in that day would hear as we did the forlorn music of their bells still floating back, long after they were out of sight. On the hillside above was one of Gubbio's wonders—the mediaeval aqueduct which creeps perilously round the shoulder of Monte Calvo, and dips down the hillside to the Bottaccione, which I can best describe by saying that it is a thick wall which joins Monte Calvo to Monte Ingino, and dams the Carmignano, making a reservoir from which water can flow at will into the town for use in mills and fountains. If the Eugubian Tablets testify to the importance of ancient Iguvium, these vast engineering feats testify to her mediaeval greatness. For though they are not as imposing as Roman Monuments, and are built of small poor stones, they are a splendid testimony of the energy of this little hill-girt city in the twelfth and fourteenth^[19] centuries, when most principalities were too occupied in petty wars to think of such stupendous work.



GUBBIO: VIA CARMIGNANO.

It would be unfair to Gubbio to take leave of her without saying one word about the Via Carmignano, which is not only one of the most picturesque streets to be seen anywhere in Italy, but which represents a sphere of life in which Gubbio was extremely active from the twelfth century to comparatively recent years—her woollen industry. It is rather astonishing that Gubbio, who had so many trades and arts, should be so poor to-day. Her school of painting which was mainly of the miniature type—for Ottaviano Nelli was as much a miniature-painter as the mysterious Oderisi, whose name, like Francesca da Rimini's, has been handed down to posterity by Dante—was famous throughout Italy.

I have already spoken of her renown as the home of Master George, the great majolica-maker; she sheltered a school of mosaic-workers from early times; and her wood-carvers, who have left splendid work in her old Church of San Pietro, were reckoned so important that a certain Niccolò was commissioned to carve the great doors of San Francesco at Assisi. But it was by her wool industry that Gubbio built up her wealth; and it was to turn their wool mills that the Eugubians built the Bottaccione out in the pass between Scheggia and Gubbio, and diverted the course of the Carmignano, which till the twelfth century had been a moat round the city walls.

To-day this little mountain torrent still runs through the heart of Gubbio, but the mills are silent. For the woollen trade, which was so prosperous in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the nobles passed a law forbidding any of their class to enter its ranks under penalty of forfeiting his title, has been slowly killed by the suppression of the monasteries, which has robbed it of its staple support, the making of habits for religious houses.

The Via Carmignano is a little Venice which loses itself in a mountain torrent as it approaches the Porta Metauro. Behind the arcaded loggia del Mercato, where it runs at the foot of the cypress garden of San Giovanni Battista, a picturesque and ancient church on the site of the early cathedral, the ravine is spanned by as many bridges as a Venetian waterway, mediaeval erections of the maddest shapes, full of fantastic angles, which sometimes only lead to the barred doors of some Merchant of Gubbio's private house. Here are Gothic palaces with gardens pouring over their walls, and coats of arms by their doors like the house near the Via dei Consoli, which has the Lamb of the Templars over its portal. But as the road creeps up towards the Porta Metauro they are replaced by thirteenth-century houses, mere cottages of rough grey stone such as you might find in any mountain village—only these were built in the time of St. Francis. Between the street and the deep river gully is a breast-high parapet with wide-eaved shrines whose hanging lamps are always lit at night; and beyond and above are the everlasting hills, towering overhead, blocking every vista with their rocks and gullies and stony water-courses, lifting their tawny heads up to the soft sky and crowned with giant crucifixes, as though they shouted in triumph to an unheeding world the old war-cry of the Lord, '*In hoc signo vinces!*'

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ANCONA

We caught our first glimpse of the shimmering Adriatic across a richly-farmed plain full of the fruit-trees which Horace and Juvenal extolled; and soon afterwards we saw the Eastern Gate of Italy, beautiful Ancona, rising like a city of white marble above its blue, sickle-shaped bay.

The history of the origin of Ancona is unique among the cities of the Adriatic, for she was founded by a colony of Sicilian Greeks who came to the shores of Picenum about 380 B.C., seeking refuge from the tyrant Dionysius. Ancona is a typical Greek site, a natural harbour well adapted to the use of commerce, with a steep hill overhanging the 'elbow' bay. From the earliest times she was rich and prosperous, for besides being the only port on the eastern coast before the growth of Venice and Ravenna she was situated in the fertile fields of Picenum, which were noted for the excellence of their olives and fruits, as well as for their wine and corn. She also had a wonderful purple dye which was said to equal that of Phoenicia, whence came the garments immortalised by Macaulay.

'Woven in the land of sunrise
By Syria's dark-browed daughters,
And by the sails of Carthage brought
Far o'er the southern waters.'

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She was one of the first cities to hold out friendly hands to Caesar after he had crossed the Rubicon on his march on Rome, and in the life-time of Pliny she was raised to the rank of a Roman colony. Later when the Emperors and after them the Exarchs held their courts at Ravenna, Ancona was of even more importance than Ravenna as the natural trading port with the Byzantine Empire.

To-day she is a large and prosperous city, with broad streets and boulevards given over to the tyranny of electric trams. She is like Alexandria, or Marseilles, with her busy wharf life on the one hand and her *piazze* with their fountains and bandstands and their alfresco cafés under avenues of plane trees on the other. Her restaurants are dear, and her inns bad; her inhabitants are the most disagreeable people we met in Italy—with all the taciturnity of the Venetians and none of their picturesqueness; but we were able to forgive her everything for the beauty of her cathedral, and for the first view of her wide bay with the pictured sails of her fishing-boats poised like a flight of butterflies on its mirroring waters.

In Ancona, while I am down in the noisy streets, my heart is always up on the grassy hill above the Mole of Trajan, where the Cathedral of San Ciriaco is set like a jewel on the crest of Monte Guasco. Truly it is on their hills that you may know the cities of Italy. For up there, far removed from the unlovely bustle of her streets with their clanging tramways, their painted kiosks, their matter-of-fact commercialism, we seemed to creep unawares right into the heart of Ancona. Coming straight from the peace and breadth and quiet of Umbria we had found her peculiarly unattractive. We had pictured a city of romance, for Ancona has ever been Italy's link with the Orient; the wealth of Byzantium has been unloaded in her harbour; the merchandise of the East has stood upon her quays. And in the first flush of our arrival, when we stood upon the wharf and saw the brilliant wings of her fishing-boats drifting in from the Adriatic, she seemed for a moment to be the city of our imaginings—a fleeting fancy, not easily recaptured on the boulevards of the modern city. But on the hill of San Ciriaco, far above the noisy town, with the Adriatic filling the horizon, and the soft bells of the incomparably lovely church of the first bishop of Ancona wafting a benediction to the fishing fleet as it sailed into the sunset, she became once more our Port of Romance, true sister to Venice, the beautiful bride of Italy's Eastern Waters.

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There was nothing to prepare us for the exquisite vista which unfolded itself before us on the crest of Monte Guasco as we toiled up the steep stair-streets which scale the Cathedral hill. The houses were old but undistinguished, the homes of the very poor, who do not even have windows in Italy, but live behind stable doors in *bassi*. Nor did we realise the moment at which we emerged from them, for our eyes were blocked by the bell-tower of age unknown which stands like a sentinel before Ancona's Cathedral. There is no church in Christendom so enthroned. It is built between two tideless seas on a wind-swept hill, which was once the seat of the white temple of the laughing Goddess of Eryx—Aphrodite, who was born of the foam.

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Beside it is the old Episcopal Palace in which Aeneas Sylvius, the last of the crusaders, waited for the false Patriarch of Venice to set sail with him against the Turks. Poor Pius II., with his quixotic and splendid dream of reconquering Jerusalem for the Papacy, how often must he have stood on the bulwark of San Ciriaco's hill watching for the galleys of the Venetian to come into sight. And when at last they did sweep down upon Ancona he was no longer waiting; he had embarked alone upon a longer journey; the last and most incomprehensible of the crusades had failed!

We, too, stood upon the crest of Monte Guasco behind its bulwark of acacia trees, on our first evening by the Adriatic, and looked down upon the busy wharf, with the long arm of Trajan's Mole encircling the harbour, and the white crescent of Ancona stretching round the bay to Monte Astagno. It was nearing the hour of sunset. Across the sunlit water we could see the great Appennines towering towards heaven, aerial as clouds upon the horizon. There Rimini lay, on that fair coast, and Venice and Ravenna, the homes of Poetry and Romance. But near at hand Ancona's fleet of bright-winged boats was spread across the bay. We stood and watched them sailing out into the west, slowly, for there was little wind to fill their gold and copper sails. They looked like argosies of Love journeying into a land of sunset mists across a painted sea. Surely they must come back to-morrow with dreams below their wings, and little lovely treasures from

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the land whither they were sailing to-night! Slowly they crossed the bar—now a crimson wing tapering to gold with a black griffin rampant; now an orange Gonfalon bearing a lion and anchor; now one of black and gold, now one of Venetian brown. We watched them drifting out, and always the west grew more golden and the distant mountains more aerial until the sea was a path of flame from the far-off coast to Trajan's Mole, where the sunset gilded the black hulks of the coal-ships in the harbour. Ere the last of those fantastic birds had winged its way out to the deep waters, the lights of Ancona had begun to twinkle in the dusk, and the bells of San Ciriaco were stilled.



ANCONA: THE FISHING FLEET.

San Ciriaco is worthy of its site. Begun a thousand years ago in the form of the earliest Christian temples, half Byzantine, half Romanesque, it preserves the original Greek cross of nave and transept, and is crowned by an antique dome, one of the oldest in Italy, which time and the salt breath of the Adriatic have painted a wonderful green, the despair of artists. The exterior of San Ciriaco is of almost Eastern simplicity, but sun and wind have mellowed the dazzling white marbles of its walls to such gracious tints that it is like a perfect fruit ripened slowly to perfection through the centuries. Its chief glory is the Gothic portico of rose-red Verona marble which tradition and Vasari assign to the hand of Margheritone d'Arezzo, the sombre painter of crucifixes, who was so jealous of Giotto that he died of spleen. Two couchant lions at the head of a flight of steps support its outer columns, and within it is blush-hued, with slender columns, alternate rose and white, wrought with a delicate frieze of the heads of saints and the grotesques of mediaeval fancy.

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Nor has the interior of this noble church suffered much from the hands of the restorer. It is a granary of rare and interesting Byzantine fragments, and its choir is graced by ten of the marble columns which once stood in the temple of Aphrodite.

Ancona of to-day is a garden where the beautiful flowers of an ancient architecture are still flourishing among the energetic weeds and herbs of everyday life. Between the two horns of her crescent bay, Monte Astagno, crowned by the Spanish bastions of the Fortezza, and Monte Guasco, which enthrones the lovely church of San Ciriaco, there is a network of streets. Let us for the sake of the metaphor suppose that these streets are paths in the garden of Ancona; and let us walk in them, searching in the tangle of hardy commercial upshoots for the delicate blossoms which graced the pleasantries of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. More than this, for down in the crowded port we shall discover the ancient growths of the Roman city in many a broken arch on whose blackened stones a Gothic spandril has been grafted, and in the glorious Triumphal Arch which the Imperial Plotina and her sister-in-law raised in honour of Trajan.

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Between the shrieking railway station and the Porta Pia there is nothing to detain us; this is more or less a modern suburb which has sprung up since the foundation of the railway; but at the Porta Pia, which stands at the foot of Monte Astagno, we enter the old harbour. To our left is the picturesque Lazzaretto built by Clement XII. in 1732, now used as a sugar refinery; and in front we see before us the curving bay of Ancona, with its grand new quay or Banchina, of which the Anconans are so proud. The Via Ventinove Settembre, whose name like the ubiquitous Venti Settembre commemorates the expulsion of the Papal troops in 1860, takes us into the heart of the modern city; but it is not in her wide Corso Giuseppe Mazzini, or Vittorio Emanuele, or Piazza Cavour that we shall find anything of the old Ancona. Here she is as modern as her names betoken, although the fruit-market in a curious uphill square and the fish-market below the picturesque sixteenth-century fountain of the Corso Giuseppe Mazzini are as picturesque and irrelevant as any market in Italy.

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It is in the southern wing of the city that we shall find the flowers we seek, in the steep Strada delle Scuole which runs through the centre of the graceful arcaded Court of the Prefettura, and the Via Aurelio Saffi, the most characteristic and romantic street in Ancona. In the Strada delle Scuole we see the great church of San Domenico with the colossal statue of Clement XII. upon its steps, and San Francesco with its riotous Gothic façade towering over the narrow street from its lofty stairs, and the Palazzo del Comune built by Margheritone d'Arezzo, and much restored and modernised in the seventeenth century.

But it is in the Via Aurelio Saffi that Ancona flowers best; for in this centre of the busy wharf life, which has been given up to the merchants and bankers of the eastern port, we find such

gracious little basilicas, enriched with carvings from Byzantine bestiaries, and Gothic porches and façades flowering into the Renaissance under the Oriental touch of Giorgio da Sebenico, the last Gothic architect of Italy. Here is the Loggia dei Mercanti, very florid and flamboyant, with its tilting knight a-horseback; and close beside it Napoleon's home in Ancona, the Palazzo Benincasa, with fifteenth-century Gothic-Renaissance windows; and here, standing a little back from the rattle of the modern port traffic, with pigeons resting on its many little arches, is Santa Maria della Piazza, with a Pisan-romanesque façade, soft and eaten by the years, encrusted with ancient sculptures and dusty majolica plaques. Opposite this ancient and beautiful church a gateway with another relief of a knight on horseback, like the splendid gilt knight of the Loggia dei Mercanti, leads into the big docks; but it is better to go down the Via Aurelio Saffi, though at the first glance it seems to be given up to shipping agents and barbers. For here, in the shadow of the old old Palazzo del Comune, which is carried up on gigantic arches to the level of the road above, we find the little church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, with its curious Renaissance portal, its one Byzantine ambo, and its elegant mosque-like interior of brick with stone cornices, pillars and groinings only thinly disguised by plaster. A little further up is a doorway of Roman masonry, and two ancient arches, with uncemented blocks up to the cornice but Gothic work above. And soon afterwards the narrow street debouches on to the wharf.

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Not in all Italy is there such a quay, or such a blaze of colour! A long line of mediaeval wall, of burnt red brick machicolated, runs down the Mole, and in its shadow are some low trattorie covered with Morning Glories. High above these, raised on a flight of steps, the arch of Trajan, with its marble painted grey and gold by rain and the years, is framed in the blue Italian sky. Beside it the bronze and copper sails of the fishing-boats are massed together among the black colliers, and above and behind are the green hills of Ancona, with her red-roofed houses climbing up their wide slopes, and Monte Guasco crowned by the white jewel of her cathedral. It has been said that Trajan's arch is the most beautiful and perfect Roman arch in Italy. I do not know. It is wonderfully unspoiled and graceful, extremely simple in design, plainer even than the arch of Titus on the brow of the Velian. But surely there is no other Roman monument which has so rich a setting!

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Though we spent a long morning down in the harbour, hemmed in by the amphitheatre of Ancona's hills, now watching the fishermen mending their big brown nets, now engrossed with the picturesque wharf life—the sailors clad in bright blue linen at work among the black hulks of the coaling ships, the oxen toiling over the stones, their snowy flanks grey with dust and dirt, the lascars of ocean-going steamers whose scarlet turbans lent a fresh note of colour to the animated scene—our first and last thoughts of Ancona were with her fishing-boats. For when we left her they fluttered after us like butterflies out of a garden as far as Falconara, just as they had come to meet us when we drew near her sickle bay.

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To watch the boats of Ancona drift into the little harbour at sundown, furling their sails, is to find oneself taken back to the Age of Beautiful Things when the ideal form and colour were as natural as sunlight and shadow. It was for this reason that we took rooms in the Albergo Milano, which is a bad and cheerless inn, for below our windows lay the whole fleet of graceful craft, with up-curved bows like ancient galleys, and sails emblazoned with devices, flaunting gay colours—old gold and purple, and Venetian browns and reds at dawn and sunset.

Although her white temple has long since vanished from Monte Guasco, Aphrodite, the goddess of fair and prosperous journeys, still keeps watch over Ancona's bay. In these halcyon-days we forgot that the vines of Umbria were already yellowing under the autumn rains; we hardly realised that these smiling waters were of an eastern sea.

Think of the coast of Norfolk in the cold wet days of an English September, when the North Sea thunders along the shore as though Poseidon shook his head in wrath! If you have stood upon the timber pier at Lowestoft, its wooden sides green with sea-wrack, and watched the deep-sea fishermen lurching out in heavy grey rollers to wrest their living from an angry sea, you will find it hard to reconcile their perilous existence with the gracious beauty of Ancona's fishing-fleet. There life is full of the grandeur and bitterness of toil, salt with the kiss of the sea and the tears of the women weeping for those who never come back; here there is song and sunshine; here you could set sail for dreamland in these painted ships upon the mirroring Adriatic.

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We were never weary of watching the boat-life from our windows. In the still dawn the arms of the harbour were like gold bars encircling a sapphire, and in the distance we could see the little towns along the sea-board shining rosily from their misty hills. Sometimes the bay was sown with boats, like azure embroidery with butterflies, and sometimes below the windows the cargo of a felucca with gold and bronze sails was being unloaded on the wharf. The sailors were clad in white and blue, or stripped to the waist, with scarlet sashes girding up their short white drawers. How Brangwyn could have caught that vivid colour against the pearly dawn! Then the sun rose and the fleet began to drift slowly out to sea, trailing their bright reflections in the water.

But I loved them best when they came in at night, furling their yellow wings or drooping their tired pinions to the west, laden with who knows what treasures from the caves of sea-gods! Some were blended into a soft harmony of colour, copper and red and gold; others had strange devices painted on them, griffins and black dragons, elephants and mermen; some were like tiger moths, black and emblazoned. And there was one crimson sail with a white horse, a gallant beast like the fiery steeds of an ancient frieze, who sank to his knees when the fishers reached the quay, and then vanished in its rich red folds.

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Aeneas Sylvius must have looked upon such sails; so might the wings of the Venetian Antonio's ships have been wrought. All the gold of the East seemed to be pouring into the harbour as those boats came in. We watched them tacking into port, passing one another again and again, like the figures in a stately dance—far off at first, then nearer, then just outside the bar, then looming

large below the windows as they trailed by to tie up at the quay—drooping their pennons and folding their wings like dream-ships, the fantastic heralds of the night.

LORETO

Loreto, the hill of laurels, which tradition has made the most sacred spot in Italy, has more than a legendary antiquity. For on its sunny slopes, overlooking the battle-field of Castelfidardo and the still Adriatic, the mysterious Picenians, contemporaries of the Umbrians and the Etruscans, left traces of a perished history in graves which have yielded the highest native art of prehistoric Italy.

They are charnelled in the museum of Ancona. But the vast cathedral built over the Holy House of Loreto is of a solidity which stands well for eternity. As we approached it on the sunny autumn morning of the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin, we thought we saw not a church but a castle, built with the robust towers of the fifteenth century. It is in fact a castle built to protect from the Saracens the treasures laid by the potentates and peoples of the Middle Ages on the threshold of the Holy House, which the hands of angels transported in the thirteenth century first from Palestine to Dalmatia; and then, when Dalmatia was no longer secure, to the hill above Recanati in the March of Ancona.

One May morning in the year 1291 some peasants of Rauniza, a little town situated on the Dalmatian coast between Tersatto and Fiume, saw a spectacle which filled their souls with wonder as they went out to work in their fields before dawn. On a hill, which the night before had been bare and solitary, they beheld a strange building, which, even to their unaccustomed eyes, was of great antiquity. Drawing near they found that it had no foundations, although it stood miraculously upright; and while they were wondering at the phenomenon they saw a multitude approaching from Tersatto, from Rauniza, and from Fiume. Summoning up courage they entered, and discovered that it was formed of a single chamber whose ceiling was made of wood painted blue, and illumined with small gold stars. The rough walls were covered with plaster on which was frescoed the story of the life of Christ, and a large open door in one of the side walls gave access to the mysterious dwelling. To the right was a long narrow window with an altar surmounted by a painted crucifix, and near by a little cupboard contained some vases of rough pottery. On the left of this they discovered a chimney hearth, and a statue of the Holy Virgin holding the Infant Christ in her arms.

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LORETO.

In that serene and far-distant dawn all the world was spell-bound in the contemplation of the prodigy. But the explanation of the mystery was not far off, for the venerable pastor of the church of St. George, Bishop Alexander of Modruria, who had been lying on a bed of sickness, came into their midst crying out that the Blessed Virgin herself had appeared to him during the night, saying in the sweetest voice: 'My house at Nazareth is now transferred to these lands. This is the very altar erected by the apostle Peter: the statue of cedar-wood is my authentic portrait carved by Luke the evangelist. Arise from thy bed of pain! I restore you to your health because I wish that the miracle of your cure may breed faith in the crowd in what you may relate to them.' Upon which he rose up full of joy and strength and ran to render thanks. The people united their prayers night and day with the prayers of the Holy Bishop, while the Miraculous Intelligence spread rapidly, and carried by the winds, the clouds and the light, it crossed the seas and mountains to fill all western Christendom with happiness and wonder.

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At that time Nicholas Frangipani, the Governor of Dalmatia, was accompanying his sovereign the Emperor Rudolph of Hapsburg in a military expedition. Warned by a courier of the arrival of the Holy House he came to Tersatto, where he could not at first believe his eyes. However, he gave permission to four wise men to go immediately to Nazareth to examine and check the facts

of this extraordinary occurrence. The mission was accomplished with danger, because the Saracens under the Sultan Khalil were in possession of the Holy Land, having driven the crusaders from their stronghold in Acre. But the evidence was altogether convincing. At Nazareth the House of the Virgin was no more to be found; a mysterious power had torn it from its foundations, which were still there to show that their dimensions and materials tallied with those of the house thus suddenly transferred to Dalmatia.

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Every doubt having disappeared, the facts of the translation were made public, and religion took advantage to reap a good harvest of faith from the miraculous seed which had taken root on the shores of Dalmatia.

But the rejoicing was not for long. On the 10th of December 1294 the Holy House of the Virgin disappeared as suddenly as it arrived, and the pilgrims sought for it in vain on the little hill of Tersatto which had become so celebrated.

One whole day the Sanctuary was upon the waters of the Adriatic. At ten o'clock at night it appeared on the other coast, in the neighbourhood of Recanati, where it deposited itself in a laurel wood (lauretum), to the terror of some shepherds who were tending their flocks, and saw the wonderful edifice approach surrounded by a halo.

At Loreto the same thing happened as at Rauniza. In a few days the place became celebrated. Crowds of pilgrims flocked to it, and from dawn to sunset the echo of their prayers mingled with the song of the woodland birds.

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Here again there were revelations. The first was a recompense to the prayers of an aged hermit. The second was found in a prophecy of St. Francis, who had foretold the coming of the Holy House. The third was vouchsafed to St. Nicholas of Tolentino who, filled with the prophetic spirit, often walked towards the sea, and fixed his gaze on the azure distance with a presentiment that from there he would receive a precious treasure. Which he did. For it was from the Virgin, in person, that the Holy Monk had the announcement that her house was no longer to be found at Nazareth, or at Tersatto in Dalmatia, but in the fresh and whispering wood of Lauretum.

Loreto the town is dependent upon Loreto the church. It is a mere growth, which has sprung up round the miraculous shrine of the Santa Casa, as the tents of the servants of God sprang up round the Holy Tabernacle in the wilderness. If by another miracle the Santa Casa, and with it the mother church and the apostolical palace, were to change its abode again, Loreto would be nothing but a cluster of peasant cottages with a mediaeval clock-tower and a picturesque city gate. It consists mainly of one long street, leading from the Porta della Città to the church, lined with humble shops, which on feast days empty themselves into the road in gaily decked booths of rosaries, medals, peasant jewellery, bright kerchiefs, and all the semi-religious paraphernalia dear to the heart of the Italian holiday-maker.

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PEASANTS AT LORETO.

Loreto is the Lourdes of Italy. The prevalence of cholera in Apulia, in the autumn of 1910, caused the Government to issue an edict forbidding the annual fair of the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin, which brings more than a quarter of a million peasants from all parts of Italy; but although the festa lost much in picturesqueness by the absence of the southern Italians, we drove up the hillside, in the company of a host of pilgrims.

