

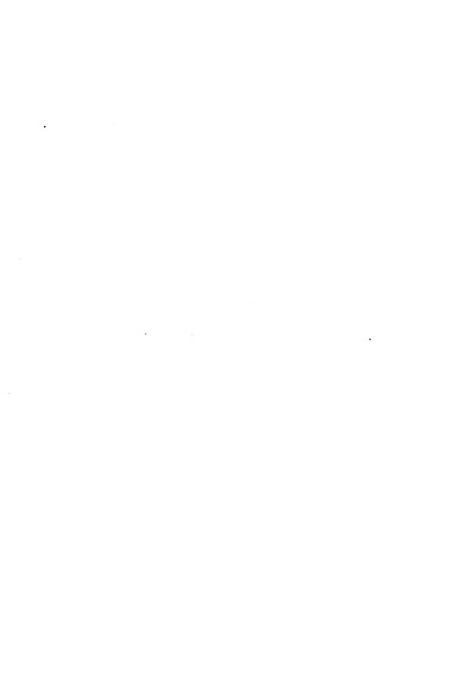




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# ROCK VILLAGES OF THE RIVIERA





Old Gateway (Via Dritta). Berdighera. From an Etching,

# ROCK VILLAGES

OF THE

# RIVIERA

BY

### WILLIAM SCOTT

AUTHOR OF

'A GLANCE AT THE HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS OF ST. MARK'S,' eTC.

WITH SIXTY ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK 1898

15175

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### PREFATORY NOTE

THE following pages make no pretence at being either a guide-book on the one hand, or a complete historical treatise on the other. During a residence of several years on the Italian Riviera, the author has found pleasure in visiting and studying a number of villages in the neighbourhood which possess various features of interest, and are not generally known to visitors. He has set down his own impressions, and now offers them in the hope that others may perhaps be led to investigate for themselves. Indeed, the subject, though modest in form, is in reality so extensive that not one only but several volumes would be required to treat fully the wealth of material involved; and it has been found impossible to include among the present notes any reference to a number of other villages lying

take. Helisalene

within the same district, and all worthy of attention. The Marchesato of Dolceacqua would in itself deserve a volume, and therefore no attempt has been made to do more at the present time than offer a couple of sketches of the place. Isolabona, Pigna, and Buggio, in the same valley; Rocchetta, among the hills, some two hours' climb away, all deserve to be visited and studied; while, on the other side of the group, Colla, San Remo (the old Matuta), Ceriana, Bussana, and Taggia, are also comprised within the district known, on its outskirts at least, to winter visitors from the North. In fact, the whole coast line down to Genoa would furnish opportunities for a series of excursions in search of similar subjects, and is practically an unworked field.

It has been thought advisable to preface the notes on the Rock Villages with a slight historical outline of the district, gleaned from the researches and works of others, especially the late F. F. Hamilton (Bordighera and the Western Riviera), the Cav. G. Rossi (Storia della Città di Ventimiglia), and the late Rev.

# Prefatory Note

Prof. Francesco Rossi (Il Comune di Camporosso, and Santo Ampelio ed i suoi Tempi), etc., merely arranging and condensing the information they have given.

The documents which form the basis of a large proportion of the book have never before been published; and the writer must assume all responsibility for any errors of transcription or translation that may have crept into his work. At the same time he wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the various communal authorities who, almost without exception, placed such documents as they possessed entirely at his disposal for purposes of study; not omitting especial mention of the Cav. F. Piana, formerly Sindaco of Bordighera, who allowed the examination of a very interesting series of records belonging to his own family archives; and the present courteous Sindaco of the same place, Cav. G. Cabagni-Baccini, to whose personal influence many of the facilities afforded were due.

With considerable diffidence, a few remarks on the dialect of Liguria have been added to one of the chapters, but the subject deserves

the serious study of competent philologists, and the following notes are only offered faute de mieux.

The illustrations are from drawings by the author, in each case made and finished on the spot. They simply aim at being faithful—some will say too faithful—renderings of actual facts; and owe nothing to the usual devices of "artist's license," or "conventional treatment."