As we went all eyes were turned towards Loreto, the little village, white as any city of the Orient, which enshrines one of the greatest treasures of the Roman Catholic Church, the humble cottage, built of rough stones, which half Christendom believes to have been the home of the

Holy Family on their return from Egypt, as well as the scene of the Annunciation and the Incarnation. For in its midst loomed the towers and bastions of the Chiesa della Santa Casa, with its many apses spreading out on the crest of the hill like the petals of a flower, golden-hued, and crowned by a dome bearing aloft a gilded image of the Virgin. We approached it through an avenue of tinselled merry-go-rounds, and rifle ranges, and red and white striped theatre-booths, —the mushroom-growths of all European festas; but it was not until we passed through the city gates that the real business of the day began. Here it was impossible to hurry. The stream of pilgrims in that narrow and crowded thoroughfare, stopping at every stall to chaffer and bid, flowed but slowly towards the shrine, although the great bell was booming from the campanile like the voice of a temple, calling its devotees to prayer.

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It was a scene of indescribable noise and gaiety, but from the picturesque point of view it was disappointing, for the peasants of the March are not beautiful like the peasants of Umbria and Tuscany, nor do they wear the gay kerchiefs and costumes of the southern Italians, seeming to prefer white silk and wool kerchiefs to the brilliant flowered *tovagliette* of the women of the Campagna.

When at last we did emerge from the narrow, crowded thoroughfare we found ourselves in a wide piazza surrounded by elegant Renaissance arcades, and saw before us the Chiesa della Santa Casa, towering above a broad flight of steps. And straightway, although the gay stalls with their fluttering kerchiefs and strings of rosaries and images flowed down one side of the square, we forgot the noise and bustle of the street; heard only the deep-toned bell calling the world to worship on that sunny hill-top overlooking the Adriatic; saw only the pilgrims streaming up the stairs on either side of the statue of Pope Sixtus v., and into those exquisite bronze doors which are among the chief glories of Loreto's treasury of art.

For here in Loreto the legend of the Holy House is told with the simple faith of the age of Rudolph of Hapsburg, the founder of the Austrian dynasty, and St. Nicholas of Tolentino, in whose life-time it took place. And whether the stranger comes to Loreto as a pilgrim or a sight-seer it is impossible for him not to be stirred by the simple piety and devotion of the multitudes which throng this shrine. When I remember that for five centuries the world has journeyed here to pray and worship, to me it makes no difference that the dimensions of the foundations of the Holy House in Nazareth do not tally with the dimensions of the Santa Casa of Loreto, or that none of the pilgrims to Nazareth between the fourth and the sixteenth centuries made mention of the house of Joseph in Palestine. It stands for so much in the history of the world. For we have all waited on the shore of the Sea of Doubt, like St. Nicholas upon the shore of the Adriatic, and searched the horizon for the treasure which we dreamt lay beyond it. And though many of us have had some message, faint and fluttering maybe, which has nevertheless grown clearer as we strained towards it, for how few of us has the miracle come safely through the breakers and blessed our eyes as the Santa Casa of Loreto blessed the eyes of the shepherds of Recanati!

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In comparison with its splendid fortified apses, whose fifteenth-century fighting galleries are still intact, and pierced by holes for dropping hot lead on to the heads of besiegers, the façade which Sixtus v. built for the Chiesa della Santa Casa is unimposing. But it is graced by three bronze doors worthy of comparison with Ghiberti's wonderful gates in the baptistery at Florence. They are the work of the sons of Girolamo Lombardo and his pupils; and the panels of the central door, with their story of the Creation, the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden and the murder of Abel, are masterpieces of the Renaissance, so godlike are the figures of Adam, as he tills the soil, and of the slayer Cain, fleeing from wrath to come. They are surrounded by a daring and frankly pagan arabesque of fauns and mermen and foliage. Nor are the side doors less beautiful, with their lives of Abraham and Moses, and their smiling cherubs holding up medallions and locketts in which are figures of Virgins and Saints, and miniature scenes in delicate low relief.

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While we stayed to look at those exquisite panels of the oldest story in the world, there came two shaggy-haired men, with the dust of long journeys on their hob-nailed boots, who doffed their hats and knelt there on the pavement in the midst of the shifting crowd of worshippers, praying before their Lord with unconscious grace, as Abel prayed before the God of Israel, ere they ventured to approach the holy shrine.

And here we paused, for this was what we had come out to see. We had no meed of worship to offer to Madonna through that strange Byzantine doll, loaded with jewels like an Indian totem, who smiles so enigmatically, over her glittering lamps and tapers, at the kneeling people. To us the story of the Santa Casa was a legend only beautiful in the faith which can believe it. Nor were we drawn hither to see the treasures worth the ransoms of many kings which Popes and Emperors have lavished on the shrine, or the exquisite frescoes of Melozzo da Forli and Luca Signorelli in its sacristies. For greater than any of these are the humble and lowly of heart who worship in the magnificent temples which princes and prelates have built to their gods. They are indeed the salt of the earth, the shining light which cannot be hid. They are like the hills and the valleys in which they live; in their eyes are the shadows born of century-long communion with Nature; being meek they have inherited the earth; being pure in heart they have seen God.

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PILGRIMS AT LORETO.

Come in with me then to this great rich church and see these little ones at prayer. See how they press into the Santa Casa. Are not their simple faith, their gentle humility, the tears and sighs of the women, the bent heads of the men, more beautiful than the rich marble screen on which Sansovino and five other great sculptors of the fifteenth century lavished their art to make a worthy casket for the House of the Virgin? Its stair is worn into two deep furrows by pilgrims journeying round it on their knees. Do you not think that the great Mother of Pity loves this rough sculpture best? Look how they pray before the hearth, how eagerly they place their rosaries and medals in the little bowl which legend relates was found in the Holy House after its miraculous journey. They do not doubt that the hands of Madonna Mary, nay, of Christ Himself, have touched it.

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We, too, were borne by the crowd into the Santa Casa. It was quite full of kneeling people. The altar was ablaze with candles, and lamps were pendant all round the walls, so that we saw them as it were through a mist of light. Here we could discern the window, blocked up now, through which the Angel Gabriel entered the cottage; there the little cupboard in which were found the humble bowls, such as poor people use to-day for cooking. And on the altar, clad in the rich robe presented by Maria Teresa and valued at 4,000,000 lire, stood the little cedar-wood statue of the Madonna and Child, which the Virgin is stated to have claimed as her authentic portrait.

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Mass was being celebrated at the High Altar when we came out again, and the body of the church presented a charming patriarchal effect. All the men were clustered in the aisles, and the women gathered together in the nave, looking like a garden of flowers, with row after row of serious girlish faces under fair white kerchiefs, broken here by a group of black mantillas, there by the stray bright *tovagliette* of a southern contadina. The gilt and frescoed apses were misty with incense and sunlight; and here pilgrims, fresh from their visit to the Santa Casa, were kneeling with rapt faces before the altars. And in the midst of all this piety and worship, with the organ pealing music down the aisles, we found old cronos asleep, or taking snuff as they rested in confessional boxes, and children playing hide-and-seek round them. All very reverently, however, not forgetting that they were in the house of their Father; nor were the dogs which had strayed in with the crowd turned away.

Later, when most of the pilgrims were enjoying a hard-earned siesta, or marketing in Loreto's single street, we sat in the cool nave and watched the people trooping in like sheep coming confidently into the fold. The great bell tolled overhead and in they streamed, all with their newly-bought treasures—now an umbrella, bright emerald or scarlet, wrapped clumsily in paper, now with some baking-pans, now with a household lamp. And all of them with some gewgaw to be blessed in the Virgin's bowl.

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The basins of holy water were so lofty that many of the women could not reach them, and some passing pilgrim would dip his fingers in and touch their hands. Now it was a group of barefooted girls with kerchiefed heads and sunburned faces who went up to the shrine; now an old old man who dipped his hand into the holy water and then knelt down in the middle of the nave, passing wet fingers across his tired eyes, and praying there awhile before he kissed the floor, and wearily stumbled out of those glorious bronze doors into the sunshine again. Here a whole family knelt together round their rugged-faced father, with their bright kerchiefs looking like a homely flower-garden; there a man going out with his two little sons dipped his fingers in the high bowl, and moistened the hands of first one awe-struck child and then the other.

So it went on all day. Nor does it matter that the Casa is of mediaeval construction; that it is not built of the grey limestone with which all the houses of Nazareth are built, and that it does not fit its ascribed foundations in Palestine. For the gods have ever been secret. Did Ceres weep at Enna? Did the rosy feet of Aphrodite ever press the sands of Paphos? Is it the blood of Adonis which makes the stream of Carmel red?

And listen to the words of the prophet: 'The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? *It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth*, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in' (Isaiah xl. 19).

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RAVENNA

Who could dream of anything but love as they drew near to Rimini and Ravenna, those cities of romance whose names are as knit with lovers' tales as Rome's with Caesar and Macedon's with Alexander! They are foremost in the troubadour land of Italy, their scroll of history is gracious with the names of knights and ladies. With the word Rimini upon the signboard of the train our thoughts leap back at once across the gulf of years, and in imagination we hear again the oft-repeated plaint of pale Francesca—

'No greater grief than to remember days
Of joy, when mis'ry is at hand!

One day

For our delight we read of Lancelot,
How him love thrall'd. Alone we were, and no
Suspicion near us. Ofttimes by that reading
Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
Fled from our alter'd cheek. But at one point
Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
The wished smile, so rapturously kiss'd
By one so deep in love; then he, who ne'er
From me shall separate, at once my lips
All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both
Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
We read no more. [20]

Nor is it only of Francesca whose griefs were sung by Dante that we think, but of those greater lovers of the same ill-fated house—Sigismondo and the divine Isotta; of Galla Placidia, the Cleopatra of Imperial Rome; of the poor child Honoria, who chose the terrible Attila to be her knight-errant; and of the Gothic Queens, Amalasantha and Matasantha, whose lives seemed as foredoomed to tragedy as those of the beautiful women of the Polentani. But the marshes of Ravenna, at once her stronghold and her weakness, seemed to have bred distemper; for almost all the stories end in sadness whether they tell of Francesca and her lovely sister Samaritana, or of the Beatrice Dante loved and lost and found again in visions, walking in the vast Pineta; or of Boccaccio's Nastagio degli Onesti; or of the weeping bride of Gaston de Foix, the flower of French chivalry, who was mown down by the scythe of war outside Ravenna's gates. [217]

There is a peculiar and vagrant charm about the Adriatic, different from the exquisite beauty of the Ligurian Riviera with its rounded bays and vine-clad hills, but worthy of a sea which washes the golden shore of Greece as well as the most romantic coast in Italy. The Appennines tower upon the horizon, and many mountain rivers rush from them to the ocean, and flood the sapphire water at their mouths with opaque gold churned from their sandy beds. Flowers grow upon the shore only separated from the sea by a strip of shingle,—tamarisks and sea-holly, mallows and yellow mulleins. And all the way from Ancona to Ravenna, save where the line runs through the famous pine-woods, are ancient cities strung like jewels along the shore of the Adriatic, with their river-harbours full of the gold and copper-coloured sails of fishing-boats—Senigallia, which Pompey devastated; Fano, Fortune's fane, linked to Rome by the Flaminian Way; Pesaro, a city of the Sikels; Gradara up on the mountains with a perfect mediaeval castle and a flight of towered walls; and Rimini, Caesar's first footing after he had crossed the Rubicon. They are all more or less blatant seaside resorts, especially Rimini, whose *plage* rivals that of Livorno. [218]



RAVENNA: THE PINETA.

Of them all Ravenna only is unspoiled. She is a jewelled city where East and West, Christian and Pagan, Rome and Byzantium met and commingled and immortalised themselves in the service of Architecture. [219]

Ravenna is a place in which one is instinctively happy. *Ravenna Felix* is the name she bears upon her ancient coins. And even to-day, notwithstanding her years of poverty, she has an air of subdued gaiety as though in spite of herself she must be happy. She is like a gentle convalescent who goes softly in recovering her strength. For, after many centuries of waiting, Ravenna, the Imperial City who proudly offered shelter both to Roman emperors and Gothic kings, and who

was the handmaiden of Byzantium long after the Western Empire had ceased to exist, is beginning to live again. The spectre of fever has fled from her marshes; the people no longer wander palely through her streets; she is in fact the centre of a prosperous agricultural district; under the hand of science even Classis, long regarded as a hot-bed of malaria, is being revived.

Just as her history is of special interest to lovers of romance, because the fate of the city was so often held in balance by the lovely women who were queens within her walls, so are her monuments of special interest alike to the historian and the student of art, as representing a period little touched upon elsewhere in Italy. For almost all the ancient buildings still standing in Ravenna were raised in the centuries which saw the Fall of Rome, the Gothic Occupation of Italy, the Invasion of the Lombards, and the final administration of the Empire through the Exarchs from the court of Byzantium in Constantinople. Through all these vicissitudes Ravenna was the seat of government, from the day when Honorius fled before the barbarians to the marsh-girt city, until the coming of Pepin of France, who invested the Papacy with Temporal Power.

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Of the triple city of the Augustan era nothing remains. Where Aeolus once filled the sails of galleys in the vast harbour that Octavian built three miles from old Ravenna, he strays to-day like a vagrant musician singing strange songs of the sea among the stems of the Pineta. Classis, the ancient port, has vanished underground, and flowers bloom above the stones of Caesarea, the suburb which linked the seaport of Augustus to Ravenna.

It is not before the period when the weakling Honorius transferred his court from Rome to Ravenna that we find any traces of the city's glorious past. But here are four treasures which by themselves are worthy of a visit to Ravenna—the little church of Sant'Agata, rebuilt in the fifteenth century, but preserving some of its outer wall intact, and containing twenty-four columns of precious marbles; the chapel of San Piero Crisologo in the Episcopal palace; the Baptistery, once the thermal chamber of some Roman bath, still lined with rare mosaics of the fifth century; and the tomb of Galla Placidia, the regent of the Western Empire.

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RAVENNA: SANT'AGATA.

The story of Galla Placidia is one long romance.

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We cannot doubt that she was beautiful since she was desired of so many men. Daughter of Theodosius and sister of Honorius she fell into the hands of Alaric the Goth in the Sack of Rome when she was but twenty, and was taken prisoner by him to Calabria. There she won the love of Athaulf, the brother-in-law of the Gothic king; and, after many delays caused by the hesitancy of Honorius, who would not give his assent to the marriage, she became his wife at the price of peace for Rome. Alaric was dead, and Athaulf was King of the Goths when the nuptials were celebrated with great splendour in Narbonne; but before many months had elapsed Fate once more changed the course of Placidia's life. Athaulf was assassinated; their infant child died; and the daughter of Roman Emperors found herself at the mercy of a barbarian who, to mark his ill-gained triumph, made her walk in chains through the streets of Barcelona. Within a few days, however, Singarich the murderer was slain, and the fallen Empress was restored to the Roman army, which came to meet her at the foot of the Pyrenees under the command of the greatest general of the time, Constantius the Illyrian. Constantius loved Placidia. Often before her capture by the Visigoths he had sought to win her hand and failed; but now, aided by the prayers of the people, who regarded him as a worthy successor of Honorius, he gained his desire, much against the will, it is said, of the Emperor's beautiful sister.

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Even so the Fates were not satisfied with their web. Constantius died and Honorius, 'credited but a short time before by evil report with criminal desires towards his sister, now turned from love to hatred, and banished the unhappy woman with her children to Byzantium.'^[21] In the same year Honorius himself died; and Placidia, supported by the armies of her nephew Theodosius II., the Eastern Emperor, came back to Ravenna where she reigned with her son for twenty-five years, first as his regent, and later as his adviser.

Her tomb, in the shadow of the great church of San Vitale, built many years later when the Western Empire had been absorbed by the emperors of the East, is the most perfect example of Roman-Byzantine art in Italy. It is like a rich casket of Oriental splendour encrusted with gems. It has walls of yellow marble, and alabaster windows, through which a golden light is shed upon the gleaming mosaics which cover every inch of vault and arch. And here, under a sapphire sky sown with gold stars and illumined by the gilded beasts of the evangelists, with white-robed saints walking under date-palms among the doves and lambs of Christian symbolism, are the three great sarcophagi which enclosed the bones of Galla Placidia and of her husband Constantius, and Valentinian her son.^[22]

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Thus did the last great Empress of the Western Empire order her resting-place, and when we realise that this jewelled casket has lain open to a rapacious world for fifteen centuries, it is little short of miraculous that it has come down to us so perfect. All praise to Theodoric, the King of the Ostrogoths, the lover of ancient arts, who presented in his person the great anomaly of a Gothic king who was the protector of temples as well as the founder of some of the most lovely churches standing in the city to-day.

The name of Theodoric the Ostrogoth is great in Ravenna. Notwithstanding the fact that many of his buildings, notably his palace, have almost disappeared at the hands of the Orthodox Church, which regarded him as a heretic because he professed the Arian Creed, Ravenna still possesses four of his monuments—San Teodoro, now called Santo Spirito; the Arian baptistery, its cupola still covered with sixth-century mosaics; his palace, his sepulchre, and Sant'Apollinare Nuovo.

The stately tomb of Theodoric, round which mediaeval imagination wove legends, as the flowers and the fruits of the earth weave a web of beauty to-day, rises at the end of a wide turf avenue enclosed in hedges of acacia. It stands in a rose-garden with a background of firs and flowering yews; round its sunken pronaos are fruit-trees laden with pomegranates and purple figs; and wistaria and yellow roses have hidden the steps which lead to its upper chamber. Externally, the tomb, which the unfortunate Amalasantha built for her father, is as unspoiled as the mausoleum of Galla Placidia; its solid masonry of grey limestone has defied the years; and the gaping crevice in its marvellous dome, composed of one huge block of Istrian marble, only serves to give point to mediaeval legends. But inside it has been devastated by his enemies and robbed even of his sarcophagus. Mr. Symonds says, 'in spite of many trials, it seems that human art is unable to pump out the pond and clear the frogs and efts from the chamber where the great Goth was laid by Amalasantha.' But on the damp September day when we visited the mausoleum its stones were dry, although the little spotted frogs, which fled below the rose-trees at our approach, were shrilling a chorus of mockery at the vanity of tombs.

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Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, which has changed its name twice since Theodoric dedicated it to the Saviour, is one of the most beautiful churches in Christendom. Like San Teodoro, its exterior is of the Renaissance. Beside its portico stands one of Ravenna's curious round bell-towers, probably built in the ninth century; but inside we found the riches of Rome and Byzantium gathered together to make a glorious whole. For along the architrave of the nave, supported on antique marble columns, we saw a long procession of Virgins and Martyrs leading from the western doors to the arch of the transept, where the Madonna and the Saviour were enthroned. Above them, and between the windows of the clerestory, were ranged the figures of Saints and Prophets. And above them again were scenes resembling the early mosaics in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, depicting incidents from the life of Christ. From the technical point of view these little panels indicate the highest art to be found in Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. They are the work of Roman mosaicists employed by Theodoric, whereas the lowest zones are by Byzantine artists; they are full of vigour and freedom; while the others, in spite of their magnificence, have the terrible Byzantine stiffness which held Italian art in thrall until the coming of Cimabue and the Pisani.

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But how rich, how decorative those jewelled garments of the honourable women, the snowy robes of the Martyrs! Just so the artist of Byzantium may have pictured them against a golden dawn, issuing from the proud city of Classis on the one hand, and from the Palace of Theodoric on the other, to lay their crowns before the Thrones of Heaven. For those Virgins are robed as daughters of the King, and they link the Mother of God in a gold and jewelled chain to the ancient town of Classis, without whose gates the galleys ride, with the wind in their billowing sails. Flowers spangle the grass at their feet, and behind them the red dates hang heavy on the palms; while in the heavenly Court the Three Kings offer their gifts, how eagerly! to the Virgin seated among the angels with the Baby Christ upon her knees.

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The beauties of San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classis are too well known to need description, even if it were possible to do any sort of homage to their magnificence in so general a chapter. They were both built by Julian the Treasurer during the reign of Justinian, and they represent the third period of Ravenna's greatness before the temporal power of Rome was eclipsed by that of the Eastern Empire. In San Vitale especially, the glory of Byzantium is reflected as in a mirror. Nowhere else in Italy is there such a perfect illustration of the Courts of the Lord towards the middle of the sixth century. In this great church, whose domed central space and retreating galleries, sustained by the gracious horse-shoe arches of the East, gave the mosque of the coming Arab conquerors its genesis, we have walls enclosed in precious marbles,

and pierced and fretted capitals wrought by Oriental craftsmen. And here, below the rich encrusted vault where Christ is enthroned upon the blue orb of the heavens, in such a paradise as Dante may have dreamt of, where white-robed Saints cull flowers as they pass, we have the jewelled splendour of the Court of Byzantium, with the Emperor Justinian among his priests and soldiers, and Theodora with the ladies of her court.

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RAVENNA: THE TOMB OF DANTE.

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Side by side in the heart of Ravenna are the tomb in which the dead Dante was laid, when the secret of his sepulture had been made known to the Ravennesi, and the old palace of the Polentani in which Francesca of Rimini was born. Near by is the house of that other poet-wanderer, Byron, whose windows overlook the gallery from which it may be that Francesca, seeing the gracious form of Paolo Malatesta coming to woo her for his hunch-back brother, felt the first pangs of love, as well as the sacred tomb whence 'he had so oft, as many a verse declares, drawn inspiration.'

Notwithstanding its withered wreaths, its stuccoed dome, its air of cheap and tawdry Campo Santo sentiment, the people of Ravenna really do come to pay tribute to the sepulchre of the great bard of the Risorgimento. But it is difficult to find anything of the real Dante here. For though Ravenna was his 'ultimo Rifugio,' as it has been the last refuge of many other great ones; and though he finished his Divine Comedy here in the house of Guido Novello Polenta his patron; and dreamed, poor pilgrim, when he wandered through the exquisite beauty of the pine-woods of Classis that he had found paradise, I think his spirit fled at its release to his beloved Florence, 'la bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma.'

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And yet there was a special fitness in our pilgrimage to the Pineta on September 14th, which is the anniversary of his death; for if the spirit of this wayfarer lingered anywhere upon the eastern shores of Italy it must have flown to the 'celestial forest' in which, in visions, he beheld his Beatrice walk amid the white-robed companies of heaven.

Autumn had laid her hand upon the poet's paradise. The earth was carpeted with pine-needles, soft and rusty, and pied with flowers,—scabious and yellow thistles, veronica and cinquefoil, and Michaelmas daisies. Great bunches of scarlet fruits encarnadined the undergrowth. The bramble leaves were rose and russet; the Pilgrim-trees were hung with crimson tassels; the yews were thick with purple berries. Evening primroses grew so tall that they were reflected in the water among the blossoming reeds. And everywhere the ethereal webs of cow-parsley, those loveliest flowers of the field, were spun on slender stems as delicately as frost upon a spider's web. Moon-flowers I call them, dust o' the moon, and when they fade they fold their treasures up into a knitted purse of green and gold, swaying heavy-headed in every hedge.

The air was warm and fragrant, like the scented breath of some one beautiful. Beneath our feet the timid lizard darted to the shadows; the birds made music in the pines, and all around we heard the shrill chorus of frogs and the rapturous song of the cicada. Driftwood and fallen leaves floated slowly to the sea, on just such a shadowed stream as that by which Dante beheld Matilda:

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'A lady all alone, who, singing, went,

And culling flower from flower, wherewith her way
Was all o'er painted.[23]

And all was still, save where a snake made a ripple that you could hear as it swam neck-high through the water.

A paradise indeed!

On our way back across the rice-fields and flowery marshes, which cover the fallen city of Caesarea, we passed the mouldering column marking the spot where Gaston de Foix fell in the battle of Ravenna. It stands on a causeway above a sluggish river, in an esedra of cypresses which whisper melancholy to the wind. All the world knows his lovely broken tomb, whose effigy is one of the treasures of the Milan Museum, but in Ravenna itself there is another tomb of just such another boy—Guidarello Guidarelli. A warrior of Ravenna it is named, but there is no stone to mark the place where fell this Knight of the beautiful face, 'dear at once to Mars and to Minerva,' who followed the fortunes of Cesare Borgia, and met his death by treachery in Imola.

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RAVENNA: THE COLUMN OF GASTON DE FOIX.

Signor Corrado Ricci, himself a son of Ravenna, speaks truly when he says 'Ravenna is a city historically great and fatal, nay, the very charnel-house of history, whither destiny sends great achievements and lofty personages to decay and oblivion. Here the Caesars, the Roman Empire, Roman Captains, Barbarian Kings, the reign of the Herulians, of the Goths, of the Exarchs, all pass away. And when its importance seems to wane, lo! Dante Aligheri is here to complete the greatest of his poems, and to die.'

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'Cardinal Bessarion, the perfect flower of Humanist culture, is brought to die in Ravenna. Francesco Maria della Rovere slays in her streets the infamous Cardinal of Pavia, Francesco Alidosio. Hither come the armies of Julius II., of Ferdinand of Spain, of Louis of France, of Alfonso d'Este; and Gaston de Foix receives his death-wound in the great battle which reimposes a term of foreign rule. Nor can the epic of the Risorgimento develop itself without new and memorable episodes being reserved for Ravenna. Here Garibaldi's astonishing retreat from Rome terminates; amid endless dangers the hero's life is preserved, but Anita, worn out by grief and hardships, died in his arms.'

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THE REPUBLIC OF SAN MARINO

To the classical scholar, San Marino must always be the real Nephelococcygia—the cloud-cuckoo-town, which the Athenian satirised as built by the birds up in the clouds to cut off the Gods from all connection with mankind. That is how the Sammarinesi live, cut off from the earth in which they are the smallest and most trivial nation. The proudest too, for though the area of their Republic is only twenty-four square miles, and they have their seat of government on the crest of a perpendicular rock, with a sheer drop of nearly a thousand feet, they have preserved unbroken their tradition of independence through fourteen centuries. Not, it appears, from any particular valour on the part of the Sammarinesi, although they must often have stood ready to the call of arms, with the greedy Malatesta so near at hand in Rimini, but because they have been greatly favoured by the enemies of Republics. The Papacy, which had already brought almost all the other petty States of Italy to their knees by force or treachery, granted recognition to the smallest of them in 1631. Napoleon listened to the pleading of Antonio Onofri, called by the grateful citizens 'the father of his country,' and repealed his decree for the suppression of the Republic. And the Kings of Italy, perhaps as a reward for the courageous shelter it offered to Garibaldi and his broken army, not only recognise its independence, but have made it a present of modern cannon, with which to defend itself.

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San Marino was a true Nephelococcygia, on the afternoon we drove to it from Rimini. A heavy bank of cloud veiled the ragged crest of Monte Titano, that giant outpost of the Eastern Appennines, towering nearly 3000 feet above sea level, to which Marinus, the saintly stonemason of Dalmatia, fled from the persecutions of Diocletian. It was a day of storms. The sullen indigo-coloured mountains were lost in drifting clouds. Sometimes when the grey pall was rent by the wind, we glimpsed the fantastic towers of San Marino, high in the heavens on their mighty cliff; but while we pointed to them they were gone, like the city of a magician conjured out of mists.

From Serravalle, which is the first village of the Republic on the road from Rimini, our way led uphill, through the vineyards and fields of corn which are the chief source of income to the diminutive state. Down in the plain of Rimini it had been warm and sultry, but as the bearded clouds swept down to meet us, the air grew cold and damp. The Philosopher had a touch of fever and was unspeakably miserable, but nothing could damp the ardour of the Poet, who sat upon the coach-box and strained his eyes towards the fairy city overhead, whose turrets every now and then loomed grey among the clouds. On the long steep climb to the Borgo, we overtook the public diligence, which had dashed past us an hour before, rattling recklessly down one hill to gain sufficient impetus to carry it up the next. It was toiling along slowly enough, behind two rolling white oxen, while its steaming horses, ridden by grooms, brought up the rear.

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And now the clouds rolled down the hillside and enveloped us, blotting out the distant view of Rimini and its sea-board, and crowding round us like curious ghosts. We could feel the chill breath of the mists upon our faces, and soon even the diligence with its laughing, chattering crowd of passengers was shut out of sight, and we were alone upon the grey mountain side. Just then the bells of the Borgo began to ring overhead, and their music floated down to us out of the thick fog, indescribably poetic, like the lights of an unknown harbour shining over the water. So we crept up, winding round the shoulder of the mountain towards the unseen town, which for all we knew might be one of the magic cities of our childhood. Sometimes the cliff rose sheer above us, and at others, the road faced a wall of cloud; and sometimes when, as it were, the breeze made windows in the mist, we saw the ragged, sullen crests of the Appennines lifting their heads above the drifting clouds. Suddenly, we found ourselves in a street with low stone houses, and in another minute we were in the Borgo.



SAN MARINO.

It was all commonplace enough, not at all the city beautiful we had imagined,—a mountain village built of grey stone, with a few stuccoed houses, but it was very friendly and welcome after the unfamiliar mists. We did not stay. We still had before us the steep climb up to the Acropolis, 700 feet above the Borgo, and as we zig-zagged up the one road that for strategical purposes San Marino possesses, we were overtaken by the rain, a cloud-burst, which, umbrellas notwithstanding, drenched us to the skin.

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It was as though a sluice had opened in the heavens. But our *vetturino*, who had neither overcoat nor umbrella, was unmoved. He deposited us, bag and baggage, at the city gate, telling us with many shrugs, *non posso andare de più*. It rained in torrents. We did not know which way to turn. The steep, paved street in which we found ourselves was a miniature cascade whose stream ran over the tops of our shoes, and flowed in eddies round our luggage. Our condition was pitiable, until some kindly Sammarinesi helped us and our baggage up that waterfall and into the hospitable Albergo Titano.

Only then did we realise our good fortune in arriving before the public diligence, which was still lost in the mists below. For the Albergo Titano, an excellent and simple inn, where mine host in spite of his smart English tweeds is not too proud to help in the kitchen and hand the dishes at dinner, has limited accommodation. When we passed the belated travellers on the stairs after we had changed our wet clothes, we heard them expostulating indignantly because there was only one room to share between the five of them!

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We found San Marino a City of Grey Cloud as romantic as the City of White Cloud into which the soul of the butterfly vanished in the Japanese legend of the Holy Mountain. It was full of shadows which materialised out of the mists, grew solid as we passed, then melted into wraiths again and vanished. It was very quiet, a world of ghosts, with great grey clouds ramping through everything. We could not see more than twenty yards ahead of us, and the end of each street seemed to float in space. No sooner had we won things from the mists than they were devoured again.

And so we came to the Piazza del Pianello with its statue of Liberty and its battlemented palace, which loomed up in the clouds like a ghost of the Gothic Palazzo dei Consoli at Gubbio. From the parapet where Herr Baedeker had told us to look for the view, we faced a sheet of mist on which some fantastic chimney-pots were faintly sketched.

Suddenly, by a seeming miracle, Monte Titano lifted its head out of the clouds, and San Marino lay clear before us, a grey, tidy, self-respecting hamlet overlooking some of the grandest mountain scenery to be found anywhere in Italy. Down in the valley the Marecchia wound, white as a river of bleached bones, towards the Appennines, whose heads were wreathed in sullen clouds. In the west the sun struggled to look once more upon the earth before it plunged below the mountains, and the white storm-wrack behind the ragged scarp of San Leo, where Cagliostro died, was fired by the fan-shaped rays. If we had felt like Dante and his guide climbing the hill of Purgatory as we toiled up the side of Monte Titano in the blar-grey mists, we looked for a moment into his Inferno when the curtaining clouds were rent apart.

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'... For certain on the brink
I found me of the lamentable vale,

The dread abyss, that joins a thund'rous sound
Of plaints innumerable. Dark and deep,
And thick with clouds o'erspread ... [24]

Across the valley the fortress of San Leo stood out in black relief against the smoking clouds, until it seemed as though eternal fires were burning behind the eagle's nest in which the great necromancer of the seventeenth century was confined. And beyond it rose the crested waves of the Appennines with the torn garments of the storm shredded upon their cruel rocks. Here and there a stray beam slanting athwart their slopes illumined the towers of some little far-off town. For a few minutes the valleys were bathed in golden light, then the sun went down, and the world grew indigo with night and storms. [240]

San Marino itself has not much to offer to the stranger within its gates. Its houses are commonplace: its cathedral and its Gothic Palazzo del Governo are modern, and its palaces contain few traces of antiquity. On the other hand the manners and customs of the Republic have a refreshing quaintness not to be found elsewhere. For instance in San Marino you do not buy and sell with the coinage of the state; that is minted entirely for collectors; and in this small community, where every one knows the business of his neighbour better than he knows his own, the pretty telegraph girl goes about the town like the buttons in a hotel, asking strangers if the wire which has just been brought up from the Borgo is for them, when she does not know the name of the recipient. Unlike the cities of Italy, San Marino is early to bed: at half-past eight the streets are silent and deserted. But she is an early riser. The only public conveyance to Rimini, which also purposes to serve the Ancona-Rome express, is timed to depart from the city gates at 4 A.M. The gaoler and the police are foreigners, *i.e.* Italians, because, as the prison-keeper remarked, 'otherwise no one would ever be arrested, because the Sammarinesi would all be relations of the police.' But the army, forty strong, is recruited from the Sammarinesi themselves. Nor should the traveller be surprised if perchance he finds lop-eared rabbits making themselves at home in his bedroom, as we did in the Albergo Titano, although this peculiarity is not confined to San Marino, it being on record in Volterra that when an artist begged the hotelkeeper to sweep below his bed, she answered that it could not be done, much as she wished to oblige the signore, because her hens were sitting! [241]

But it is San Marino's incomparable views, over the wide valley of the Marecchia to the Appennines on the one hand, and over the plain of Rimini to the Adriatic and the hills of Dalmatia on the other, which make the long climb worth while.

Even the Philosopher, who had rheumatism added to his other sorrows, could not help responding to the joy of waking, and finding himself high up in the clear blue sky overlooking a world washed clean by the rainstorms of the night before. The great mountains and rock-scarps which bounded the valley of the Marecchia were flecked with shadows, and snow-white cumuli, shining in the sunlight, were piled above the distant peaks. We climbed up to San Marino's second tower through a half-deserted quarry where pink cyclamens, brambles and wild flowers had woven a tangled web about the rocks. In the west the ragged hills rolled on like waves towards the gaunt peaks of the Appennines, and the highest of them all had its great solemn crest hidden in a low-hanging cloud which held it in the old embrace of sky and earth, regarded by the Greeks and Egyptians alike as a mythological sacrament. To the east the rock fell sheer to the vine-clad plain of Rimini, and far away we saw the Adriatic in a silver haze. [242]

How long we stayed up there among the flowers by that ancient tower I do not know. There was a kind of rapture in the morning. The bees were humming in the ivy as though they thought that it was still summer. The cicalas sang. Close at hand the Rocca, as fantastic as the most fantastic fortress in the whole of fairy-land, overhung its precipice. On our left rose the third tower of the Republic flaunting its feather to the wind.

We forgot San Marino, that gay popinjay of a city, which is so out of keeping with its landscape, absorbed in watching the play of light and shadow down in the wild valley of the Marecchia, where the great cloud-barques which sailed across the wind-swept sky were reflected on the bosom of the hills. It was a land of great and primitive desires, with rivers rushing passionately to the sea, and inarticulate mountains travelling to reach heaven. Nor was the earth appeased until the gathering storm-clouds stooped down and rested on its hills, as the Ark of the Lord rested upon the peak of Ararat.

We left at dawn in the postchaise of the Republic. Night had not yet rolled her curtains from the mountains. Eastwards the sea and sky were veiled in tremulous mists, but when we reached the Borgo the silver morning was lightened by a rose and saffron glory. We found the Borgo asleep, though when we left, after waiting half an hour for the mail and picking up a solitary passenger, the church bells on the cliff above were ringing and all the cocks were crowing. How gay and fresh it was! None of the grumblers of the world were out of bed. The *cocchiere* with the stemma of the Republic in his hat cracked his long whip; the horses made music with their bells, tossing their heads as they smelt the breeze; even the querulous brake made merry over its discomfort as we swung down the hillside. [243]

Long after daybreak the mists lay supine in the valley and there were shadows on the mountains, as though the languid eyes of nature were not yet opened to the morning. But overhead the little clouds were pink as the wings of flamingoes, and when we reached the fields we found the vines, drunk with the magic of the morning, dancing like Bacchanals with linked hands across the valleys, bearing their gifts of purple grapes. Often at the turning of the road we looked back to San Marino, standing up like a biblical fortress with its strong watch-towers overlooking the plain, the home of liberty, where Garibaldi found sanctuary from his pursuers. When we reached Serravalle we saw it through a veil of mist, thin as gossamer spun out of the dawn. Later there were little wisps of cloud-drift hanging on the rocks below the towers. Long [244]

ere we drove into the gates of Rimini our Nephelococcygia vanished like a dream into its clouds again.

URBINO

We came to Urbino for the sake of Raphael, the gentle youth who conquered Death in dying, and to see the palace built by the greatest hero of the Rinascimento, Frederic of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. We stayed long after we had made our pilgrimage to the brown palace, where Giovanni Santi reared his motherless immortal, long after we had walked through the decaying splendours of that fairy castle which saw the star of Frederic's dynasty go down not ninety years after it had arisen so brightly on the slopes of Monte Ingino. For Urbino, though she is old and faded, though the grass grows in her streets and flowering weeds spring from her cracked and tottering walls, is still a city beautiful, a golden crown upon the green hillside.

We came to the foot of her vine-clad slopes after three hours of journeying through a world of shadowy mountains which had moonlit gossamer resting on their peaks, and silver rivers running through their valleys. Her towers gleamed white as polished ivory against the vaporous sky; her many lights were like a diadem of jewels out-brillianting the stars. As we climbed up the hillside in the chill night air every turn of the road revealed fresh vistas of mountain peaks rising like crested waves out of the moonlit vapours. And when we reached the summit of Urbino's hill, and found ourselves below the terrific walls of Federigo's palace, we saw above them, limned against the stars, an enchanted palace such as Perrault might have dreamed of, with its towers and esedras transmuted by the moonlight into jade. [246]

Only for a moment; in the next we were rattling over the cobbles of a wide arcaded street lit with electric lights and hung with hundreds of little coloured globes, red and white and green, for the festa of the Venti Settembre. It was so gay and homely after the moonlit silence of the mountains, and the inn we found upon that lonely hill-top was so unexpectedly good, with airy rooms and clean red tiles and snowy bed-linen, that we loved Urbino from the first hour we knew her. When we woke next morning to the music of Sabbath bells and saw the towers of Federigo's palace shutting out our horizon eastwards; and westwards, across a valley, the white houses of Urbino climbing up through their gardens towards the broken walls of her fortezza, we knew that she was to be one of our cities of happy memories. Nor were we disappointed. For in Urbino with her crisp morning air tempering the sunshine, and her vistas of wide valleys and deep-bosomed hills rolling away towards the magnificent crags of the Appennines, we spent some precious days forgetful of the world, which toils and sweats in busy marts and narrow self-made prisons, so far removed in spirit from the hills and all the sweetness that appertains thereto.



THE PALACE OF THE DUKES OF URBINO. [247]

We had read in books that Urbino was decayed and lifeless, the true ensample of Leopardi's tragic words:— [248]

'O patria mia, vedo le mura e gli archi,
E le colonne, e i simulacri, e l'erme
Torri degli avi nostri
Ma la gloria non vedo.'

So we went out expecting to find her a mere ghost, pathetic in her faded grandeur, like beautiful San Gimignano or the wind-swept home of Perugino. It is true that grass was growing in the climbing street which leads up the hill past the house of Giovanni Santi, and we were to find

out soon enough that the great castle of Federigo, where Castiglione wrote his Golden Book, was falling to decay like his palace at Gubbio. But it was easy to forget these things on a sunny morning in September, when the Piazza Otto Settembre was filled with a crowd of stalwart men, in their national costume of wide velvet breeches and black wide-awake hats, and lovely dark-eyed women, kerchief'd or wearing the fringed mantillas of Eastern Italy,—the descendants of the brave mountaineers who made the arms of Duke Frederic respected even by the redoubtable Francesco Sforza.

As it was Sunday, the day on which country people come into their hill-towns all over Italy for Mass and market, there were booths of haberdashery and flowered kerchiefs in the piazza below the ruddy old church of San Francesco, and pottery, not of Urbino, was spread out in the roadway of the two streets which descend so swiftly to the valley. The fruit and poultry market was in the little piazza full of pollard acacias behind the Franciscan church. The passive hens of Italy, which spend so much of their lives being carried head-downwards to and from market that they never give way to hysteria like the fowls of other countries, were ranged below the trees on one side of the square, and golden pears and peaches were heaped with purple grapes in the cool shade of the other. 'And may you have salvation!' cried the merry old dame from whom we bought more than we could carry of her luscious wares for a few soldi.

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Close by, in the very heart of the gay little city, stands the house of Giovanni Santi, a brown fifteenth-century palace, with broad eaves and bricked-up arches, which bends like an aged man over the lichened pavement of the Contrada Raffaello. A white dove was bowing on the sill of the room in which Raphael was born, and through the opened panes of another window we could see the broad plastered beams of the low-ceiling living room within.

Urbino cherishes the memory of Raphael. The house in which he spent the spring of his short life is swept and garnished, empty except for framed engravings of his pictures and some antique chairs and high-backed stools old enough to have been there in his father's day. The rooms are low, with panelled ceilings and decent red-bricked floors. One of them has a Madonna and Child by Giovanni Santi which is said to be a portrait of Magia and the baby Raphael, and in the other is a bust of Morris Moore of London, who gave the money, needed to buy the house, to the Società Reale Accademia Raffaello in 1872. But to me the place was somewhat disappointing; it lacked the spirit of the happy boy who carried with him to the courts of Rome and Florence the breath of sunlight and fresh mountain air. Urbino itself is just the home one would imagine for Raphael, a city of the Renaissance, golden, full of gardens, in which the culture and refinement engendered by the Montefeltro Dukes still lingers. But there is nothing of Raphael in his father's house. Perhaps because he was there so little, for, like the lovely curly-headed children of Urbino to-day, he probably spent most of his time out in the streets when he was not working with his father, now waiting to see Duke Guidobaldo, and the knights and ladies of his court riding up the hill from their hunting and hawking, now playing with clay, as Gigi of the golden curls and petulant mouth plays still, a little higher up the Contrada Raffaello, with a world of great mountains lying below his feet.

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When we first saw him, Gigi was sitting on the doorstep of a house close beside the palace of Timoteo Viti, one of Raphael's greatest pupils, who for love of his aged mother left his studio in Rome and came back to his native town. Gigi was three years old, with a shock of golden hair, and grey eyes, thickly-lashed and full of dreams. He was barefoot, very dirty and happy, modelling childish fancies out of a morsel of wet clay, and he was so beautiful that we stopped to speak to him. But Gigi was adamant. He frowned and went on making unintelligible daubs with his slim brown fingers. Later, when we passed again, his mother had dressed him in boots and socks, his face and hands were washed, his clay was forfeit. But when she tried to make him beg for soldi from the *forestieri*, he wept and hid his face against the wall. Poor little Gigi! We often tried to make acquaintance with him, but he would have none of us. Nor did he play with the other children, who seemed to laugh at him.

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But one evening when the sun was sinking low behind the Appennines, filling the valleys with a sea of rosy mists, from which the fantastic rocks of San Marino and San Leo emerged far away to the right, and the great head of Monte Catria, Dante's asylum, to the left, Gigi crept from his hiding-place behind a bramble bush and came to stand beside the Philosopher. It was the 20th of September, the anniversary of United Italy, and all the other children had long ago fled laughing to the piazza where the police band was to celebrate the festive occasion with music. But Gigi, with his golden head thrust forward and his little arms behind his back, stood rapt in wonder before the glory of the sun. We watched them stand together, those two, both worshippers in their unconscious pose, both dreamers, till Gigi, proud and silent Gigi, who would neither smile nor beg, stretched out his hand and took the Philosopher's in silent sympathy. So they stood linked together, man and child, inarticulate before the glory of earth and sky, until night began to hang her purple veils along the valleys and Venus was shining softly in the West.

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'Among other laudable actions Federigo erected on the rugged heights of Urbino a residence, by many regarded as the most beautiful in all Italy, and so amply did he provide it with every convenience that it appeared rather a palatial city than a palace.'

So spake that courtly gentleman Baldassare Castiglione, friend of Raphael, honoured guest in Guidobaldo's brilliant assembly, and ambassador from Urbino to the English Court in 1503, when Henry VII. of England invested the Duke with the Order of the Garter as his father Frederic, the most distinguished soldier of his day, had been invested by Edward IV. And seen by moonlight, as we climbed Urbino's hill, it was a fairy palace, with towers and loggias soaring up to the stars above dark ilex groves, once gardens where the lovely ladies of Elisabetta's court dallied with love.



URBINO: SAN FRANCESCO.

But if you wish to carry with you unimpaired this vision of ethereal loveliness it is wiser to let your imagination, and the flowery epithets of Castiglione, Sanzio, Baldi and Vasari, fill up the blanks, nor seek to find inspiration in the deserted halls of Federigo. Come rather, across the cleft in Urbino's hill, and climb towards the height of the Fortezza. There you will see a panorama of great hills unfold itself, Monte Catria and lovely Monte del Cavallo, Monte Nerone and Carpegna, the cradle of the Montefeltrian race. At your feet across the brown roofs of the Città Inferiore you will see the mighty walls and bastions of Urbino encircling Federigo's palace, with the dome-crowned bulk of the Cathedral on the one hand and a gracious ilex-wood upon the other; and in the midst, enshrined as it were in the panoply of war, a pleasure-house for princes, white and gold, with airy loggias opening out towards the mountains, and hanging gardens and slim tourelles, like a mediaeval castle of the Troubadour land. For the spirit of the Renaissance was in Urbino when Frederic and his Dalmatian architect Laurana built this palace. Though Italy was still racked by civil wars, though she was yet to tremble before the foreign armies, which poured through her defenceless passes from the day that Charles VIII's mad escapade showed that the way was open, to the invasion of Napoleon in 1796, Federigo the man of war and letters chose to build a pleasure palace for himself and his descendants upon Urbino's hill.

No one else but Federigo would have dared. The Sforza trembled in the fortress they had wrested from the Visconti in the heart of Milan; many years later the Medici had need of a covered passage connecting the Pitti with the Palazzo Vecchio, as the Popes had, to cover their retreat from the Vatican to Sant'Angelo; the palace of the Dukes of Ferrara was armed at every point; even the courtly Lords of Mantua could flee at a moment's notice from their exquisite summer-house outside the city gates to their stronghold in the Castello Gonzaga. But it is not likely that Federigo, the great soldier who had led the armies of kings and Popes to victory, and whose fame had crossed the Alps and earned him laurels in the far-off Court of England, depended only on the strength of his mountain home or the loyalty of the sturdy citizens of Urbino, when he planned the first unfortified mansion which an Italian dared to build since the Villas of the Roman Empire were destroyed by the barbarian. He knew well enough that they could be trusted. Had he not left his beloved Countess Battista to their care while he was carrying on his wars in Tuscany and the Campagna, although his life-long enemy, Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini, was harrying his borders and seeking to inflame his people to revolt?

There was another weapon in his armoury, stronger than precipices, more trustworthy than the shifting humour of a crowd. He may have learnt to use it as a boy in the brilliant Court of Mantua, where he was taught philosophy and science and literature and oratory by the famous Vittorino da Feltre, while he was becoming one of the most skilful swordsmen and military tacticians of the day. No doubt the liberality of Nicholas V., the great little man of Sarzana, and his own intercourse with Pius II. the Humanist Pope, and Lorenzo the Magnificent, augmented his enthusiasm. For the Renaissance was at hand. The lamp of learning hurled by the Saracens from the shores of the Bosphorus had thrown its beams across the Adriatic just in time. Already Petrarch and Boccaccio had kindled the sparks of their wit and humour at its flame. Manuel Chrysoloras, the Byzantine, had already filled the Greek chair in the University of Florence; Gemistos Plethon, the Platonist, had already attacked the roots of Christianity; the famous Academy of Florence had been founded by Cosimo de' Medici.

And nowhere did the torch of culture burn more brightly than in Urbino, where Federigo, and

after him Guidobaldo, and that exquisite lady Elisabetta Gonzaga his wife, stored up the treasures bought by Federigo's hard-earned and honourable wealth—rare translations, rarer autographs, sculpture and bronze and paintings, choicest intarsia, delicate instruments of music, all the curious and beautiful fruits of the Renaissance. This little hill town, almost unheard of until the Montefeltro dynasty raised it to dignity, became a beacon among the Appennines, a city of fair fame to which poets, philosophers, artists and musicians, humanists, scholars, knights and ladies gathered from all the courts of Italy.