A word of grateful thanks must be tendered to a well-known and accomplished writer, who may not be named, but to whose kind suggestion the inception of this little work is mainly due, and whose encouragement has aided its completion.

Bordighera, October 1898.

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# ROCK VILLAGES OF THE RIVIERA

#### HISTORICAL OUTLINE



Bordighera from the West.

Not least among the amusements of those visitors who flock to the Riviera during the winter months, whether in search of health, or merely to enjoy a pleasant change of climate, may be reckoned the numberless excursions into the neighbourhood of their temporary and fashionable headquarters.

The Littorale, whether French or Italian, is rich in attractions of this kind, owing, partly, to its mountainous character, and, partly, to the fact that long ages ago, when there was much less general security for life and property than Europe now enjoys, and pirates existed outside as well as inside the story-books, those who by choice or necessity inhabited this region placed their dwellings in positions not too generally easy of access, and grouped them together for facility of mutual defence.

Thus arose the Rock Villages of the Riviera; and, though their political and historical importance has never been extraordinary, they have had features of interest which are worth recording, while even to-day they possess some characteristics quite other than common or unimportant.

The history of the district as a whole has been so fully treated of in works specially devoted to the subject, that it will not be necessary here to do more than recall some of its main outlines.

The earliest inhabitants of whom we have

any record are supposed to have been of Greek origin. The Romans called them *Ligures*; and among their subdivisions one tribe was known as the *Intemelii*. They had a seaport the name of which was Albium or Alpium Intemelium, and this, shortened into Alpintemelium, gradually became known as Ventimiglia.

The first important contact of the Romans with these early inhabitants of Liguria seems to have taken place in B.C. 237, under the Consul Sempronius Gracchus, and in B.C. 200 the republic of Rome made a fresh and serious campaign against them. If we may trust the traditions relative to this campaign we shall be able to trace an interesting relic of Roman prowess and constructive skill in this neighbourhood; for we are told that the Consuls Appius Claudius and Marcus Sempronius, who were victorious in the struggle just referred to, erected a stronghold on Monte Magliocca above Alpintemelium; and archæologists assert that some portions of the ruins with which we are familiar as Castel d'Appio, beyond Ventimiglia, may be referred to that structure. The castle or stronghold was

undoubtedly rebuilt by the inhabitants of the district in A.D. 1222, but probably the cistern at least dates from those Roman times.

Liguria—and the name still clings to the district—became a Roman province by annexation in the year B.C. 118.1 It extended from Genoa on the one hand to Cemenelium on the other, while its prefect or governor resided at the latter place,—the designation of which has gradually been changed into the well-known modern Cimiez, the name of our Queen's favourite resort; and Genoa, in later times, gave birth to the famous republic of that name, sometimes the ally, sometimes the enemy, but always the restless and relentless rival of that other and more splendid State whose symbol was the Lion of Saint Mark, and whose home was founded in barbaric splendour on the lagoon islands of the Adriatic Sea.

Through this portion of Italy passed one of the famous military roads of the Romans, the *Via Aurelia*, and the Ligurian portion was specially distinguished as the *Via Aurelia* 

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Hamilton, Bordighera and the Western Riviera (1883), p. 52.

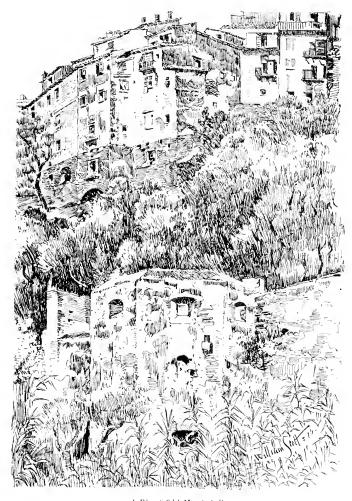
Emilia. It has not hitherto been possible to decide with any certainty where this Roman road was situated, nor, curiously enough, can we point to any traces of it east of Ventimiglia; but tradition has preserved for us a record of some slight value in the name Via or Strada Romana, still borne by one of the present roads at Bordighera.