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'It was scholarship which revealed to men the wealth of their own minds, the dignity of human thought, the value of human speculation, the importance of human life.' Gone was the need for barred and shuttered gates, for secret night raids, for bravoos waiting in the narrow ill-lit streets. The doors of Federigo's palace were thrown wide open, and while the duke sat in his great hall for dinner all those who wished could come and go; or, if they sought an audience of their lord, gain easy access. It is only when we remember how, many years later, the Baglioni were to bathe the streets of Perugia in blood, and the fair cities of Tuscany,—Siena and Pisa and Lucca, were to sweat under the yoke of tyrants, that we realise how much the airy grace of this premature flower of the Renaissance stands for in the history of Italy.

All this was clear to us as we looked across the valley and saw the towers of Federigo's palace golden in the late September sunshine. But as we had come so far to see its long-deserted halls, we turned back and climbed the Via Puccinotti to the piazza where Raphael, the Adonais for whom Rome wept, is immortalised in bronze between the House of God and the House of Urbino.

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The battered crown of Italy's Iron Duke is not a whited sepulchre. Behind its cracked walls and perishing windows are many precious carvings, doors of rich intarsia, and gracious stucchi, not plundered from other palaces but designed for the salons where the Montefeltro, and after him the Delia Rovere, held his court.

But how the spirit of the place has flown! How shrunken are the glories chronicled by Santi and the philosophers and historians who were attracted to Urbino in the zenith of its glory! Here and there some trace of human use conjured up the ghostly past—a marble balustrade polished like glass by hands long since forgotten in death; the yellow stories of fireplaces where pages and men-at-arms once leant to warm themselves beside the cheery blaze; the worn-out tiles before the dais of Federigo's great hall, with its windows overlooking the piazza, where he watched his workmen building a worthy house for his God. And sometimes we caught a glimpse of the inner character of these sons of history, in the rich study lined with fine intarsia and hung with tapestry where Federigo rested from cares of state with his beloved books; or the exquisite little chapel in which the cipher of Guidobaldo is entwined with the delicate carvings and arabesques which cover vault and walls.

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It would be a mournful place if it were not that the Renaissance, flowering so graciously within these silent halls, has left a world of fantasy to people them, satyrs and fauns, and little laughing loves who make music with pipe and tabor, and dance along the chimneys of the Sala degli Angeli above the roses and carnations, tipped with gold, which bloom upon its panels. For almost all the treasures, which Lucrezia Borgia wondered over when she passed through Urbino on her way to wed the Marquis of Ferrara, were rifled some months later by her terrible brother Cesare, who broke into the territory by sword and treachery where she had come in peace. And what was left when the Borgia fled and Guidobaldo returned, and all that Guidobaldo and his successors, the della Roveri, garnered together, were bequeathed to the Papacy by the last Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria II., in 1624, only one hundred and fifty years after Sixtus IV. had placed the ducal cap upon the head of Federigo, creating him at the same time Knight of St. Peter and Gonfaloniere of the Holy Roman Church.

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FOLIGNO

In Foligno it still rained. From my bed I could see the indigo clouds which had pursued us with such a mighty storm-song all the way from Urbino. Every now and then great splots of water fell from the wide eaves on the paved street, with a pleasant sound like the intermittent music of a fountain.

I was in no hurry to get up. We had arrived late the night before, in such a downpour of rain that we knew nothing of Foligno except that we had driven through a wide avenue of plane trees to the city barrier, where the douane insisted on opening our luggage; and that the Albergo della Posta, whose charming host, Signor Cherubino Pinelli, had made us welcome, was one of the most comfortable hospices in Umbria.

But we were back in Umbria, mystical Umbria, where ancient gods walk hand in hand with saints along the banks of gently flowing streams; where life goes slowly to the tune of bells slung round the dewlaps of snow-white oxen, bred by the waters of Clitumnus and praised by Virgil, Pliny and Propertius; where the soft beauty of the hills and sky forms worthy backgrounds for a gentle people, whose stately and unconscious grace has been immortalised by artists of the Quattrocento—an age in which, we learn from Matarazzo, the human form was worshipped with a touch of the old passion which was mother to the genius of Greece. [260]

And that was enough to take me out of bed and to the window, where I found the wings of the storm sweeping across the bleak blue hills towards Nocera as it fled back to the Appennines, and the sun already shining through the rain upon the white towers of Spoleto, while Trevi, near at hand, rose out of the plain on the top of her conical hill.

In the road below, the men of the octroi, with their long blue cloaks wrapped round them, waited, rapier in hand, to prod the bags and bundles of the peasants as they entered the city gates. And along the fair white road which links the little townships of this Umbrian vale together—Perugia, Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi, Spello, Foligno, Trevi, Spoleto—I saw a stream of people flowing towards the Porta Romana. Some had burdens on their heads, and others were riding pannier-wise on mules; here they walked with free step beside their milk-white oxen, there they rode on wooden tumbrils among their heaped-up fruits and vegetables. Far away where the slim poplars rose up like banners upon the horizon I saw them, mere specks upon the long white ribbon of the road. Below my window they streamed into Foligno through the modern barrier which has taken the place of the old Porta Romana, running the gauntlet of the facetious or overbearing octroi-men, who prodded everything with their long skewers in search of illicit wares. [261]

It was a rare comedy to watch. The gay Lothario, whose cloak thrown well over his left shoulder gave him a swashbuckling appearance, lingered in conversation with the pretty kerchiefed girls, though often they carried nothing in their hands at all; and dare-devil boys fled laughing by on their bicycles, with diminutive dinner-bags tied to the handle-bars, nor slackened speed for the surly old octroi-man who bade them stop, and who, I wager, suspected every one of them.

Foligno, which many people only remember as the little city low in the background of Raphael's Madonna del Foligno, is to-day as it has always been, one of the most important commercial towns in Umbria. Its position down in the plain three miles from Forum Flaminii, the junction between the great Flaminian Road from Rome to the Adriatic, and its loop branch by Interamna, Spoleto, Trevi and Foligno, made the Fulginium of Imperial Rome a city of considerable importance. The proximity of Mevania and Hispellum probably prevented its growth during the Roman Empire; but after the destruction of Forum Flaminii by the Longobards in the eighth century, its scattered inhabitants settled in the then flourishing town of Foligno, which became one of the chief communes in Umbria. Was it not in the market of Foligno that young Francesco Bernardone came to sell his father's bales of cloth before he gave the money to the old priest of San Damiano? And is it not the proud boast of Foligno that in 1472 the earliest copy of the *Divina Commedia* was printed within her walls, a fact which her citizens claim to prove not only her industrial but her artistic energy? [262]

Standing at the junction of the railways from Rome and Florence to Ancona she is of considerable commercial importance to-day, with numerous sugar refineries and paper mills, and a large carburet factory on the banks of the Topino. But never did a city so small and compact hide the cloven foot of commercialism as well as Foligno. It is true that looking down on her from Perugia or Spoleto, she is seen, lying like a bride in the green valley, below a veil of fine white dust or smoke from the carburet factory; but outside the walls she is still the city Raphael painted for Sigismondo Conti; and in her byways she is the same town which ran with blood when the terrible Corrado Trinci paraded through her streets with the three hundred dead who were the price of his Vendetta.

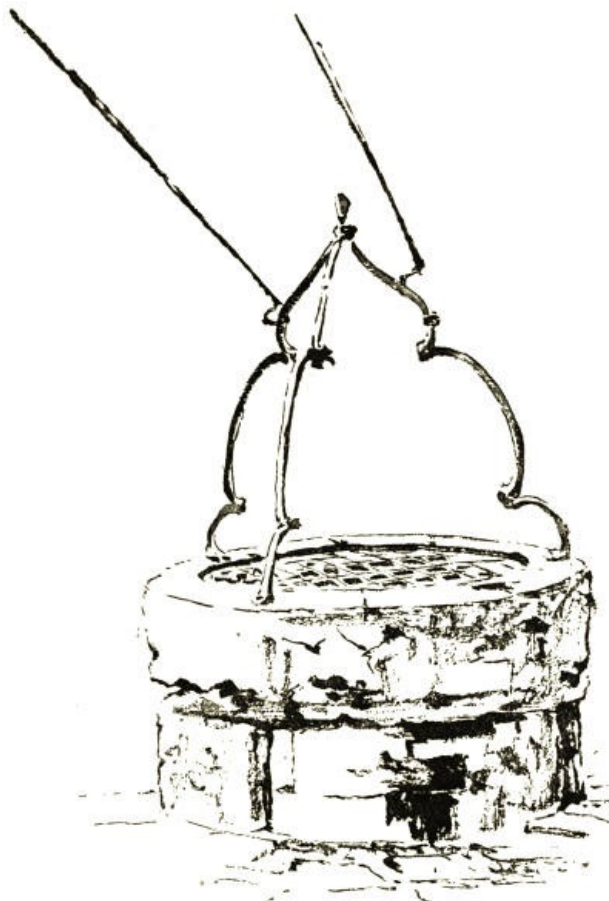
For when Ser Pietro da Rasiglia, the Governor of Nocera, whose wife Niccolò Trinci had dishonoured, lured Niccolò and his brother Bartolomeo to Nocera and slew them on a hunting expedition, Corrado killed three hundred 'souls' and brought them back heaped up on mules to show his vengeance to the people of Foligno. [263]



FOLIGNO: SAN DOMENICO.

Foligno is full of ancient churches, some with their ruddy mediaeval grace unspoiled, like beautiful Santa Maria Infra Portas, a little Romanesque building of rose-coloured Subasian stone with a gracious porch and a square bell-tower, which is a treasure-house of frescoes, and contains an interesting Byzantine chapel. And others like San Feliciano, the Cathedral, modernised within, but still one of the chief glories of Foligno with its exquisite *facciata minore* in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, rich with the art of the Comacine Masters, and the beautiful reconstruction of the western front by the Scuola di Arti e Mestieri.

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FOLIGNO: WELL IN THE CASA NOCCHI.

But it is the fruit of her mightiest days that makes Foligno rich in monuments—the years between 1305 and 1439 in which the Trinci, having finally driven the Ghibellines out of the city,

were its despots, until Eugenius IV., to whom the memory of Corrado's terrible vendetta had an evil savour, deprived him of power, and put him and his family to death. For to this period Foligno owes the vast church of San Domenico, whose picturesque campanile Mr. Markino has sketched rising over the trees of Signor Tradardi's garden; and little San Giovanni dell'Acqua with its gracious doorway; and San Francesco and San Salvatore, and the dismantled church of Santa Caterina, and many another façade of rose and white Subasian stone, on which the years have wrought a tender bloom as of fruit ripened in the sun. And not churches only, for to the Trinci she owes the stately Palazzo Trinci long since fallen to decay, but still linked to San Feliciano by a covered archway, still preserving its great processional stairway, still decorated with the frescoes which Ottaviano Nelli painted for the bloodthirsty Corrado.

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Foligno has many charms too often overlooked by the traveller because she is such an admirable headquarters both by rail and road for seeing Central Umbria. The courtyards of her ancient palaces have lovely well-heads of wrought iron, and many of their doors have quaint and interesting epigrams over the lintel. She has a little Venice on the banks of a canal, half dammed by docks and water weeds, crossed by a Roman bridge; and a water mill, where the women wash their linen in a long arcade of red brick overhanging the brown millstream. Her churches are full of golden pictures by the greatest exponents of the Foligno school, Niccolò d'Alunno, and Pier Antonio Mesastris, a painter little known outside his native town, whose beautiful Angels and Madonnas, combining an ideal tenderness and sweetness of conception with a real depth of feeling, have earned, in the language of the people, the name of *Maestà Bella*.

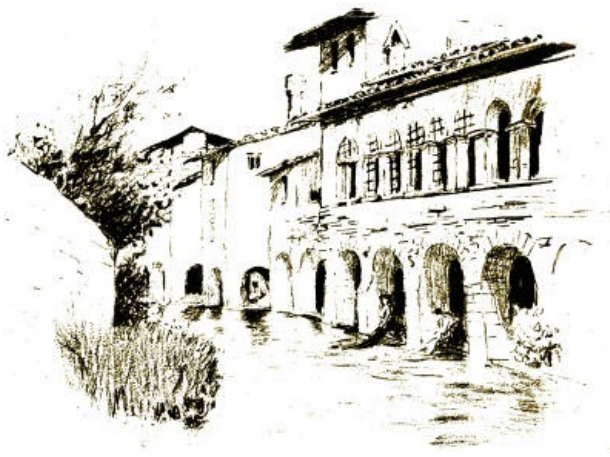
Speaking of the Foligno school of painting, which was characterised by an earnestness not to be found in every branch of Umbrian art, whether it is the grace and delicate spirituality of Mesastris or the tragic intensity of Niccolò d'Alunno, brings me to Foligno's modern school of art, of which she is justly proud. It is housed in the old cloisters of San Niccolò where Canova once had his studio, and where he left many of his plaster casts. And it is under the direction of Professor Arturo Tradardi, a delightful enthusiast who never wearies of studying the glories of his native town, or seeking to recreate them. In the beautiful cloistered garden of the Scuola di Arti e Mestieri he has gathered together reproductions in plaster, toned to the exact colour of the originals, of all the most beautiful monuments in Umbria. A labour of love which may be responsible for some of the extraordinary energy to be found in Foligno, which with Viterbo leads the way among the smaller towns of Italy in the glorious work of freeing ancient monuments from the plaster prisons in which they have lain hidden from the world during the last three centuries.

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It goes without saying that Foligno, which lies low in the heart of Umbria, not more than ten miles from Assisi, the cradle of the Franciscan legend, should be the birthplace of a saint. But, notwithstanding the picturesque legend of the Blessed Angela, which tells us that as she walked through the fields of Umbria, wearied by her struggles, and despairing of overcoming the burden of her sins, she heard the voice of Christ bidding her be of good cheer because He loved her better than any other woman in the Valley of Spoleto, we hear more of the Blessed Angelina within Foligno than of Sant'Angela, who lies buried in the church of San Francesco. For it was the Blessed Angelina, Countess of Civitella and Montegiove, who founded the Convento delle Contesse, that quiet retreat in a forgotten corner of Foligno where noble women have continued to work and pray unceasingly since its foundation towards the end of the fourteenth century. Just as it was the Blessed Angelina's chapel in the church of the Franciscans which sweated blood seventeen years after her death because, as she related in a vision, the Christians had lost Constantinople.

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But it is not so much for her miracles and wonders that this saintly woman is held in veneration as for her holiness and chastity. And indeed her calm spirit seems to linger in the quiet cloisters and gardens of the Convento delle Contesse, in which she died after she had founded no less than sixteen Convents of the Tertiary Order of St. Francis. It is an oasis of peace and rest, an oasis which is too easily passed by in the maze of Foligno's streets, for its walls are high and bare, and give no hint of the gardens they enclose, unless perchance the outer gate be left unbarred, as it was when we stumbled upon it and stopped to wonder at the beauty of a picture disclosed under a wide pent-house roof within. For over the doorway of this Holy House which was the first home of that much-travelled picture, the Madonna del Foligno, Mesastris painted one of his lovely golden-haired Madonnas, enthroned among angels and virgin-saints, while in the background little Loves gather the delicate pied wind-flowers, limned against the sky, and heap them up in baskets to scatter, maybe, with song and praise upon the courts of Heaven.



FOLIGNO: THE WASHING PLACE.

Here too, if anywhere, the liberal spirit of the Middle Ages lingers. We knocked, and the door was opened as it was wont to open in the bountiful fifteenth century before the old Order trembled. And within we saw the Lady Abbess of a bygone day ruling a little company of noble dames amid the serenest spells of art and nature, with the beauty and the holiness of their lives setting an ensample to the world instead of being lost in mortification of the flesh behind closed gateways. Signor Tradardi made us acquainted with the beautiful Mother Superior, who came with us, telling her beads and smiling at our enthusiasm as each step revealed unsuspected charms, for nowhere else in Italy had we gained such free admission to a nunnery, nowhere else had we found the ancient loveliness of fresco and Gothic loggia untouched in any convent possession as in the little courts and pleasaunces of this Garden of the Lord. Two black-robed sisters were walking among the flowers with their pupils, but when the gentle Abbess called for candles to take us to the frescoed cell of the Blessed Angelina, they were brought by a slender boy, whose curiously intense beauty made a break in the calm and holy atmosphere of this quiet retreat. He was very much at home, and evidently did not seem to think that we should feel it unnatural to find him in that *galère*.

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We learned that he was the nephew of the Lady Abbess—the professor of music for the convent. And that he lived in Umbria, but next week was going to Ancona. We had lately come from there? Then perhaps we had heard the opera *Thaïs*, recently produced so excellently in Ancona, which he was making the journey on purpose to hear!

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We drove to Spello on a September day of vagrant sunshine, when the earth was musical with running waters and the heavens, tinted mother-o'-pearl, were spread with tearful clouds. The rugged crests of Nocera's pyramidal hills in the van of the great Appennines were shadowed with cobalt. The vines were brown, the hedges full of berries, the scent of wild mint sweetened the air. A rippling stream was singing in its rocky bed beside the road, and long grasses were still lying against the muddy banks as they were pressed by the rush of storm-rain the day before. And Spello lay before us in the sunshine like a cluster of yellowing roses on the spur of Monte Subasio.

But first we drove between the vineyards to the little church of San Giovanni Profiamma which marks the site of the ancient town of Forum Flaminii, built by the Consul Flaminius on his Roman road before it left the Umbrian Vale and plunged into the passes of the Appennines. Like all the thirteenth century churches of this part of Umbria, it is built of the lovely pink limestone of Subasio which gives such a peculiar beauty to the streets of Spello and Assisi. Its ancient rose window is broken, and two white houses hem in the façade on either side.

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The Romanesque doorway stood wide open, because a knot of villagers were busied in putting up a gilt and paper baldacchino for a festa. Some children and a black goat had strayed in to watch; the priest was giving directions, and every now and then lending a shoulder when the whole affair threatened to fall over. But what simplicity, what unspoiled mediaeval grace we found in this tiny chapel in the fields, which is the only relic of a long-forgotten city. It has been restored, almost rebuilt, by the parish priest, who to his honour has preserved every ancient stone, and arch, and bifora; even the altar he has left in mediaeval simplicity, a slab of marble on a worn and battered fragment of granite column, all that remains of the pagan city of Flaminius.

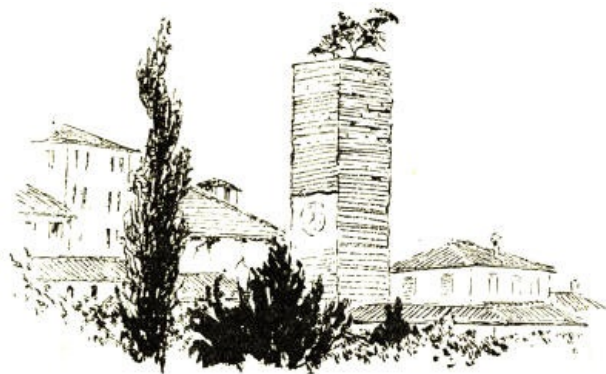
They are a splendid people, these country priests of Umbria, with their ambition to beautify their little churches, and their merry good-nature in the face of hardships. We met so many of them in Foligno,—one who had written a book about his church, and toiled to rescue the faded frescoes veiled in plaster on its walls, taking the same pleasure in their beauty as a gardener in the first blossoms of the year; another who had made a museum of his sacristy and cloisters. But the priest of San Giovanni Profiamma has preserved some precious pages in the history of art. We watched him scramble into his ramshackle cart, shouting some last instructions to his villagers before he drove off at full gallop over the rough road with a huge sack of fodder tied on behind. And we remembered another country priest whom we had seen at Todi leading his saddle horse down the hill to say Mass in some roadside chapel, singing as he went, as Brother Francis might have sung, with no thought of the morrow, but only joy in the present, and faith for the life to come.

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We found Spello gay with the bells of her ox-carts, and as busy as a good housewife, her men bringing in bundles of fire-wood against the winter, or getting ready for the vintage by rolling the pipes and hogs-heads down the hill to be cleansed at the fountain below the old bell-tower; and her women washing their linen with song and laughter outside the Roman gate.

Spello, the old Hispellum, which claims to have been the birthplace of Propertius, notwithstanding the stress that poet laid upon the neighbouring city of Mevania as his home, is one of the loveliest cities in the Valley of Spoleto. She is as pink as a rose. Her houses are all ancient, many of them with Gothic doors and windows; her arches are threaded with vines and Morning Glories; she clammers up the hillside in narrow streets which turn naturally into steps when they are too steep even for the nimble mule; her people dress in bright-coloured linens, and the women cover their burnished hair with the gayest of flowered kerchiefs. As we drew near we saw her Gothic gate bestriding the road as fiercely as though it feared the Trinci might still come riding from Foligno, but close behind it, on the tower of some fighting baron which has been turned into a belfry, a full-grown olive tree stretched out its arms, welcoming strangers with the branch of peace.

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SPELLO.

We went up through the ancient Porta Consolare, whose Roman statues, toga'd ghosts of old Hispellum, stare down upon the snowy flanks of the yoked oxen bringing in the fresh-picked grapes just as they did in the years before Hannibal laid waste the Valley of Spoleto on his march down to Campania. In Spello's climbing streets, though she is poor and broken, we found treasures worthy of great temples, heirlooms stranded in the shipwreck of her wealth, like Santa Maria Maggiore's rich Renaissance doorway and thirteenth-century portal, and the exquisite holy water stoup in the nave, which was once a pagan altar.

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But most of all Spello is Pinturicchio's city. Her peasants are the ghosts of his old people; in her streets we met the lovely fair-haired girls whom he was never weary of crowning as Madonna Mary. He painted many pictures in her churches, in San Girolamo and Sant'Andrea, and a whole chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, where he left his own portrait hanging from the Virgin's shelf of books in the scene of the Annunciation, as it hung perhaps from the shelf of some woman whom he loved. In this church too are many altar pictures, and an exquisite Madonna hidden away in the sacristy among the tawdry paraphernalia of saints' days, and an angel, lost for three hundred years in a dark cupboard, which, when the sacristan illuminates it with a candle, shines like a vision of the angel Gabriel coming in the dawn of day to Mary.

The chapel, which was painted for one of the Baglioni of Perugia, is faded and defaced like the Borgia room in the Vatican, and needs bright sunshine to bring out its dim rich colours. But it is full of gracious Pinturicchio figures who play their parts in the drama of the birth of Christ against a luminous background in which we glimpse the life of the Quattrocento as it flows in and out of distant cities. And the floor is covered with gold and blue Deruta tiles, made for the Brothers in 1565, and so worn that we were sad to walk on them, although the sacristan dragged chairs across them with the utmost unconcern.

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Then it rained, and because we had seen all Spello's churches we had to seek shelter and lunch. The only inn was down the hill outside the Porta Consolare, but we found both food and refuge in a humble cottage where the family were just sitting down to their meal of steaming pottage. They gave us a plate of that, and dressed some raw tomatoes with oil and vinegar, at our suggestion, for Italians seldom eat raw tomatoes, which they do not think are healthy. And we were content with this and some good wine and excellent rough bread, although the coffee which our smiling hostess prepared so carefully was spoilt by its too liberal dash of methylated cognac.

But the rain drove us from our little hill-city. We tried to brave it, as we searched in vain for the Porta Venere; nor could the old country women climbing the hill in the shelter of their enormous green umbrellas, who were the only people out in the storm beside ourselves, tell us the whereabouts of anything.

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CLITUMNUS

We drove to Spoleto along the Roman road which threads the rich green valley of the Clitumnus, skirting the hill of Trevi and the olive-groves which crowd round the ruined fortress of Le Vene, and dipping at last into an oak wood where the crystal springs, far-famed in ancient days, leap from the rocky hillside.

It is the loveliest drive in Umbria. Not only for the beauty of the way, for here all ways are beautiful, and lie through gardens, where milk-white oxen labour with wooden ploughs beneath the classic olive, and vineyards where the vines usurp the trees and clothe the valley in luxuriant festoons; not only for the loggia'd farms scattered among the fields, or for the towered castles frowning upon the road like mediaeval Sant'Eraclio; not only for the sight of Trevi, the steepest town in Italy, a queen upon her hill-top, with her face towards Spoleto and her yellow skirts trailing down into an olive-grove. All these we had seen a hundred times before from other Umbrian towns. But nowhere else had we found such unspoiled pastoral loveliness as in this soft wide valley whose glory Virgil sang, and all the ancients praised, the latest home of gods, where snowy bulls, victims for the Roman sacrifice, were bred beside the waters of a sacred stream.

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'Thou, gay Clitumnus, where thy currents glide
There bleating flocks thy flow'ry borders hide;
There snow-white bulls, the greatest sacrifice
Design'd for Jove, who rules the deities,
First wash'd and sprinkled with thy sacred flood
Pay for the Roman triumphs with their blood.'

Though she looks like a queen on her hill-top, Trevi is at heart a simple country maid, with nothing to offer to the traveller but a few pictures by Perugino and his pupils, and an exquisite Renaissance altar by Rocco da Vicenza. She is the most disappointing of all the mountain fastnesses which have defied the assaults of change, but she stands like a sentinel before a landscape of surpassing beauty, peopled with classic memories.

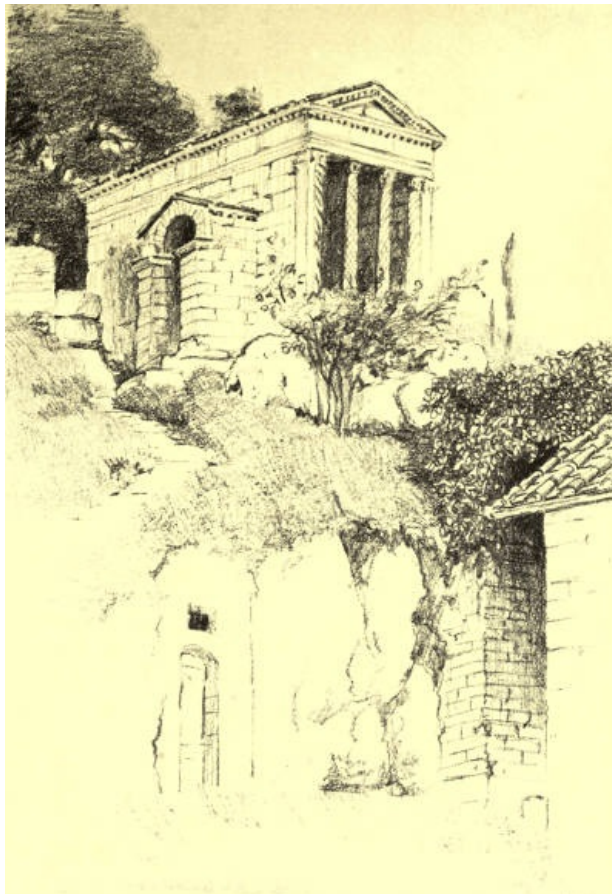
For here, below the crumbling walls and towers of Le Vene, at the foot of olive-wooded hills, we walked beside the crystal waters of Clitumnus, through scenes immortalised by Virgil in the Georgics.

'Unbounded plains with endless riches blest;
Yet caves and living springs, and airy glades,
And the soft low of kine, and sleepy shades
Are never wanting ...'

Here by the roadside we found the little temple which some say is one of those chapels of the god Clitumnus that Pliny wrote of to his friend Romanus when he adjured him to visit this so-lovely spot. And others, because of the Christian symbolism carved on its walls, claim to be a Christian fane built of pagan fragments in the fourth century. In any case it is deserted of its gods to-day, for if no incense is offered to old Clitumnus, neither is Mass said now before its altar, for the honour of San Salvatore. And yet I do not think the oracle, whom Caligula as well as Honorius came to consult, is far away; for the sun and rain have mellowed the old stones, giving them a rare and perfect beauty, and the birds nesting beneath its tympanum chant praises in the dawn, while from below ascends the song of the sacred stream as its flows by to mingle with the Tiber on its way to Rome. Nay, Pan himself, weary of making music in the reeds, might stray into this temple, to wonder at the faded saints who looked so coldly on him from their niches, before he leapt back again at break of day to the oak-woods on the hill above, where the goat-herds tend their flocks.

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A little further on we reached the source of the Clitunno, where many crystal streams gush from the hillside or bubble up from the ground, uniting in a wide lake before the river can escape along the valley. The air was full of the merry music of lapping waters and the ecstatic shrilling of the frogs. Tall poplars swayed upon the shallow banks, and giant willows trailed their branches in the stream like the long hair of water-nymphs. Little white bridges led from one green island to another, but the lush grass sloped so gradually to the clear waters that we could hardly tell where it first mingled with its own reflections. The crystal pools were underworlds of emerald waterweeds, now dark, now light, and in their mysterious depths were springs whose shafts of cyanite blue gleamed phosphorescent through the swaying plants. And here small fishes darted in and out with watchful eyes, and speckled trout swam slowly to and fro.



THE TEMPLE OF CLITUMNUS.

Surely if anywhere the old gods linger here. And when the valley is silent, but for the distant shepherd piping to his flocks, surely the naiads resting on the emerald sward call to their sisters, the Hamadryads and the Oreads, to leave their oak-woods and the hills above and dance down to join them in the clear cool water. Half unconsciously we looked and listened for them. And in a moment the youth of Arcady seemed to be born again. The babbling of the many little streams was like the echo of mocking laughter. I felt as though I had strayed into a court of water-nymphs and heard them making merry as they hid among the reeds. I could have sworn I saw one once; but it was only a darting fish. Then a kingfisher flying low took cover in the sedges just where the glinting sunshine dazzled my eyes. And I thought I heard them laugh again.

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SPOLETO

Too few have sung the splendour and beauty of Spoleto, the proud white city whose towers breathe a message of peace to-day, where they once blazoned war down the wide green valley to Perugia. For Spoleto, like Perugia, has been a queen among cities. Like Perugia she has kept ward through the ages upon the valleys of Umbria, gazing down from her sacred ilex groves on lesser cities riding the encircling hills—towered Montefalco upon the ridge which shuts off the valley of the Tiber; Trevi on its steep olive-girt mount; Foligno and Bevagna down in the plain; little Spello; Assisi, very beautiful as she kneels before the mighty temple she has raised to San Francesco on the slopes of Monte Subasio; Santa Maria degli Angeli and Ponte San Giovanni. And in one proud memory at least she is greater even than Perugia, for she alone withstood the tidal wave of Hannibal in the second Punic War, so that he turned from her walls dismayed, nor dared to march on Rome, seeing that this small colony could hold his force in check.

If she had faded out of history after that, her name would have been heroic among the Umbrian towns. But though she suffered in the civil war of Marius and Sulla, we know that she continued to flourish even in the dark years between the fall of Rome and the growth of mediaevalism. Totila destroyed her as Frederick Barbarossa was to destroy her in the middle of the twelfth century; but Theodoric the Ostrogoth, and after him Narses, the Exarch, built her up. Under the Longobards she became an independent duchy; after the fall of the Carolingians her Dukes were for a short time Emperors of Italy.

Ah! Spoleto, it is little wonder that you are proud to-day, that your bells ring so joyously down the valleys, that you hold high festival to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of United Italy. What does it profit Perugia that her name was splendid in the Middle Ages, and that she is still the Queen of Umbria, 'the Empress of hill-set cities'? Yours was the greatness of a more heroic day. Her lords were savage beasts, her people slaves, her streets were noisome with slaughter, her name a proverb for ferocity, while the Baglioni spread their pestilence across the valleys, seeking ignoble victories, and fighting unending little wars for self-aggrandisement. Because the Barbarossa laid you low the star of Perugia rose clear upon your horizon. Already in 1198, when you with all the other Umbrian towns paid tribute to Innocent III., she was the capital of Umbria. But you, the champion of Rome, the Knight-errant of the Papacy, had nobler ambitions. Your Dukes were heroes before the lords of Perugia were even robbers. Were they not Emperors too? Guido, with his pretentious claim to the kingship of France, and poor young Lambert, the chivalrous and beautiful Knight of Spoleto, with whose ill-timed death, on the very spot where the great battle of Marengo was fought nearly a thousand years after, perished the hope of a united and independent kingdom within the Italian^[25] frontier.

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SPOLETO: PORTA D'ANNIBALE.

Spoleto was truly in a jubilant mood when we climbed up her winding streets, past the beautiful but ruined apse of San Niccolò, and the magnificent prehistoric wall below its convent. An Industrial Exhibition was being held in the Piazza Bernardino Campello, and the Merry Widow —'nuovissima per Spoleto'—was to be played that night in the Teatro Nuovo, 'con ricchissima

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messa in scena!'

But at all times we found the quality of joy in Spoleto. Long long ago she wept perhaps when she waited, as Elaine for Lancelot, while her lover, the beautiful and splendid Lambert, was in the toils of his insatiable mistress, Rome. Widowed, she trimmed a lamp before his shrine and turned her eyes towards the Papacy, seeking to build up an Italian Empire, through the temporal kingdom of the Pope. But now she has opened her gates to welcome the new era, and, having doffed her mourning garments, sits enthroned at the head of her magnificent valley, welcoming the world with the gracious dignity of one who for a few short years was the mother of United Italy.

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Spoleto does not clamber up the hillside like rosy little Spello. She is tall and stately, pale as a lily, silent as a girl who dreams of love. More than any other of the hill-set cities of Umbria she bears the stamp of Rome, in arches and half-buried houses, in walls and ancient temples long since turned to the worship of other gods, and most of all in the inspiration of the great aqueduct which spans the ravine between her Rocca and the ilex-woods of Monte Luco.



SPOLETO: SAN GREGORIO.

In Spoleto Rome and modernity walk hand in hand. Spoleto is not mediaeval in character like other Umbrian towns. Her hill is crowned by the imposing Castello which Cardinal Albornoze and Nicholas v. built on the site of the Rocca of Theodoric, and she has many gracious churches which flowered from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, like the cathedral and San Gregorio Maggiore; or, more ancient still, San Salvatore, that exquisite relic of the fourth century, which contains the nucleus of a Roman temple; and San Pietro, on the lower slopes of Monte Luco, which was built in the fifth century and restored in 1320, after it had been practically destroyed by the Ghibellines. It is true that the splendid roofless apse of San Niccolò soars above the main street with broken lancet windows framing the heavens, like the windows of Tintern, but it is built over the ancient circuit of the city walls; and though its slender Gothic grace beautifies the hillside, it was the rugged stones of Spoleto's prehistoric fortifications which claimed our eyes. For it was against these walls, which the Unknown People, and later the Pelasgians and the Romans, built round the foot of their city, that Hannibal threw his Punic troops in vain before he retired to the rich territory of Picenum, where he fortified his soldiers after the rigors of their journey through Northern Italy and the Alps.

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It is the same all through Spoleto. Here and there we wandered into steep, narrow lanes, where the strip of sky above our heads was cut by bridges leading from one tall mediaeval mansion to another, where there were shrines in the walls and Gothic doorways leading to dark and mysterious courtyards, and Doors of the Dead, and, to speak truth, unsavoury odours, which are the least pleasing reminiscences of the Middle Ages. But for the most part Spoleto is clean and modern, with wide streets and piazzas graced by hanging gardens, in which her Roman fragments are stranded like the skeletons of giants, where they are not buried beneath the soil, like the wonderful subterranean bridge outside the Porta San Gregorio; and the lower church of Sant'Ansano, on the foundations of a Temple of the Sun; and the mosaiced house which is said to have been the home of the mother of the Emperor Vespasian.

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Among her treasures Spoleto holds the dust of Brother Philip in a beautifully wrought casket of lapis lazuli and gold, for that was how the façade of Santa Maria Assunta appeared to us as we rounded the corner of the Episcopal Palace, and came upon it suddenly, bathed in the yellow

sunlight of late afternoon.

The Cathedral of Spoleto is set humbly on the hillside in the shadow of the great Rocca of Nicholas V. So that we stood, as it were, above the jewelled façade, and saw it rising in all its glory at the bottom of a wide steep slope which opened out into a green piazza between the sloping gardens of the Rocca and the little Renaissance Chiesa della Manna d'Oro. Like the Cathedral of Assisi, which its façade resembles, having the same triangular tympanum enclosing grand Gothic arches corresponding to the naves of the older building, it is externally one of the most gracious churches in Umbria. The fifteenth century loggia of its portico supports a Renaissance arabesque, and above it the central arch of the tympanum is filled with gold and blue mosaics which glow like jewels in their rich setting of mellowing stones. The glass in the beautiful rose windows is the colour of lapis lazuli; two little stone pulpits are built into the wall on either side of the portico, and in its shadow is the frescoed chapel of Francesco Eroli, Bishop of Spoleto.

But why attempt to reproduce with pen and ink and dull description a picture more fitted to the golden brush of Fra Filippo Lippi, and which indeed owes much of its charm to the beauty of the Umbrian hills billowing away to the horizon, and the alchemy of sunlight changing ancient stones to gold—the complete and lovely unity of Art and Nature.

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I hope the sun sometimes shines in upon the tomb of Lippo Lippi, for I know he loved it, and the marble cenotaph which Lorenzo the Magnificent raised in his honour, when the Spoletani refused to let him carry away the body of the painter, because 'they were badly provided with things of note,' is rather bald in spite of its florid epitaph. But the tomb itself did not detain us long, for in the apse we had caught sight of some of Brother Philip's loveliest frescoes telling the story of the life of the Virgin, in four great chapters—the Annunciation, the Birth of Christ, her Death, and in the vault above, her Coronation in the Courts of Heaven.



A STREET IN SPOLETO.

According to Vasari, Fra Filippo, engaged as usual in a love affair, was poisoned by the family of the lady whom he had seduced while he was at work on the Cathedral. It is likely that the people of Spoleto were not so complaisant as the Florentines, who had long ago ceased even to shrug their shoulders at the amours of this son of the Renaissance, although he had refused the offer of Pius II. to legitimise his marriage with the beautiful nun Lucrezia. But later writers have dismissed the idea as one of Vasari's ill-founded scandals. In any case there were few men less worthy of painting the sacred story of Madonna Mary, and few who could have told it with such

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purity and tenderness, and intuition. For not even the damp which has caused them to peel and discolour in places, or the uninspired work of Fra Diamante who finished them, when Lippo Lippi, 'that vagabond and joyous mortal,' had been laid to rest, can rob these pale and sad Madonnas of their beauty, or take away the spiritual loveliness of the angels, who with the sun and the moon and all the constellations do homage to the Queen of Heaven.

But these things are as nothing compared with the real glories of Spoleto—the peculiar beauty of her landscape, and the magnificence of the Ponte delle Torri, the great aqueduct of the Longobard Dukes, which links the city to the sacred ilex groves of Monte Luco.

Nature has endowed Spoleto richly. She is built on the slopes of an isolated bastion of the Appennines, which closes as it were the Central Plain of Umbria. Behind her towers the broad shoulder of Monte Luco, veiled in ilex woods. To the south the wild valley of the Tessino opens a vista of rolling hills, mounting fold on fold to the horizon. And from the windows of our inn, the picturesque old Albergo Lucini, whose palatial rooms, sparsely furnished with ancient grandeur, are such a luxury in the hot summer months, we looked over the roofs of the lower town, and across the tranquil country to Perugia, more than forty miles away.

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A FOUNTAIN OF SPOLETO.

Was it perhaps because we knew this soft and gracious valley, sanctified by the footsteps of many saints, so well, that we loved it even more dearly than we had loved it as we gazed from the bulwarks of Perugia? Then these little towns sown along the hillsides or crowning their miniature peaks, like Trevi, and Montefalco, were nothing but names and points of beauty. But now after many weeks spent on the eastern coast of Italy or among the rugged Appennines, we had come back again to gentle Umbria, to find that every little town was full of smiling memories, and all the winding roads were pathways to romance. Who could forget the classic grace of Clitumnus, when he saw the clustered poplars soaring from the plain? Or the capers and the flowering rosemary, which made a garden of the ancient walls of Trevi? Or the sweetness of the olive woods below Assisi, where we wandered in the footsteps of St. Francis gathering an imperishable bouquet of holy memories? Or the subtle beauty of the Tiber, as it washed the skirts of Perugia's hill?

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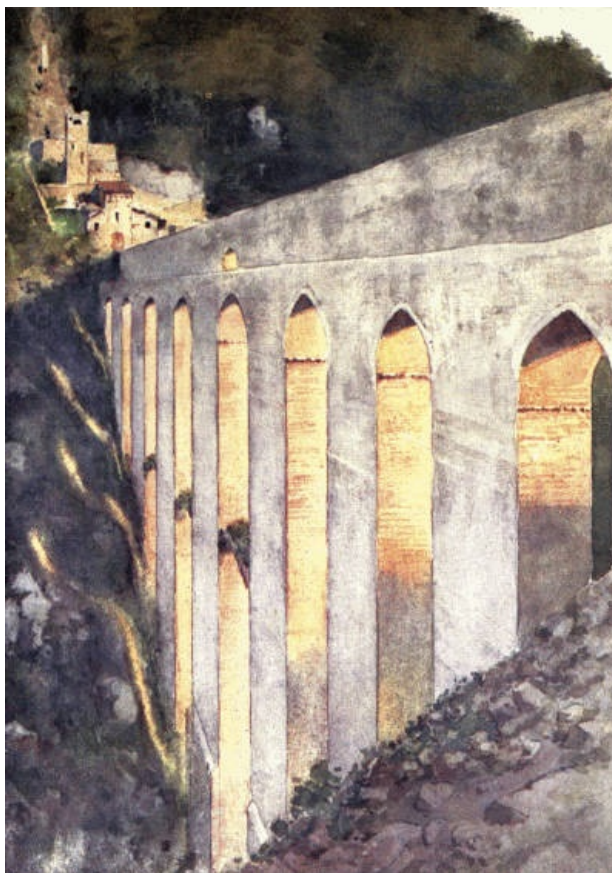
Nor had long association lessened the miracle of the soft radiance of the heavens, or made commonplace the clarity of atmosphere, or dimmed the strange light which seems to float like an eternal benediction between the mountains of this Mystic Land.

Early next morning we climbed up the hillside, past the Piazza Mercato, where a blackbird, always singing in a wicker cage, in the shadow of a Roman arch, is the personification of the joyous spirit of Spoleto. A few steps from the Rocca, through a gate in the ancient line of fortification, brought us into a small bastioned piazza overlooking the deep ravine of the Tessino, and the aqueduct which spans it.

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In my notes, I have said nothing of the Ponte delle Torri except to cry the wonder of it! Which is not surprising, for there are no words to fit it, no words large, or grand, or ambitious, or vigorous enough to describe this bridge of towers and colossal arches, which bestrides the valley between Monte Luco and the hill of Spoleto. It is the work of giants. It would be a worthy testimony to the grandeur that was Rome's; to the energy and the indomitable courage of the men who moulded an empire out of a handful of earth, and ruled the world from seven little hills. But the Ponte delle Torri is not the work of Rome. A mystery surrounds its origin. Theodelapius, third Duke of Spoleto, is said to have built it early in the seventh century, but it is at least reasonable to suppose that the foundations were Roman—indeed the local Guida di Spoleto claims that the actual conduits in use to-day are Roman. And it is obvious that the pointed arches are of mediaeval structure, probably contemporary with the ancient fortress, now a water-mill, which guards the head of the aqueduct on the slopes of Monte Luco. It is in fact a mosaic to

which the Spoletans of all ages have contributed their stones.



SPOLETO: THE AQUEDUCT.

But it was not only the grandeur of this Leviathan which held us spell-bound on the edge of the ravine; we were captivated by the lavish beauty of its *mise en scène*. For the ilex groves of Monte Luco, sacred to the ancients for their primeval forests, and to a younger world for the mediaeval saints who dwelt therein, were full of morning mists. Here and there some treetops illumined by the rays of the sun, lately risen above the shoulder of the mountain, stood out in clear relief against the dark hillside. The rest was held in shadow. Little blue columns of smoke ascended on the windless air from the bosky depths where charcoal-burners made their fires; the far-away bells of the Franciscan Convent on its crest were like the music of wind-bells under the roof-trees of the Gods. Every now and then the chimney of a cottage, sunk in the hillside below the level of the road on which we stood, wove a transparent veil of fragrant wood-smoke between our profane eyes and the sacred mount.

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We came again in the evening when the aqueduct was bathed in the declining sunlight, which threaded its great arches with slanting bars of gold. And then we crossed that magic Bridge of the Giants and plunged into the enchanted ilex woods of Monte Luco. The stony way was sown with cyclamens, and the rocks were broidered with bronze and emerald mosses. At our feet the hill sloped sharply down the ravine and the slanting sunshine wove a web of light between the trees. Above us a sea of sunlit ilexes rose to the blue heavens. As we went deeper, the cool, scented breath of oak trees came out to greet us. And across the valley we could see Spoleto and her crested Rocca, with her ancient walls striding down the hillside through her vineyards. From this point she seemed to be a city of towers and *loggie* and hanging gardens.

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SPOLETO: SAN PIETRO.

Presently we reached the beautiful and ancient church of San Pietro, and found the strange Mediaeval carvings on its façade gilded by the last rays of the setting sun. While we were spelling out its fanciful devices the glow faded from its face, leaving it old and grey at the head of its long flight of steps, as though it had seen fear. And indeed time has dealt harshly with this shrine since it was founded in the fifth century on the fragments of a pagan building. Even the fading light sufficed to show us that it held no treasures, beyond the twelfth-century fragments from Byzantine Bestiaries on its façade, and the later reliefs dating from its restoration in the fourteenth century, after it had been wantonly destroyed by the Ghibelline wolf, seeking in vain to force an entrance to the fold of Spoleto.

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THE FALLS OF TERNI

At Terni the marvels of Nature have been transformed into the marvels of electricity without changing the face of the landscape. For the Velino, the swift black river which has its source deep in the mountains of the Abruzzi, and hurls itself in three gigantic columns over a precipice 600 feet high, takes to the mills of Terni an electric current which does the work of 200,000 horses without speeding the placid Nar as it washes the fantastic Gothic walls of Interamna.

There are few waterfalls so unspoiled as Terni. The immense power-station is almost out of sight, and though the leafy valley which excited the admiration of the younger Pliny is blocked at various points by great factories, there is not a single café or restaurant to mar the savage splendour of the Cascade delle Marmore.

Early in the morning of a St. Martin's summer we set out from Terni to see the famous cascades of the Velino, which, like the falls of Tivoli, are the work of Roman hands.^[26] The great mountains closing the valley of the Nar were shadowy against the sunlit mists. As we drew near, the clamour of the water grew and gathered like the exultant roar of some primeval giant. The river began to hurry in its deep channel below the road, and foam-white torrents clambered down its banks, with bursts of laughter, to find themselves escaped from the main waterfall. But still the mists clung to the green hillsides so that we only saw their crests silhouetted against the welkin.

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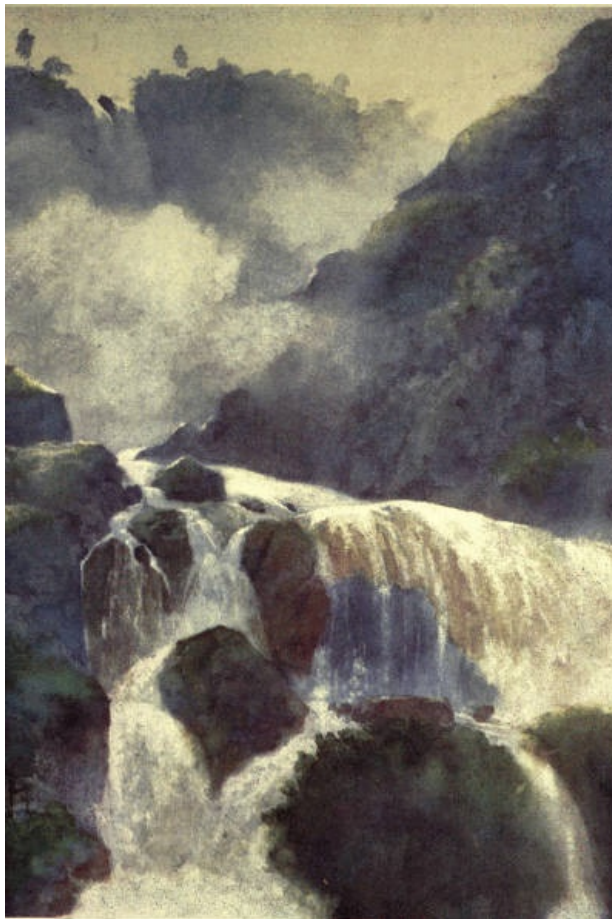
Suddenly out of the tender half-tones a sunlit cloud loomed silver in the heavens. I have seen the snowy turrets of a cumulus illuminated by a burst of sunlight on many an April noon. I seemed to see them now, shadowed against the blue Empyrean. But it was no cloud. The growing clamour told me so. That fantastic outline, clothed in the semblance of giant trees, was solid rock cleft with a flood of leaping water, which caught the sunshine, like the silver lining of a storm-cloud, as it topped the cliff, and then vanished in a mist of mounting spray.