A well-known historian of Ventimiglia, the Cav. Rossi, asserts that Julius Cæsar was at one time a guest in the house of a noble of Alpintemelium named Domitius, but the faction which favoured his rival Pompey contrived by foul means to procure the noble's arrest, and afterwards his strangulation.

Those who care to investigate the subject will find that there have been discovered many positive evidences of Roman influence in the remains of a theatre, some villas, pavements etc., and during the excavations at Nervia several years ago not a few interesting objects were brought to light, some of which have been carefully preserved and are now available for inspection and study. Unfortunately a number of the structural remains,

after having been uncovered and measured, were covered up again and built over; others were ruthlessly and stupidly destroyed. Exasperating stories are told, on the best authority, of the deliberate destruction of valuable vases etc., in the hope of discovering gold ornaments or coins. Even pavements of priceless value brought to light in digging to make vineyards were wantonly sacrificed and broken to pieces, when a little care and trouble would have handed them down for yet many generations to a thankful and appreciative posterity.

The early period of the Christian era has left for us no traces in this district. History is silent regarding the events of the first four centuries, during which time Rome passed through various stages to her decline, but we know that the earliest barbarian invasion took place under Alaric the Goth in the year A.D. 400, and that his armies spread through Liguria as well as Provence. The next date worth remembering is that of the foundation of the Genoese League in A.D. 617, consisting of the various colonies along the coast. This lasted till the conquest of



A Bit of Old Ventimiglia,



Charlemagne in A.D. 800. On his death in 814 his empire was divided between his two sons—that portion which lay in what we now call Italy going to Lothair, who was known as the Emperor of the West.

We find Ventimiglia already a county—that is, a place under the rule of a Count—in the tenth century; but the Republic of Genoa soon became jealous of its independence, and it was taken and sacked in A.D. 1140. The ruler, Count Hubert, made submission to Genoa, and was confirmed in his seigneurial rights over the county. Afterwards, Ventimiglia again ventured to oppose Genoa, and in the end became practically a fief of the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa.

In the year 1238 there was a general rising in places of importance along the coast, and, as usual, with a more or less reasonable pretext that the existing government was tyrannous and insupportable. The governor of Ventimiglia, Bonifacio Embriaco, being warned of the intended rising, had time to withdraw into the castle with his family and the other officials of the government, and

hastily sent off a messenger to Genoa for help. Fourteen Genoese galleys shortly appeared on the scene, and were opposed by the insurgents under the leadership of Guglielmo Saonese. After a fierce struggle the Genoese soldiers were able to effect a landing, the city surrendered, and Saonese was put to death. A number of the discontented inhabitants managed to escape, and took refuge on the Cape of S. Ampeglio - as it had already begun to be called-where they built themselves houses, erected some sort of fortifications, and in fact prepared to carry out their ideas of Home Rule. The tower which is mentioned as part of their stronghold was probably in existence from a much earlier date, and may indeed have been a Roman avisium, seeing that such structures were found at frequent intervals along the coast.

So strongly were these settlers entrenched that Genoa found it advisable to dislodge them by force, and therefore in the following year, 1239, a fleet of thirteen galleys, commanded by Fulco Guercio, appeared off the Cape, and after another sanguinary encounter

the Genoese not only landed, but utterly destroyed the little settlement. It is important to bear in mind these circumstances and this date because they fix for us the real origin of Bordighera, which some authorities have mistakenly, though not without a show of reason, attributed to a later period.

Records of the thirteenth century give us some idea of the social conditions in those times among the various classes of the population, and of their various dwellings. In the Towers, or, as we should probably say, the Castles, dwelt the militi or nobles; the Case, or ordinary houses, were inhabited by the liberi or freemen, the citizens, in fact; while in the casali, huts or inferior dwellings, lived the artigiani, the artisans or working classes. Beside these, there was another and distinct class, known as the villani or peasants, whose condition seems to have been similar in some respects to that of certain discontented tenants we have been accustomed to hear a great deal about during the last quarter of a century. They lived on, and cultivated for themselves, lands belonging to

the Signori or feudal lords, transmitting their rights from father to son, and even selling the same. Their tenure depended upon the payment of an annual censo, a sort of rent, or sometimes the rendering of a corporal duty or service; and though the lord of the manor could dispose of his lands together with his relations to the holders, he, as well as the purchaser, was bound to respect the conditions upon which they were held. The humblest class of all consisted of the servi, or common labourers.<sup>1</sup>