Sun and river poured together over the ilex-crested mountain, the light in solid rays athwart the belching smoke of the falls, the water like a living thing, an unchained element, which leapt again in ecstasy to the blue heavens, winnowing the air with plumes of wind-tossed spray. On either side the hills fell back before us, their forests and terraces glistening with Byron's

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'... unceasing shower, which round,
With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
Is an eternal April to the ground,
Making it all one emerald....'

And in the midst, cleaving the ilex forest on the brink of the precipice, the Velino hurled itself into the abyss with a mighty shout of laughter. Sometimes it spent itself upon the rocks in foaming passion, impotently desiring its consummation with the sea, doomed to captivity upon the way, to lie in stagnant pools chained for the service of humanity. Sometimes it trickled languidly over the moss-grown crevices, engrossed in the delicate pleasure of its own music. Sometimes it glissaded as transparently as glass, seemingly motionless in its resistless speed, over the smooth yellow boulders bearded with stalactites.



THE FALLS OF TERNI.

It was profoundly exciting—the voice of Nature, a real and primitive thing. Only a little way up the valley great manufactories choked up the banks of the Nera; but here the clamorous voices, mad with the delirium of motion, sang to the heavens in unbridled joy. It was a great song of labour, a gigantic Wagnerian strain, in which we could distinguish the lilting song of the Rhine daughters above the thunder of the giants, telling the happy innocence of earth before her stolen gold became a passion to gods and men. Or in another mood we heard the laughter of water-gods as they leapt into the boiling chasm, and the dryads and the naiads calling to their sisters, the 'wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist,' and clapping their hands to see their great comrade come hurtling from the heavens careless, in his mad race, of the defeat to come. Only the mists, the tiger-striped mists, leapt up to warn the silver giant, and lost themselves under the melting kiss of the sun. We never could have wearied of watching these maenads dancing before their lord.

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But time pressed. We were to be in Narni that night, and we had yet to climb to the head of the fall, through its enchanted ilex-wood, where ferns and flowers, all wet with glancing spray, grow round the lips of overhanging caves, and dock leaves wave huge fans in the wind of rushing waters.

Sometimes through an opening in the trees we caught sight of a moving curtain of white mist; sometimes the path led on to a narrow ledge overhanging the main fall, where we could stand in the shelter of a hollowed cave and watch the water leaping down in Gothic points of spume, plunging into the smoking cauldron to rise again in Iris clouds of spray. A butterfly which had ventured from the green shadows of the music-haunted wood fluttered an instant in the wild wet breath of the fall, and was drawn remorselessly into the vortex. Here, indeed, with the thunder of the Velino shaking the hillside, there was a savage and awful beauty in the scene. Here we could recognise the landscape where Virgil's Fury, leaving 'the high places of the world,' fled to the mansions of Cocytus. 'A place of high renown, and celebrated by fame in many regions ... the side of a grove, gloomy with thick boughs, hems it in on either hand, and in the midst a torrent, in hoarse murmurs and with whirling eddies, roars along the rocks....'

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THE LOWER FALL OF TERNI.

We lunched in a cottage a little way from the bottom of the fall, which seemed to be a restaurant for the humble needs of the workmen in a neighbouring carburet factory. At least its landlady was greatly distressed because she had nothing for the signori. 'Non è basta! non è basta!' she cried, although we discovered four roast chickens and some excellent potato salad as well as a huge cauldron of *minestre* on her stove. Later, when the factory bell had rung for *mezzogiorno*, and all the employés crowded in, we found there really was not enough to go round. But the courtesy and charming manners of the workmen were a revelation. Although there was no soup for some of them, and certainly we had eaten one of their chickens, they treated the whole affair as a joke, and heaped their plates contentedly with *pasti*.

But to us the biggest joke was the price of the good lunch we had so unwittingly stolen from the regular patrons of the inn. For the bill for the wine was threepence-halfpenny for all, and the potato salad was a penny each, and a plate of chicken was sixpence, and a plate of soup twopence only. Truly, as the poet said, 'Italy has everything: climate, scenery, art, antiquities, history, romance, beautiful people, fruit and wine and cheapness.'

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NARNI

From the first moment that we saw her, a jewelled hill-top set high among the stars, there was a touch of magic about Narni. As we drove through the valley tall black cypress spires showed us our path, and the starry heavens were as luminous as though Diana had already lit her lamp below the hills. Dimly we glimpsed a battlemented gate rising gaunt above the road, and the ghostly form of the broken bridge of Augustus striding amid the reflections of the Nar. We climbed up into the hooded night between great hedges where the frogs shrilled softly to each other. The Pleiades hung low upon the mists of the horizon like the phosphorescence of a tropic sea, and above us the lights of Narni were gold against the silvered canopy of stars.

The way was long although it was so beautiful, and lonely, too, when the town was hidden from us by a fold of the hill and we could see nothing but the towers of the Rocca upon its crest, a shade of the Middle Ages among the imperishable stars. So that we welcomed the cheery beams of a shepherd's lantern set by chance in the window of a white-walled farm, like a beacon on the dark hillside. And soon afterwards we passed under the beetling Trecento gate of Narni, and found ourselves in a piazza where the driver pointed out thousands of earthenware pots spread on the ground beneath the trees. 'For the festa to-morrow, Signori,' he said. And that was the first we heard of any festa. But not the last, for all the inns were crowded, and it was only by dint of a great deal of talking, and through the courtesy of a young Italian girl who had travelled by the same train as ourselves, and who volunteered to sleep in the village, that we were able to find two beds and a sofa in the Albergo del Angelo.

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We woke to find ourselves in Arcady. The smiling sunshine called me early out of bed. Below my windows came the music of passing herds and flocks—the lowing of kine and the tinkling of their bells, the clipping hoofs of mules and asses, the pattering feet of sheep, like summer rainfall on the broad-leaved trees. And, strangest sound of all, the clear high song of larks, so rarely heard in Italy, where the native, as in Dante's age, still 'throws away his days in idle chase of the diminutive birds.'^[27]

There were two windows in my room. The one to which the dulcet singing of the larks called my attention looked from the wall of Narni's precipice into the deep valley of the Nera, a magnificent and awe-inspiring view, for the Angelo is perched upon a crest of beetling rocks with a sheer drop of a hundred feet towards the river. But from the other I looked on one of the loveliest pastoral pageants I have ever seen in Umbria. For down the old Flaminian Way which Popes and Emperors, and Caesar with an army, trod, and up a winding pathway such as Gentile da Fabriano loved to paint, which led from the valley to the hill of Narni and joined the main road at our very door, came neat-herds driving before them snow-white oxen, and peasant women with brightly flowered kerchiefs riding a-pillion on mules and asses, or walking behind flocks of sheep with wide flat baskets of poultry and fruit and vegetables on their heads. Barefoot children helped to guide the calves; and here a shaggy farmer rode up the hill a-horseback in sheepskin trousers, with a wallet and flask of wine slung across his mediaeval wooden saddle; and there some happy youths led in their heifers with scarlet fillets hanging

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on their brows.

They might have been processions of the Magi bringing their gifts to the Infant Christ in the dawn of the Nativity. Or, better still, these joyful husbandmen and shepherds bringing the first-fruits of their harvest into this little hill-town for the ox-fair of St. Michael, might have been the votaries of Apollo coming to celebrate the Pyanepsia with offerings and invocations.

We dressed in haste and hurried to join them as they flowed along the streets and out through Narni's mediaeval gate to their Forum Boarium beyond the city walls. And it was Arcady we found below the silver olives. For the road looped a natural theatre, such as the Greeks loved to terrace and face with marble, where the citizens might sit gazing over the glittering stage, on which Gods and Heroes spoke the dialogues of Aeschylus and Sophocles, at one of Nature's masterpieces—Etna, rising above the Strait of Messina, or the isle-girt sea of Salamis.

Here the olive-clad slopes were steep and the curves of the bay were bold, and the flat area which they enclosed was commanded on one side by the towering bastions of Narni and on the other by a great Dominican Convent with all its ancient splendour revived by the Royal House of France. And here we looked across a market in the hollow of the theatre, where thousands of white oxen, their foreheads bound with Roman fillets, scarlet and blue, stood below the twisted olives in a mist of slanting sunlight, which threw a tracery of blue-veined shadows on their snowy flanks. Beyond them in the open champaign we could see the towered bridge over the Nera, and the green pasture land characteristic of lower Umbria which makes it so different to the vine-engarlanded plains of the Valley of Spoleto.



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THE CATTLE FAIR AT NARNI.

On the hill above, the mules and asses, still bearing their wooden pack-saddles picked out in brass and scarlet cloth, were tethered in the shade of the army of olives, which swept up to the walls of the grim old Rocca. And before us lay the winding road, with its gay stalls and booths and its moving crowd of peasants, looking for all the world like a brightly-coloured ribbon threading the grey wood.

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Surely the gay Hermes, the god of markets, the beneficent patron of pastures and herds, smiled on this gracious fête champêtre, so pagan in its simplicity and lavish beauty. Perhaps he lingered down in the ox-fair where a charming patriarchal custom was observed every time a bargain was concluded, when the bystanders joined the hands of the two farmers concerned, and held them while they shook in token of good-will. Or likelier still he wandered on the causeway with Corydon and Thyrsis, or, in more jovial mood, searched among the pretty peasant girls, for Amaryllis and fair Delia, whose thoughts to-day were all for market wares, displayed by plausible auctioneers below the laurel avenue.



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There were restaurants of trestle-tables in the chequered shade, where husbandmen regaled themselves with such aesthetic fare as bread and celery and walnuts, washed down by plentiful libations of amber wine; and savoury kitchens where pigs and calves were roasted whole on spits; and stalls of peasant jewellery—strings of blood-red coral and over-chased earrings; and booths of lace and embroidery. Here boots and shoes were spread beside the road; there sun-burnt peasant women were buying stays, heaped

on the ground close to a stall of fluttering kerchiefs. The majolica and copper dishes were also ranged along the roadside, as were the stalls of wooden implements, bobbins, and spoons and trays. But the cotton umbrellas, scarlet and blue and emerald green, were hung like fantastic lanterns from the branches of the avenue.

What a scene it was! The lowing of the kine mingled with the distant music of the bells of Narni. Every moment fresh arrivals added their quota to the merry bustle of the market, some bearing on their heads great baskets heaped with fruit, some laden with captive turkeys and chickens, some leading in their wide-horned oxen, gay with scarlet fillets and bells slung round their silken dewlaps. The brilliant kerchiefs of the women made them look like flower-gardens as they stood in smiling groups before some alluring bargain held up to their admiring eyes by salesmen. And mingling with the crowd were fortune-tellers, and ballad-singers, and the terrible crawling beggars of Italy.

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Later in the day we went down the hillside and rested in the shadow of the great ruined bridge of Augustus, that splendid relic of Imperial Rome, which once carried the Flaminian Way across the waters of the Nera. Only one arch is left to stride across the ravine, and in the middle of the sulphureous stream the second pier has fallen sideways in huge blocks, as though it had been toppled over by an earthquake. But even in its ruin it is a monument of the greatness of Rome, and it frames a wonderful vista of the wooded glen of the Nar and the ancient convent of San Casciano.



NARNI: MARKET PEOPLE.

The contadini were pouring out of the city and across the river by the mediaeval bridge that takes on its shoulders the modern traffic, which, had the years been kinder, would still have been carried by the Ponte d'Augusto. They were all laden with purchases from the fair, and they made merry as they passed along, driving before them, not without a struggle, their unwilling cattle. But we did not stay there long to watch them, notwithstanding the picturesque beauty of the scene. For the pitiable cries of the mothers, struggling to go back to their calves, resounded through the valley; and the blind unreasoning misery of their offspring, driven with blows along an unaccustomed road, was heartrending to witness. Though common sense was plausible to point out how soon the agony would pass, it was too human to be anything but tragic.

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So we climbed the hill back to Narni and wandered through her empty streets, astonished to find them rich in ancient grandeur. For we had grown to think of her as a pastoral queen of Arcady, forgetting her antiquity—that as Nequinum she was great among the cities of the Umbri; that under the Romans she was a fortress of importance commanding the Flaminian Way; and that in the fifteenth century she bore a famous name as the ancestral home of Gattamelata, the great Condottiere of the Venetians. Narni has good reason to be proud of her sons. One was an Emperor, one a Pope, and one a hero.

And she herself has an heroic history, for so great was her defence against the Romans that when at last she fell before the Consul Fulvius in B.C. 299, he was given a Triumph 'de Samnitibus Nequinatibusque,' and in the fatal year, 1527, she offered an historic and gallant resistance to the *lanzknights* of the Bourbon when they retreated from the horrors of the Sack of Rome. For this the little citadel suffered the terrors of a sack in which one thousand men and women were brutally put to death by the Spanish and German mercenaries. So that there is again cause for wonder that so many of her ancient churches and palaces have been left unharmed, like the gracious little chapel of Santa Maria Impensole, the Gothic Palazzo Comunale and Palazzo dei Priori, and the beautiful cathedral, which is so rich in tombs, and counts among its treasures a Romanesque shrine of high antiquity and interest.

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But though the Bridge of Augustus was the glory of Nequinum in the days of Martial, it is Erasmus, called Gattamelata, who is the chief pride of Narni. A whole quarter of the city bears his name. In the Vicolo Gattamelata a humble little house is inscribed 'Narnia me genuit, Gattamelata fui,' and in the Palazzo Comunale, beside Narni's great Ghirlandajo, is a copy of that Knight of the Uffizi, which up to the last few years has been ascribed to Giorgione, and which the citizens of this little hill-town treasure as a contemporary portrait of their hero.



NARNI: THE PONTE D'AUGUSTO.

I have another memory of Narni. One morning, very early before sunrise, we set out from that little city and made pilgrimage along the Old Flaminian Way to the altar of an unknown, quite forgotten god. It was our fancy to pay homage by the roadside where the careless feet of generations had passed by. But we had not thought to find such unexpected beauty on this ancient highway whose stones were old before the Caesars had been dreamed of by the oracles of Rome.

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The Via Flaminia girdled the hillside, now disappearing round the bluff of overhanging cliffs, now plunging into bosky depths of wooded slopes, now reappearing across the ravine like a white thread among the firs and ilexes which clothe the valley of the Nera; now climbing down to the open plain. The air was fragrant with the freshness of a sweet September morning, and musical with the liquid song of larks. Below the road the hill sloped sharply from our feet to where the

Nera encircled the folds of its mountains; and above us to the right towered a sheer cliff, curtained with wild flowers.

At last we reached the altar of the Unknown God, or so we called him, because, unlike Aius Locutius of the Palatine, we knew nothing of him save that in the distant ages, even before the coming of the Romans, men sacrificed and offered incense here before a god. It was only a rough-hewn table of stone, raised above the level of the road, overlooking the deep valley of the Nera where it pierces the wooded hills and widens out into that misty plain of the Tiber,—already a mighty river on its way to Rome. As we stood before it, gazing down the valley, Phoebus gilded the hill-tops. Our feet were on the Old Flaminian Road. And because the day was young and the air like wine, and the ancient way to Rome was as beautiful as a poem, we gathered together ferns and dried leaves, and lit a fire upon this cold altar of the God of an older world.

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It began in play. The Poet put a sprig of scented thyme upon the ancient stone. But as the fire leapt up, and the blue smoke ascended to the clear air like fumes of incense, our laughter died away. Just for that moment all we were slipped from us. We became as children playing in a temple who turn from their games at the solemn voice of the prayer-bell, and leave their toys unheeded for a while. Just for that moment there was only beauty, and the need of worship to the God of beautiful things. No longer can we say,

'Glory and loveliness have passed away;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathed incense do we see upborne
Into the east to meet the smiling day.'

For standing on the steep hillside upon the Old Flaminian Way, we made a heap of scented herbs, thistles and dry mullein stalks, all that the withered bosom of the earth could yield, and made our offering to the valley and the hills and the great plain which opened out before us.

So the old stone was warmed, the old god propitiated. And as the smoke curled up to the blue heavens we saw the feet of Apollo golden on the hill-tops. When we turned back we found Narni sheathed in sunlit mists, as Turner painted her, like a mediaeval saint rapt in the mystic glory of communion with nature.

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The Poet quoted softly:—

'For, it may be, if still we sing
And tend the shrine,
Some Deity on wandering wing
May there incline;
And, finding all in order meet,
Stay while we worship at her feet.'

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ORVIETO: THE CITY OF WOE

'To rear me was the task of Power divine,
Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.
Before me things create were none, save things
Eternal, and eternal I endure.
All hope abandon ye who enter here.'

DANTE.

The broad white steps of Orvieto Cathedral were strewn with thousands of dead flies, killed by the merciless glitter of its new mosaics in the eye of the sunshine. Poor little dust of life scattered at the door of Madonna Mary's temple, with your shattered wings and your sightless crawling agony, meeting your death unwittingly in the heart of this city of woe! You are the key to its desolation, you with your myriads of dead, the horrid harvest of an insatiable ghoul. For not even the shrill music of Luca Signorelli's angels, hovering above the gloomy fortresses of Orvieto with their hair streaming in the breeze of the dawn, can raise her up to life. She is a city of the dead—shrivelled and dark-browed, standing high over the plain on an island of volcanic rock, 'dark-stained with hue ferruginous,' like Malebolge within the depths of hell. Death lies around her in the valleys where the earth is riddled with the tombs of Etruria—one vast necropolis—and she herself, though she held life so dearly, as we can see by her grim Romanesque houses each with its back to the wall as it were, each armed at every point, would be almost dead to the world if it were not for the Tuscan glitter of her great Miracle Church.

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Even her name has a sinister ring about it—Orvieto—the Old City. To the writers of antiquity she was *Urbs Vetus*, but no man knows her ancient name, and although archaeologists dispute in vain as to the rival claims of *Herbanum* and *Salpinum*, it is recognised that the origin of Orvieto is plunged in mystery. Unlike the other cities of Southern Etruria, built on the extremity of a peninsula of hills, she is isolated on a volcanic rock in the heart of the melancholy valley of the Paglia, an impregnable position, as many a Pope has realised with thankfulness as he fled to it for Sanctuary from the wrath of Emperors or the malice of Cardinals, or, more often still, the vengeance of the people of Rome. For Orvieto was consistently Guelf in her sympathies, and no less than thirty-two Popes have taken refuge within her walls since Adrian IV., Nicholas Breakspear, the only Englishman who ever sat upon the Papal throne, held his court there in 1157, because Rome had not yet forgotten the martyrdom of the heroic Arnold of Brescia.

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BELOW THE WALLS OF ORVIETO.

We came to Orvieto by rail and scaled her precipice on the funicular, which connects the station down on the plain with the city on the rock above. If we had come by road, only a toilsome climb of several miles would have brought us to the grim *Porta Maggiore*, where Boniface VIII., in his twofold tiara, keeps watch from his niche above the gateway.

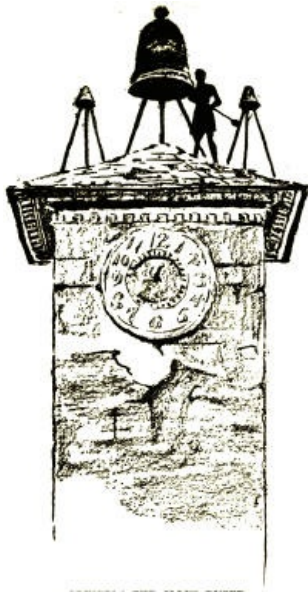
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Does any city frown so fiercely on the traveller as Orvieto? The arch is gloomy and the road within is dark and steep. The sheer cliffs sweep to right and left like the pylons of an Egyptian temple, and above them peer fortified houses, squat and brown. This surely is the city named of *Dis*, which Dante had in mind, whose walls 'appeared as they were framed of iron,' upon whose gates the citizens looked down with ireful gestures!

Through this gate hastened the Popes, fleeing from wrath to come, and in their footsteps we toiled up the steep street between the same houses of yellow volcanic tufa gone black, which frowned upon the turbulent successors of St. Peter, who let down their nets, not for the drawing in of souls, but for the dragging in of wealth and the entangling of the feet of the unwary.

Through dark alleys we could see the gloomy depths of caves, hollowed out of the living rock behind them: in the low *bassi* the citizens of this broken city toiled silently, and outside their doors sat hooded owls on poles driven into the stony ground. Here indeed were the Middle Ages, but not the Middle Ages of pomp and pageantry, of Gothic palaces and slim young knights in silken hose. There are some streets in Orvieto which look as though war had stalked through them only yesterday; as though the terror-stricken Ghibellines still cowered within doors, while the Monaldeschi rang bells in triumph, as they did on that fateful day in the year of grace 1312, when the Filippeschi had tried in vain to open the gate of the city to Henry VII. of Luxemburg.

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ORVIETO: THE CLOCK TOWER.

bloom of Italian Gothic architecture upon the rock of Orvieto.

But look closer. Behind the aerial grace of the façade with its bewildering embroidery of yellowing marbles, rarely carved, its jewelled canopies of mosaic, its Lombard colonnades and soaring pinnacles, not even Time, the great artist who puts the crown of beauty upon all the works of man, can veil the ugly nudity of nave and transept. If the pride of the Orvietans had only left him a freer hand upon the façade it would have been immeasurably more beautiful. But the mosaics which should gleam from their rich setting with the subdued brilliance of a peacock's feather, have been restored so garishly by a local artist that they rob the cathedral of half her wonder. Their glitter sears like a burning glass: only on a rainy day, or by moonlight, could we look on them with equanimity.

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It was not for these that we stayed so long outside the portal of Santa Maria, but to study the exquisite carvings which Lorenzo Maitani or Niccolò Pisano traced on the bases of the four pilasters. When two such scholars as John Addington Symonds and Mr. Langton Douglas fall out over the authorship of these sculptures it is useless to offer any opinion on the subject. But there is a pretty legend concerning Niccolò Pisano and his work at Orvieto; and because the reading of it gave me much pleasure as I sat on the stone bench below the Opera del Duomo, marvelling over the glories of the Miracle Church, I will give it in a quotation from Mr. Symonds' delightful essay:—'Nicola Pisano, before Cimabue, before Duccio, even before Dante, opened the gates of beauty, which for a thousand years had been shut up and overgrown with weeds. As Dante invoked the influence of Virgil when he began to write his mediaeval poem, and made a heathen bard his hierophant in Christian mysteries, just so did Nicola Pisano draw inspiration from a Græco-Roman sarcophagus. He studied the bas-relief of Phaedra and Hippolytus, which may still be seen upon the tomb of Countess Beatrice in the Campo Santo, and so learned by heart the beauty of its lines and the dignity expressed in its figures that in all his subsequent works we trace the elevated tranquillity of Greek sculpture.'^[28]



A STREET IN ORVIETO.

And, indeed, there is a curious and unexpected beauty in these naïve reliefs telling the ancient story of the Creation and the Fall, the Old Testament up to the Birth of Christ, the life of Jesus, and the Last Judgement. For though they are a typically mediaeval expression of faith, yet they are astonishingly free from the bizarre design and crude workmanship of mediaeval imaginings. Lofty in conception, they tell the solemn history of Christianity in a series of scenes divided the one from the other by the Vine, of which it has been written, 'I am the Vine and ye are the branches.' But here for the first time in Mediaeval Art we see treatment worthy of the nobility of the Theme. For whether the sculptor did really become enamoured of the antique by the study of an ancient tomb, or whether some fire of genius within himself bade him struggle forth from the swaddling bands of Byzantium and the grotesqueries of the North, he has inscribed a new chapter in the history of Art upon the walls of the Cathedral of Orvieto.

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Forsaking the crowded imagery of Mediaevalism, he has made manifest the dignity and beauty of the human form. And something else as well. For looking on the reliefs of the Creation, we can almost hear the rustling wings of the two guardian angels as they hover in the silent dawn above the garden where God creates man in His own Image. And we see the germs of that poetic imagery which was later to bear fruit in the genius of Ghiberti and Donatello, even, it may be, in the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel where Michelangelo completed the great epic of the Human Form, whose prologue we may read upon the stones of Orvieto Cathedral.

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Directly we pass through the portal and enter the bare, ugly church, it is apparent that although its Tuscan architects and artists began their work lightheartedly enough, and although the Popes made offer of indulgences to all who assisted them, the sullen influence of the place weighed on their spirits. See how grey and gloomy is the nave behind its gay mask; see how Niccolò in spite of his love for the human form dwelt on the grim drama of the Fall of Man; see how the tragedy of life is blazoned forth by Signorelli. Only the Umbrians, the simple-hearted artists of the countryside, called in to paint the chancel with the story of the Virgin and the Life of Christ, and the Blessed Angelico, working on the vault of the Cappella Nuova, seem to have been untroubled.

But neither the frescoes of the Umbrians, among which we thought we could trace the hand of Pinturicchio, and certainly he was under commission to paint for the canons of Orvieto, when he was working in the Borgia Rooms in Rome, nor the exquisite reliquary which Ugolino Vieri of Siena wrought for the miraculous Corporal of Bolsena, detained us long. For in the southern transept we had glimpsed the Chapel of the Madonna di San Brizio, where Fra Angelico and Benozzo Gozzoli frescoed the vault, below which, many years later Luca Signorelli came to paint his great pictures of the Last Judgement.

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It is a strange coincidence, as though some deep emotion had moved these Tuscans to expression, that in Orvieto we see not only the beginnings of realism in sculpture but the masterpiece of the first great painter of the Quattrocento, who gave life to the human form in fresco. Every one knows that Vasari claims for his kinsman, Luca of Cortona, the honour of having inspired the Last Judgement of Michelangelo. And no one can dispute that the Florentine, his greater genius less exercised by the study of anatomy, clothed his figures with more grace and dignity; and that the Dantesque terrors of his hell, with the boatman of the Styx silhouetted against the lurid glare of the underworld, are told with more reserve than Signorelli's. But

whether the confusion and morbidity of the whole, already foreshadowing Baroque, surpasses the spacious compositions of Signorelli is largely a matter for the enthusiast for technique to declare.



ORVIETO: SANT'AGOSTINO.

It is interesting to note the discrepancy between the conditions under which these two men worked, each animated by the fire of genius, though one so far beyond the other, each rapt in contemplation of the awe-inspiring mystery of life and death. Michelangelo, with the denunciations of Savonarola fresh in his memory, worked alone and silently below the vault of the Sistine, where he had lavished his splendid energy twenty-two years before; almost friendless, filled with gloomy imaginings. And looking on the Sistine Judgement we feel something of the inarticulate anguish of his great spirit. But the frescoes of the Cappella della Madonna di San Brizio are the key to an unsuspected chamber in the soul of Luca Signorelli. For how reconcile these strange visions of the anti-Christ and of Life after Death with our knowledge of that courteous and stately gentleman 'who delighted in living splendidly, and loved to dress himself in beautiful garments.'

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Only one other time does he give us a glimpse into this secret chamber, when we read the pathetic story of how he painted the bodily loveliness of his dead son before he yielded it, dry-eyed and silently, to the tyranny of the grave. Yet here perhaps we have the clue to the meaning of his frescoes in the Cathedral of Orvieto. For he had loved exceedingly, and seen his loved one lowered to the unresponsive earth. Do not we too know what it is, in spite of all our creeds and our philosophies, to weep for the gentle voice and the dear brave eyes and the comforting hand of those others whom we shall never meet again except in dreams? And it is not only the spirit that we cry for, but the body.

So, Signorelli. And we felt this, especially looking at the fresco of the Resurrection. For into the cold grey dawn of a featureless world rise men and women, struggling with the clay which seems to cling about their limbs, forcing them to make conscious efforts. Above them in the starry heavens two strong and splendid angels send forth the blast which calls them from the earth. The utter aloneness and the awful sense of space make the newly-risen dead shrink together, and some of them cling to each other, showing a pathetic human feeling of desolation in the midst of their wonderment and terror. Others are still engrossed in their struggle with the encumbering earth. But there are some who meet in this cold plain after long years of separation, and rush to hold each other. How Signorelli loved their splendid physical beauty! Even in his Paradise, where the heavenly choir makes music overhead, and the angels scatter celestial roses among the saints, he does not clothe them in gold raiment, only in their fair, strong limbs which were to him as beautiful as flowers.

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It was not so long a step as it appeared from Signorelli's Visions of the Future Life to the Necropolis of Etruria, below the frowning walls of the city. For Orvieto is shadowed by the Wings of the Angel of Death—the *genie* of the ancient Etruscans, which we see faintly limned upon their sepulchres—and as the old custode at the Mancini Tombs told us with arms outspread towards the plain, 'c'è una vasta città dei morti, più grande che la città alta.'

The way was strewn with flowers, like all the paths of Umbria, and it led us through the undergrowth at the foot of the rock of Orvieto to the olive garden of the Mancini Necropolis. Barren figs sprouted from the gaping crevices overhead, and sometimes the bearded ivy hung half-way down the cliff. Once we came upon two rude wooden crosses nailed to the brown tufa, with the marks of a third between them, making the desolate valley more like a Golgotha than ever.

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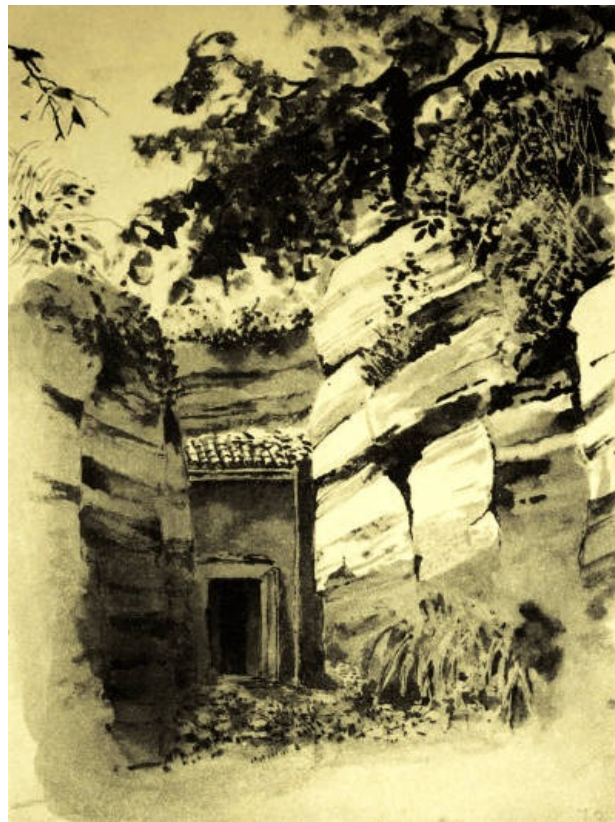


ETRUSCAN NECROPOLIS BELOW THE WALLS OF ORVIETO.

The necropolis below the hanging church of Sant'Agostino is more interesting than romantic now that the tomb has been dismantled, which Signor Mancini used to show to the traveller, intact, with the inmate lying on his rough bed, surrounded by his last possessions. The sepulchres are not hollowed out of the living rock like most Etruscan tombs, but are built in a sort of honey-comb of rough masonry, back to back, with chambers about 12 ft. long by 8 ft. wide, and perhaps 10 ft. high. The round *cippi* on the mounds which cover them make them appear curiously like Oriental villages.

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But it is to the student rather than to the pilgrim in the world of Beauty that this sombre burial-place of the ancients will appeal. We found more joy in the painted tombs on the hill of the Cappuccini, where in the cavernous depths of the tufa rock we caught a fleeting glimpse of Proserpine seated beside the Lord of Hades, and heard the flutings of Etruscan slaves as their princes drank libations to their own departed souls. And it is worth while crossing the valley in the early morning to see the loveliness of Orvieto, crowning her great rock in the heart of her wide pale valley, with the sunlight gilding her towers and the jewelled face of her cathedral.



ORVIETO: ETRUSCAN TOMB.

It was very early when we emerged from the frowning gate of the city and dipped down among the dewy vineyards. Beside the road an aqueduct rose out of the earth, a crumbling mass of ancient masonry. As we climbed down into the valley it towered above us, spanning the ravine, but when we toiled over the penitential stones of the Via dei Cappuccini, thankful for its shade as we mounted, it sank again into the hillside, and the leaping green things clambered upon it, eager to drag it back to the ditch. So we went leisurely through the play of light and shade, and always as we looked back we saw Orvieto rising sheer out of the valley like a queen on her brown rock. The morning mist wove a magic beauty round the spires of her Gothic cathedral and the giant pine-tree on the edge of her precipice, until she seemed the very city Turner immortalised.

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And presently we came into a chestnut grove where the path was hidden under a carpet of rustling autumn leaves; and a tangle of wild flowers—harebell, cyclamen, saffron and fireweed—wove a tapestry on the loom of the grass. Here were our nameless tombs, sunk deep in the tufa rock, with over-arching trees above their gates and Canterbury bells growing on their mossy paths. Within, the damp had eaten away many of the beautiful forms about which Dennis wrote. But we could trace the shapes of the Lords and Ladies of Etruria as they sat like shadows before their eternal banquet in the halls of Elysium; we could see the slaves preparing their elaborate feast, here baking bread, there pounding meat to make it tender. And on another wall, a young warrior, attended by a winged genius, bearing in her hand a scroll inscribed with his good and evil deeds, drove in his chariot to Judgement in the Unseen World. In the midst of these wraiths there was one unspoiled fragment of plaster, the head of a youth, beautiful and Greek, who gazed sadly upon the ruin of his gods, shut from the world so fair, which he had dreamt was made for his strong youth and beauty, in whose ears even the faint, half-vanished music of the pipes will soon be silenced, if it is true that when the pictured ghosts of things have faded their soul is stilled.

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Their melody rang in our ears when we stood once more in the chequered shadow of the chestnut grove, already gilded with autumnal gold, and looked across the wide pale valley to Orvieto. It was the hour of Mass, a Sabbath day and wonderfully silent. Again we seemed to hear that plaintive strain. But it was only the humming of the insects, and the bells of the distant city calling her people to prayer.

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VITERBO

Though they are sisters in name—Urbs Vetus and Vetus Urbs—and though their function in the mediaeval history of the Papacy was the same, it would be difficult to find two cities so dissimilar as Orvieto and Viterbo. The mystic sadness of Orvieto is foreshadowed in the pale valley of the Paglia, strewn with the débris of volcanic upheavals; but instinctively our spirits rose as we drew near the gay and beautiful city of Viterbo, across the rolling plains of Lazio, which have been trodden by the feet of all the armies who sought to invade the sanctuary of Rome. It is a field of history and romance, full of memories.

Far away upon our left the Appennines were piled like storm-clouds on the horizon; and upon our right, over the valleys once guarded by the strongholds of Etruria, rose the splendid outline of Montefiascone, the shrine of the Goddess of the Etruscans—the Fanum Voltumnae, to which they gathered in times of doubt or danger to consult the oracles and appease the gods. Near at hand, black against the blue Sabine mountains, was the mysterious Ciminian Mount, whose terrors held the Roman legionaries in check until the Consul Fabius Maximus in B.C. 310 plunged through its forests into the great Etrurian Plain, to the terror of the Senate, whose prohibition reached him too late.

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OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF VITERBO.

The sun was sinking behind the hill of Montefiascone when we entered Viterbo. It was Sunday, and the passeggiata between the station and the Porta Fiorentina was filled with a gay crowd of citizens and soldiers. For unlike the other papal cities of refuge, Orvieto and Anagni, which have fallen upon evil days, Viterbo, always a natural centre, is becoming an important provincial capital, one of the most prosperous towns in Italy, with a rapidly increasing population. And to her honour be it said that her municipal energy is making itself felt to great advantage in the direction of stripping from her Gothic palaces and churches the baroqueries which have veiled their beauties during the last three centuries.

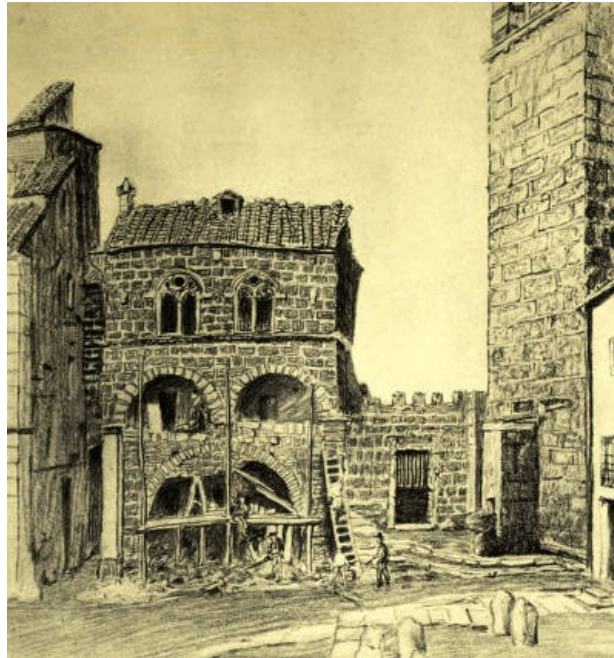
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The origin of Viterbo is as mysterious as the source of the Nile. An Etruscan city is known to have stood upon its site; it contains positions of great strength, tongues of hill, guarded by gorges, well suited to the Etruscan style of fortification; and it stands at the Etrurian gate of the Great Ciminian Forest, the chief obstacle which the Romans had to pierce for the subjugation of Etruria. So, putting aside the stupid forgeries of Annio di Viterbo, who 'claimed for his native city an antiquity greater than that of Troy,' it is curious that the Vetus Urbs is not mentioned before the eighth century, when the old chroniclers speak of an ancient castle—castrum Viterbii—standing on the present site of the cathedral. But from the year 773, when it attracted the attention of Desiderius, the last King of the Lombards, who made it the base of his intended conquest of the States of the Church, has its history been interwoven with that of the Papacy.

Little is known of Viterbo in Lombard times, for all the grandeur of her Lombard walls, which were many times thrown down and built up again in her constant warfare with Rome. It was not until the beginning of the twelfth century that she sprang into importance in mediaeval history as the capital of the Patrimony, bequeathed by the Countess Mathilda of Tuscany to the occupants of the Chair of St. Peter, assuming the rôle of a fully-armed Minerva springing from the brow of Jove, because her lofty position made her a fortress for the Popes in time of peril from the sword, and a sanatorium in seasons of pestilence. In the twelfth century Eugenius III. summoned the vassals of the Church to assemble in Viterbo, and in the thirteenth century five popes were elected within her walls, and four popes died there; in 1240 Frederick II. was living in peace in Viterbo; and five years later the city inscribed the most glorious page in her annals when the great Emperor was humiliated by her heroic defence against his onslaughts and forced to retreat into Pisan territory. But her power decayed from the end of the thirteenth century, when Honorius IV., in removing the interdict which his predecessor had laid on the city for the outrages committed in the papal elections, decreed that she was to raze her fortifications, lose her jurisdiction, and yield her rectorate to Rome. Later, we find Urban V. staying in the Rocca when he returned from Avignon, the mediaeval Babylon, in answer to the exhortations of Petrarch; and here died the great soldier and statesman, Cardinal Gil d'Albornoz, before the Pope continued his unwilling journey to Rome. But it is chiefly as a city of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that we regard Viterbo to-day; for in those stormy years which saw the rise and fall of the great house of Hohenstaufen, the fate of Viterbo was synonymous with that of the Papacy,

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and it is to this period that most of her mediaeval monuments belong.



VITERBO: MEDIAEVAL HOUSE IN THE PIAZZA S. LORENZO.

Coming from Orvieto we found Viterbo very gay and gracious, with exquisite fountains making music in all her piazzas, and her mediaeval streets full of the merry air of vintage time. Already the great vats had been cleansed, and we had encountered enormous barrels groaning and rumbling down the hills as they were rolled to the fountains to be soured and sweetened by sun and air, or tumbled back to their accustomed cellars. All day long the yoked oxen swung slowly in through the ancient gates, drawing carts filled with barrels of fruit; and in front of more than one humble osteria we found a group of men and girls singing and laughing as they pressed the grapes with bare white feet, up and down, up and down, while the dark fluid flowed through a conduit into the vats below. This alone would have made us love Viterbo, just as we still carry gentle memories of Mantua, not so much for its great castles of the Gonzaga, as for the beautiful simplicity of the vintage which we watched being brought home to that city of arcades from the fields round Virgil's home not many autumns ago.

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VITERBO: THE MOAT OUTSIDE THE PORTA SAN PIETRO.

But Viterbo, 'the Nuremberg of Italy,' is full of charm. She is one of the most mediaeval cities in Italy; she has a whole quarter of thirteenth-century houses cheek by jowl with barons' towers and ancient churches; she has exquisite cloisters like that of Santa Maria della Verità, where the recent Camorra trial was held; and on the hill where the ancient castle of Viterbo stood she cherishes a gem of Gothic architecture—the Palazzo Vescovile, which was once the palace of the popes.

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This was the stage on which the chief personages in the history of Viterbo and the Papacy played their parts. Here came the Barbarossa to pay his unwilling homage to proud Adrian IV.,

who thought of lowering human dignity far more than any Latin would have done. Here came Frederick II. in peace, because Viterbo had departed from her loyalty to the Papacy for the time being, since the cause of Gregory IX. had been espoused by her ancient enemy, Rome. Here was elected Urban IV., the pope who never entered the Lateran or St. Peter's. Here Charles of Anjou, and King Philip III. of France, travelling from Tunis with the body of his father, Louis IX., waited for the election of Gregory X. in 1271; and the impatient Charles, seeing that the cardinals were in no hurry to choose a successor for Clement IV., took the roof from their council chamber, confident that discomfort would hasten the decision of those luxury-loving priests. That same year, in the presence of the King of Sicily and the King of France, Henry, son of Richard, Duke of Cornwall, who was on his way to England from the Tunisian crusade, was done to death by Guido di Montfort, Charles' vicar in Tuscany. 'The sight of the English prince awoke the fury of this bloodthirsty warrior, and impelled him to avenge himself on the royal house of England, by whom his great father, Simon of Leicester and Montfort, had been slain in battle, and his remains outraged in death. He stabbed the innocent Henry at the altar of a church, dragged the corpse by the hair, and threw it down the steps of the portal.'^[29]

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It is interesting to note that the murderer was not punished by Charles, and that, as Gregorovius points out, only twelve years later he was spoken of by Martin IV., who made him General in the service of the Church, as his beloved son. But Dante places his soul in hell among the tyrants who were given to blood and rapine, where he commemorates the fact that Prince Henry's heart was exposed before the sorrowing eyes of the English nation beside the waters of the Thames.

'... He in God's bosom smote the heart
Which yet is honour'd on the bank of Thames.'

But it is difficult to realise such stirring scenes in Viterbo to-day. For directly we left the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, with its cheerful provincial bustle, behind us, and crossed the sunny Piazza del Plebiscito, guarded by the lions of Viterbo, rampant on columns below their heraldic palm-trees, we found her a gentle city fallen upon sleep, full of stately mediaeval houses with outside staircases, and ancient hospices for pilgrims, Gothic and grey, with buttressed walls and cowl-like windows.



VITERBO: FROM A WINDOW IN THE PALACE OF THE POPES.

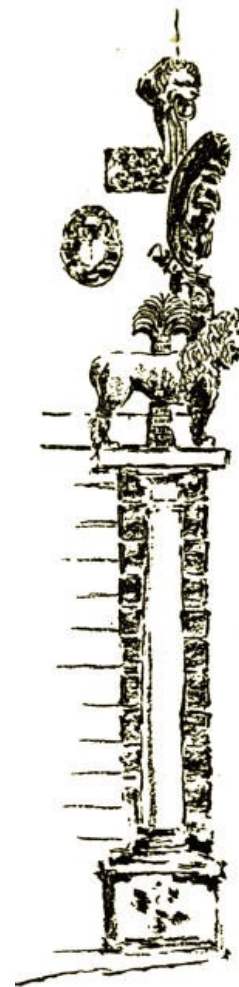
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The Palace of the Popes, where there are memories for every stone, stands with the cathedral in a sunny square beyond the Piazza della Morte and the picturesque palace where the great Farnese Pope was born. Thanks to Pedro Juliani, that most distinguished scholar, who took the name of John XXI. when he was elected to the vacant chair of St. Peter at Viterbo, the palace which was the home of so many popes in the thirteenth century is one of the most beautiful Gothic ruins in Italy. For it was the ill-fated John XXI. who built the exquisite chamber supported by a single mighty column and an arch, which is the chief glory of the Palazzo Vescovile. Legend

has been busy with the name of this pope, whose scientific studies made him hated and feared by the ignorant and superstitious monks of his day, and whose untimely death increased the popular belief that he was a magician. He was killed by the falling ceiling of the very room which he had taken such pride in adding to the papal palace, and on the night of the catastrophe it is said that a monk roused his companions from sleep by crying out that he had seen a huge black man knocking with a hammer on the wall of the Pope's room—a legend quite in keeping with the general belief circulated in Rome more than two hundred years later, that the devil had called in person at the Vatican to carry away the body of the wicked Borgia Pope.

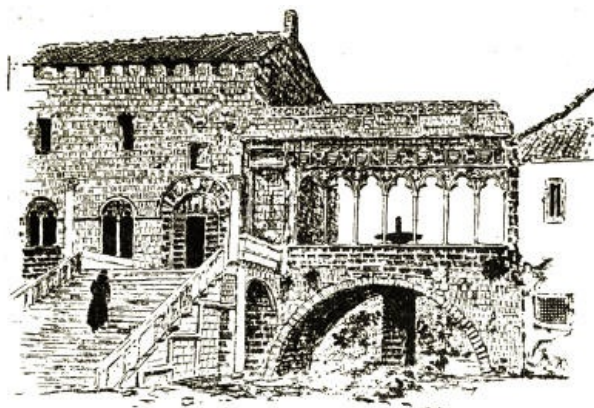
At the first glance the Palazzo Vescovile seemed nothing but a gracious ruin, for the lovely Gothic chamber of John XXI. is only a shell whose loggias frame the blue heavens, and whose fountain, fallen into decay, is overgrown with weeds. It is open to the sky; but the great Council Chamber, from which that impatient Prince, Charles of Anjou, took the roof above the heads of the Papal Conclave, has been closed in again, although the wind strays at will through its beautiful trefoil windows. And here we loved to sit looking through the empty Gothic frames at the great church of the Trinità across a vine-clad slope, and the grey convents and buttressed walls of Viterbo shimmering in the opal light of an October morning, with the noble sky-line of Montefiascone upon the horizon, and the misty blue hills of Umbria beyond. For we never wearied of the mediaeval grace and the deliberate beauty of this palace of the Popes with its silent fountain and its grass-grown loggia; and one day, while we sat in the lofty Council Chamber which has been witness to so many stirring scenes, a motor drove up to the foot of its sweeping steps, oh, splendid anachronism! and from the inner palace hastened a proper dignitary to meet the ancient prelate who descended from it, and conduct him into the presence of his master, reminding us that this stately ruin is still the episcopal headquarters of Viterbo.

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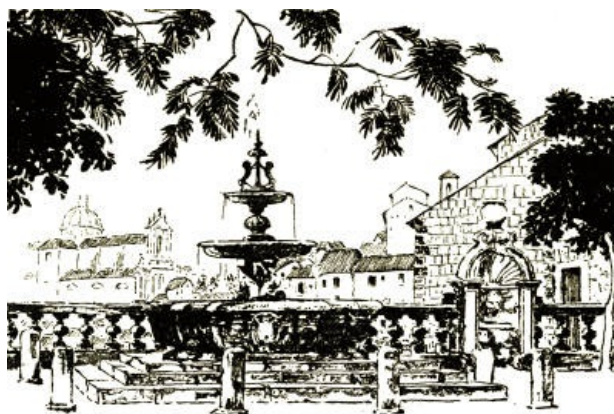


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VITERBO: THE STEMMA OF THE CITY.



VITERBO: THE PALACE OF THE POPES.



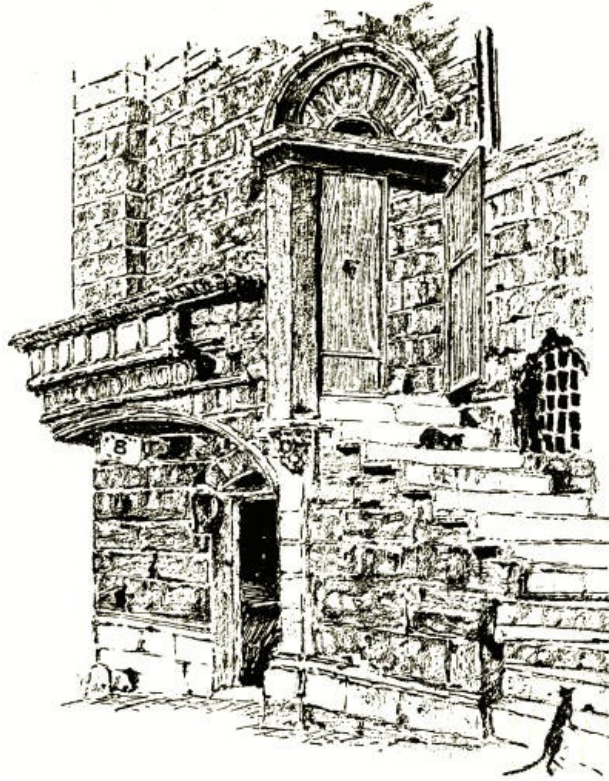
VITERBO: FOUNTAIN IN THE PALAZZO MUNICIPIO.

'Città delle belle fontane e delle belle donne' was the boast of the ancient chroniclers of Viterbo, but we did not see many beautiful women in her streets, although the splendour of her fountains is still a proverb. Every little piazza, no matter how humble, is endowed with a fountain of exquisite grace, where silver floods of water pour over lichened stones, or trickle from the spouting mouths of the Guelph lions of the city; even Rome cannot boast so many gracious

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fantasies of the fifteenth century. They are as numerous as the beautiful outside staircases which are to be found on more mediaeval houses in Viterbo than in any other Italian city. Such an one is the Casa Poscia, half way up the Via Cavour, which is turned to a humble use to-day, like all the great palaces of Viterbo, having an osteria in its basement, but which is a perfect specimen of the local domestic architecture of the Middle Ages, still closed at night by ancient wooden doors. The Viterbesi invariably point out this house as the Casa of the bella Galiana, whose inscription in the Piazza del Plebiscito bears witness to the mortality of that Helen of the Middle Ages, who was 'flos et honor Patriae, species pulcherrima rerum.'

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VITERBO: THE HOUSE OF BELLA GALIANA.

But the chief glory of Viterbo is the romantic mediaeval city which lies between the Via Principe Umberto and the gates of the Carmine and San Pietro. Here even the names of the narrow and mysterious streets have not been changed by the rise of the House of Savoy. Would it not give a thrill even to the most unimaginative of travellers to step from the Square of the Dead into the Via di San Pellegrino with its grey thirteenth-century houses huddled on either hand, now flowering into Gothic windows and elegant outside staircases, now frowning defiance from square fighting towers with evil slits for eyes, now opening a passage down the steep hillside like the Street of a Hundred Bridges or the staircase street which leads to the Bridge of the Paradox?



VITERBO: VIA DI S. PELLEGRINO.

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Here the Middle Ages come to life again; nor are the people themselves greatly changed, for the women scrub their linen at ancient fountains, and the men work in the dark *bassi* at their humble trades; here we saw a white-haired dame plying her distaff in a little vine arbour at the head of her balcony staircase, and there we met a man coming from the bakery with a plank of bread, three and a half feet long on his head. As in Orvieto, there were hooded owls on stands outside the doors to give another mediaeval touch, and from the upper windows women looked down with the languid curiosity of the Latin races. In the smaller streets there were dirt and squalor unimaginable, broken fruit and flies, unspeakable smells and the noise of screaming children, but in their midst were serene-eyed mothers, with the mysterious calm in their faces which has made the Italian woman the most subtle type of Madonna, who seemed in some strange fashion to be exalted above the impure atmosphere in which they lived, like the crimson garofani, or the long sprays of Morning Glory which flowered in their mediaeval windows. Though there was poverty it was the poverty of the country rather than the destitution of a city, just as the sheets and towels which fluttered from loggia and arch and balustrade were threadbare in spite of their fine embroidery and rich insertions of hand-made lace.

It was through these streets that we saw the vintage coming in through the ancient Porta San Pietro under the shadow of the magnificent palace which was the home of Donna Olimpia Pamphili, the infamous sister-in-law of Innocent X., just as it was brought in the days when the *Vetus Urbs* was a sanctuary for the princes of the Church.



ONE OF VITERBO'S MANY FOUNTAINS.

Una giornata di tempo bello we drove across the swelling plains of Etruria to the ruined city of Ferentinum. It was the happiest of days, the last, though we did not know it then, of our careless pilgrimages, for the next morning came autumn with cold winds and rain, and we were forced to hurry after our luggage which had already gone to Rome. But on that day there was a special beauty in the rolling plain which once was peopled by the vanished cities of Etruria, and now is

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so like the Campagna with its ruined tombs and scattered trees and lonely farmsteads. Here we found the same enchantment that we remembered in the fields of Rome—the silence, the gnats hanging in the air in glinting masses as though they danced in an invisible net, the larks singing in the blue distance, the song of a ploughman hidden in a fold of the plain. From our feet stretched the dusty road losing itself in the valleys and cresting the hills beyond. Far ahead rose Montefiascone with its great dome soaring above its ilex wood, and to the right, blue and mysterious in the early morning sunlight, was the dark Ciminian Mount, misty with spreading columns of smoke as though the shepherds or the woodcutters within the precincts of its haunted forest were offering incense to the Gods.

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And once we came upon a dozen yoke of oxen ploughing the heavy brown earth, with the sunlight shining on their smoking flanks and glistening on the freshly-turned clods of mould behind them. How little it has altered, this immemorial plain, since the days when Rome feared to plunge into the dark recesses of the Ciminian forest, and the Lucumos of Etruria rioted their energies away in the little cities below the mighty fane of Voltumna! For if mankind has changed, Nature is still the same; those rolling oxen are on the tombs of Thebes; the ancient poets have sung of these dark woods and scented plains, and the husbandmen at work!

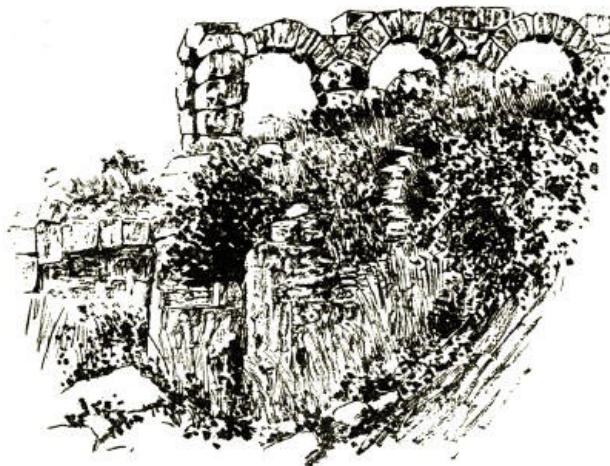
The way was long until we came, between hedges with a flower like japonica, to an outpost of Ferentinum standing over the green valley of the Acqua Rossa,—a disused tomb which had been a home for the living long after the dust of the poor forgotten dead had been scattered to the winds. Here we dismounted and climbed up a path so thickly spread with soft brown dust that our feet sank into it and made no sound. Here and there we saw the basalt *selce*, which marked the direction of the Roman road. Among the tangled brambles at the side were half-demolished tombs, now a columbarium for cinerary urns, now a niche, now merely a heap of tumbled stones. For the earth is taking this ancient city back to her heart again, and though the summer drought had withered the flowers which bloom where once the pitiful dust of humanity was laid, the empty chambers were full of golden bracken and fantastic thistles, silver with scattered seeds.

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Still we wound up the hillside, and presently we came upon two wind-blown oaks, the only watchers at that city's gates, beside a rough stone wall, built by some shepherd to prevent his sheep from breaking in upon the sleeping silence of Ferentinum. It was a city of the dead, deserted save for the lizards fleeing from our footsteps, and a few white butterflies dancing above the mullein stalks.

At first it seemed as though no stone had been left standing on the other, but on the crest of the hill, overlooking the wooded and precipitous valley of the Acqua Rossa, and framing in its Royal Gateway the misty forest of the Ciminian Mount, we came upon the Theatre of Ferentinum, the only building in the ancient city which retains any semblance of its former grandeur. So do our vanities outlive us when our loves and homes are covered with the dust of oblivion! Behind it the purple basalt of the road was worn into deep ruts by the chariot wheels of the ancient peoples as they drove by on pleasure bent, and the ground was jewelled with mosaics and the iridescent dust of ancient glass, powdered by time. Here and there we could trace fragments of the mediaeval town grafted on to the city of Etruria, which in the days of its Roman occupation was the birthplace of the Emperor Otho—like the remains of the Byzantine church in the shadow of the Theatre—but for the most part there was only ruin in the fallen city of the Etruscan Goddess of Fortune.

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THE RUINED THEATRE OF FERENTO.

Surely the earlier Gods must wonder at the fate of this small country town, which was renowned among the ancients not so much for the greatness of its history, as for the beauty of its monuments and the art of its brass-workers, but which was destroyed in the name of Christ in the year 1014, nearly nine centuries ago! It is a strange story. How the Viterbesi, arrogant and always on the watch to increase their power as a commune, razed the little episcopal city of Ferento to the ground, because it persisted in the heresy of representing Christ upon the cross with His eyes open (after the manner of the Byzantines) instead of closed!

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From that day there has been no human habitation in Ferento except the hut of the shepherd-guide. But the half-vanished city of three civilisations is filled with an inexpressible charm, not desolate because the sun and wind have peopled it with flowers, and not deserted by the fleeing footsteps of the Gods. For surely they were with us in the magic beauty of that soft October

morning when the little breeze across the valley fanned our hair like an invisible plume, and Earth, the wise mother of mankind, was offering incense to the heavens—the fragrance of crushed herbs, the soft hymn of insects, the silver voice of the Acqua Rossa. Even the blue threads of smoke which still ascended from the ilex groves of the dark Ciminian Mount seemed part of the mysterious sacrament.

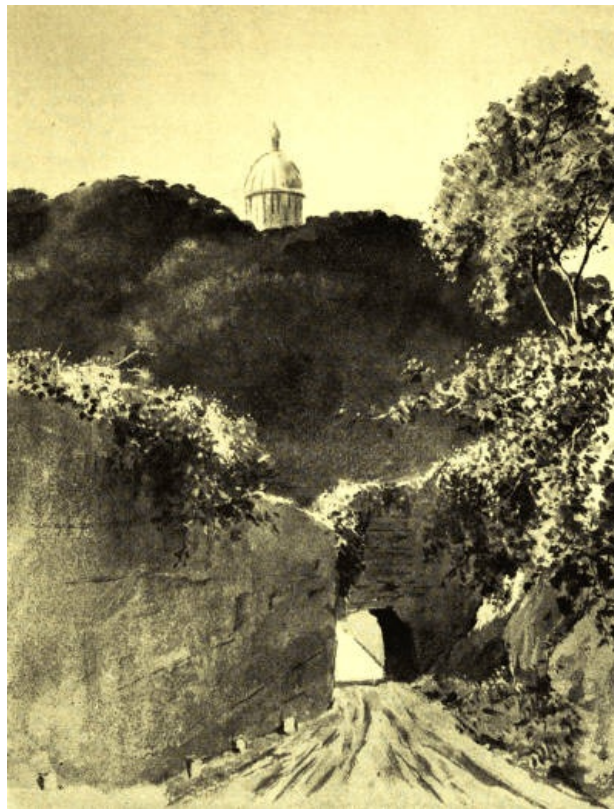
ROME

It was in Foligno, seeing that fair white road which threads the rich valley of Spoleto, now skirting the Hill of Trevi, now leading through the olive gardens of Le Vene to the crystal springs of Clitumnus, that we first began to think of Rome. Up to that time we had not raised our eyes to the horizon. The beauty of the road itself had led us on, but now, though she was still far off, we felt once more the magnetism of the great Mother of Cities. Truly in Italy every road must lead to Rome. Many times we had been greeted with the words, '*E Roma? Andate ancora a Roma?*'—in little Passignano that gazes like Narcissus into the mirroring waters of Thrasymene, rapt in the contemplation of her own beauty; in far-off Gubbio, wistful and forlorn in the shadow of her great hills; in San Marino, the eagle nest where Liberty has taken refuge upon a mountain top. And when we told our simple questioners that we knew the city well, they pressed to hear what she was like, this *città bella e magnifica*, whose light shining upon their horizons they perhaps might never see. We had not dreamed that she was so beloved. But at the oft-reiterated question some flame of enthusiasm, which we had thought quenched, began to burn again, and Rome became the secret goal of our pilgrimage, until we thrilled to see that white road leading through the plain from the walls of Foligno, because it had become the symbol and expression, as it were, of our desires.

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We crossed the Campagna in a thunderstorm, when earth and sky were united in a mighty storm-song. Above the roar of the train we could hear the booming of the thunder and the shriek of the wind, the sibilant cry of the rain-lashed trees, and the exultant shout of rivers, which the demon of the tempest had changed from languid veins of water to brown and foaming torrents.

As we drew near the Eternal City across the many-bosomed desert of the Campagna we saw St. Peter's dome hanging like a mirage on the grey thunder-clouds, more like a mountain than a church, dwarfing Monte Mario. And we thrilled at the thought of nearing Rome, feeling the contentment that human beings feel towards each other when they meet a dear friend after long years of absence, knowing that, the strangeness of the first moment over, they will find themselves settled down with few words into the old dear comradeship of yesterday.



ROME: ST. PETER'S SEEN FROM THE ARCO OSCURO.

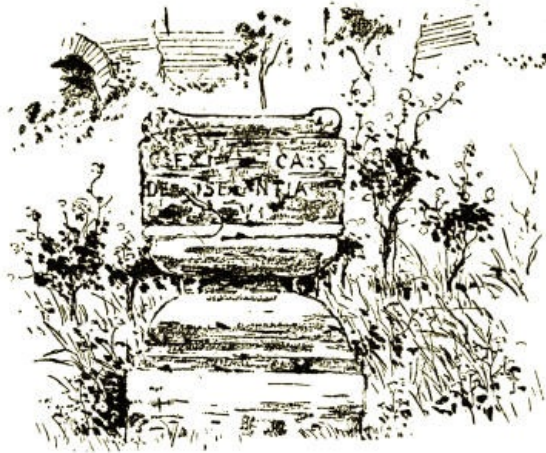
But perhaps it was because we came so lately from Umbria, sweet-scented, golden Umbria, where the only shadows are the heavy veils of night or the shifting reflections of sunlit clouds, that our hearts sank in Rome. We had bid our loves good-bye so lightly, looked our last upon their beauties, and shut their little voices up by miles of empty plain. Perhaps too we had caught something of the spirit of the simple country folk who clasped their hands and sighed over the splendid city of their imagination.

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I will own that I felt very heartsick in those first few days, notwithstanding my old love for Rome. The golden peace of Umbria, which we had garnered and stored in our hearts through the long summer months, seemed lost in the urgent business of Rome. Memory had clothed her with antique grace, had peopled her with Emperors and Popes, had filled her winding streets with mediaeval palaces, her piazzas with the gay Renaissance. But coming from Umbria, where the Middle Ages still linger, and that older, simpler life of the Beginning of the World is pictured in her vineyards and olive gardens, we found Rome little more than a modern city, full of unrest and noise. Everywhere there was scaffolding and masonry, and we feared to look for our familiar

landmarks lest the great god of change should have swallowed them up. It was impossible to enjoy walking in the streets; all we could do was to pick our way along the narrow pavements, one behind the other, thinking ourselves fortunate if a screaming demon of a tram did not come upon us unawares. We crossed the roads in a meaningless sea of shouting taximen and winecarts and motor-cars and jostling people. To make matters worse our beloved Via Tritone was being enlarged, and was still undergoing the process of having tramway-lines laid down it to the Corso. And the Piazza Barberini, our own piazza, where the Triton singing in his fountain had dwelt in our memories and dreams, was the workshop of the tram people, full of stones and unconnected lines, which seemed to fall automatically upon each other with a hideous noise all through the day.

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THE ALTAR OF THE UNKNOWN GOD ON THE PALATINE.

Can you wonder then that our Goddess, Imperial and lovely Rome, seemed to have stepped down among ordinary mortals?

Another thing. We had left a great city in search of joy. And we had found it. Up there in Umbria we had culled it from the roadside as you cull flowers. We had drunk of Lethe and gathered forgetfulness beside its waters. The burden of the world had slipped from off our shoulders. Little by little our feet had grown lighter upon the hillside. Our mountainous doubts, our despairs, our days of little faith, became mere memories. All the old fears of a city 'with houses both sides of the street,' were forgotten. We no longer bruised our feet on paving stones, but felt the soft warm earth beneath our soles and smelt the fragrance of pine-needles in the woods. Life became a beautiful and simple thing. Holy too.

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But here in Rome old doubts came back upon us, taking us unawares. 'The poor in great cities are not like the poor in Umbria,' said the Philosopher; 'here they suffer so.' We heard more tales of pain in those first days in Rome than we had heard in all the sunny months we had been dreaming away in Umbria. And on our first night in the city a courtesan screaming hopelessly below our windows as she was dragged to prison made our new-found joys shiver away to death. We felt like the Israelites when they looked upon their manna the second day and found it full of worms, and we knew that we had gathered the food of angels in the sunlit spaces of the Umbrian plain.

I am no Utopian who seeks to bring the country to the town. I know too well how soon its incorruptible beauty would be corrupted. It is only in the hills that we may find it and the open spaces. There, it seems, we must go to learn our lesson, and when we have learnt it, this A B C of beauty, we can come back to the towns and learn more difficult things, the reverence for beliefs which are no longer beliefs, as Emerson taught, the beauty of a city, and of a poor man's smile. But just as the Israelites, when the need for manna was past, returned to ordinary food and found it good, so we too drifted back to our old content and began reluctantly to worship our old gods again.

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And it would be childish to deny that the great Exhibition for which Rome was preparing marked her splendid prosperity under the rule of the House of Savoy; or that the magnificent memorial to Victor Emmanuel on the brow of the Capitol is the most imposing monument in the whole city; or that the Palatine has gained in picturesqueness now that the débris has been cleared away from its lower slopes.



ROME: A FOUNTAIN IN THE BORGHESE GARDENS.

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But it was not to see these things that we came to Rome, and we found their ancient charm untouched in those shrines of beauty to which we paid a special pilgrimage. For all the pictures which had given us delight upon our journeys, from the faded frescoes of Cimabue in San Francesco d'Assisi to the strange fancies of Luca Signorelli in the Cathedral of Orvieto, were only stepping stones to the vault of the Sixtine Chapel and the revelations of Michelangelo. Not any of the fountains in Viterbo or in Siena or Perugia had such a gracious setting as the moss-grown basins of the Villa Borghese, whose crystal jets, like Arachne of old, challenge Athena to spin a lovelier web below the ilexes and autumn-gilded maples. And when we came to worship at the shrine of the Unknown God on the sunny slopes of Rome's sacred hill, where the reapers were scything the fennel and thistles and tall rank weeds, which had grown higher than a man, we found the altar of the Genius of Rome fragrant with the last red roses of summer. Above it fluttered a butterfly like a soul that fain would speak, and a careless lizard was sunning himself upon the ancient inscriptions which mottled lichens seek vainly to erase.

Out on the Appian Way the roadside was still full of flowers, white, purple and gold. The dry fennel and yellow thistles and tall weedy mulleins were waist-high among the tombs. Butterflies fluttered their last dances before they yielded their little bodies to the enchantment of winter sleep; birds were fluting overhead, lizards sunned themselves upon the old grey stones.

For the rest we found the Ancient Way deserted, a home of sunshine and peace. If there was dust, was it not dust of the dead? Is not all the dust in the world dust of the dead? And were not the flowers, those gay brave pennons of spring and summer, the quintessence of this Roman dust?

To our right Tivoli was hidden in mist, but Rocca del Papa and the Alban Mount rose like shadows to the south. The aqueducts marched across the plain, or stumbled into ruin among the flowers with which the merciful earth covered their fall. Lonely farms, towers, nameless tombs, grew out of the folds of the plain. And the early setting October sun, dipping into a haze, empurpled the fields and wove a golden halo round the sheep who bleated homewards in the melancholy of the dying sky. The little trees, like mourners, bent down towards the tombs, or seemed to shrink back to the earth. Only the stone pines with their heads to heaven were unconscious of the death around their roots.

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THE VIA APPIA.

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Dante, *Inferno*, Canto xxii.
- [2] Dante, *Paradiso*, xi. 41.
- [3] The Flagellant Brotherhood originated in Perugia in 1259, and spread like wildfire through Tuscany and Umbria to Rome.
- [4] 'Their Highnesses the Baglioni had the livery which Count Jacomo, son of Niccolò Piccinino, gave them, ... and for their arms they bore a shield azure traversed in the middle by a bar of gold, and above for crest a griffin's head, and behind this hung down a serpent's tail.'—Matarazzo, *The Chronicles of Perugia*.
- [5] The mediaeval Italian apparently believed that he averted the visit of Death by blocking up the door by which the dead body was carried out, since Death was supposed to enter a house by the door through which he had already passed. But Mr. Markino gave me an interesting variant of the superstition. In Japan Doors for the Dead were used because the human body was considered not clean in comparison with the Gods; and especially after death, when the human body is only dust, it could not be allowed to pass where the Gods might come—through the chief doors of a house.
- [6] I adhere to the Greek names because this is a digression into Arcadia.
- [7] Mr. W. Heywood tells us in his admirable book, *Palio and Ponte*, that 'from the beginning of the seventeenth century the Feast of Our Lady of Provenzano became well-nigh the principal holiday of the Sienese year. It was celebrated on the 2nd of July, the day of the visitation of the Blessed Virgin.' The Palio was not actually presented to the victorious *contrada*, but the silver basin which accompanied it, or its equivalent in money. 'Not unfrequently they petitioned the Governor to permit the race to be run anew, by the other *contrade*, on the day after the Festival of our Lady of August, offering as a prize the silver basin which they had themselves won.... By degrees this practice grew to be so common that before the end of the eighteenth century the Palio of the 16th August had become as regular an event as that of July.'
- [8] The Alfieri are pages in the mediaeval sense. Siena is the only town in Italy which still makes a study of the mediaeval sport of banner-tossing.
- [9] Some of the horses which took part in the race were sorry nags, but the *contrada* of the Porcupine had a really good animal.
- [10] Dante, *Inferno*, Canto xxix. 17.
- [11] This Annunciation is claimed to be by Sebastiano Mainardi, the friend and pupil of Ghirlandaio, with whom he worked while he was engaged on the Chapel of the Holy Fina. Mainardi, who later married Ghirlandaio's sister, and Vincenzo di B. Tamagni, a pupil of Raphael, were the only artists born in San Gimignano.
- [12] But I do not doubt the wisdom of the Government, for our two soldier coachmen only voiced the general opinion when they told us that the peasants of the neighbourhood had been impoverished under the rule of the monks, but that they make an ample livelihood under the rule of the state.
- [13] J. A. Symonds.
- [14] Dante, *Paradise*, xvi. 73.
- [15] 'It is by some pretended that these subterranean passages form part of the labyrinth of Porsena, but this opinion has no foundation. They are much more probably connected with the system of sewerage, and the subterranean chambers may have been either cellars to houses or *favissae* to temples.'—Dennis, *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, vol. ii.
- [16] Livy, Book xxi.
- [17] Dante, *Purgatory*, xi. 93.
- [18] Laura M'Cracken, *Gubbio Past and Present*.
- [19] 'Their origin has been variously assigned to the twelfth and the fourteenth century. If, as seems probable, they were designed by Gattapone, they may be placed in the middle of the fourteenth century about the time of the erection of the two municipal palaces.'
- Laura M'Cracken, *Gubbio Past and Present*.
- [20] Dante, *Inferno*, v. 118.
- [21] Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*.
- [22] Their identity is disputed.
- [23] Dante, *Purgatory*, xxviii. 40.
- [24] Dante, *Inferno*, iv. 6.
- [25] 'The energetic Lambert had made a genuine peace with Rome, where he had gloriously restored the Imperial power. The Pope, though compelled by necessity, had with equal sincerity striven to secure Lambert in the Imperium. Freed from all foreign influence, it seemed now for the first time possible to form an independent kingdom within the Italian frontier.'—GREGOROVIVS, *Rome in the Middle Ages*.
- [26] 'This waterfall is in its present form wholly artificial. It was first formed by M'.

Curius Dentatus, who opened an artificial channel for the waters of the Velinus, and thus carried off a considerable portion of the Lacus Velinus, which previously occupied a great part of the valley below Reate.'—*Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*.

[27] *Purgatory*, Canto xxiii., Cary's Translation.

[28] J. A. Symonds, *Italian Studies*.

[29] Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

—Errors in printing and punctuation were corrected.

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