However interesting might be the subject of those great commercial companies which sprang into existence during the Middle Ages, having an especial development about the year 1600, and being the forerunners of our own East India Company among others, we can only here parenthetically mention the fact that one of them, the famous Banca de San Giorgio, founded in 1346, with its head-quarters at Genoa, became possessor of this part of Liguria in 1514, and retained it till the improved financial condition of the

<sup>1</sup> Rossi, Storia di Ventimiglia.

Genoese Republic justified its repurchase in 1562.

From the end of the thirteenth century onward the political fortunes of the Rock Villages followed in the main those of the Republic of Genoa, the nominal ruler of the district. Some exceptions there were, which will be referred to in their proper places; but it will be sufficient to complete this slight outline by passing on at once to the series of more modern events commencing with the famous "war of succession" which began on the death of the Emperor Charles VI. of Austria in 1740, and in which the part of his daughter, Maria Theresa, was taken by England and Sardinia against the other powers of Europe. In this war, although Genoa, being weak, professed neutrality, the English Admiral Mathews, in 1742, found it advisable to disembark his men at Ventimiglia on account of a suspicion that provisions were being, from that place, supplied to the allies; and, soon after, Genoa formally joined the Franco-Spanish forces. This was in May 1745, and soon the Infante of Spain, Don

Filippo, passed through Ventimiglia at the head of his army. In the following year these troops suffered a reverse and retired through Ventimiglia to Mentone; the French commander, Lebœuf, taking possession of the fortress of Castel d'Appio and the city of Ventimiglia, which had been held by the Marchese of Dolceacqua. Charles Emmanuel III., King of Sardinia, reached Bordighera on the 29th of September in that year, and at once sent the Marchese Balbiani with 4500 men to dislodge the French from Castel d'Appio. The enemy, however, thought fit to retire without fighting, leaving only a body of men in possession of the fort of S. Paolo; and the governor of Ventimiglia at once sent the keys of the city to the King at Bordighera. But the troubles of the district were not over yet, and the Franco-Spanish troops returned later, only to be anew driven away by the Austro-Sardinians. Once more was Ventimiglia taken by the Spaniards, but a suspension of hostilities took place in 1748, and a treaty of peace was signed in 1749. One other step brings us to the stormy



Borghetto, from the Stream.

#### Historical Outline

times of the Revolution at the end of the century, when a Provisional Government was set up in Genoa. Ventimiglia, true to her habit of siding with those in power at the moment, immediately sent off a couple of deputies to announce her adhesion to the new régime, and she became chief town of one of the twenty-eight districts into which the territory of the Republic was divided, her authority extending over most of our otto luoghi, and stretching away up the Roya Valley as far as Penna and Airolo.

Then followed in rapid succession the subjection to the French Empire; the abdication of Napoleon; the temporary reconstitution of the Genoese States (1814); <sup>1</sup> and, in consequence of the Congress of Vienna, the definite annexation of the Ligurian territory to the Crown of Sardinia.

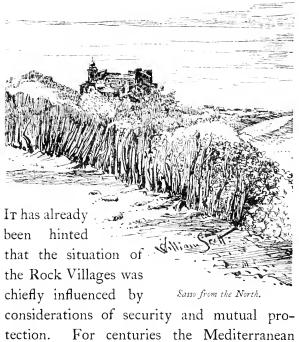
Again Ventimiglia had an opportunity of sending a deputation to a new ruler, so a "Magnifico" and a tradesman were admitted

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In celebration of this event the authorities of Camporosso forwarded to the Senate at Genoa an address in which occurred the words: "Thanks to the magnanimity of the British Government the existence of the Republic is assured," etc.

to the presence of the Sardinian King, bearing a fulsome address in which the Sovereign was designated as the "delight of his people, and the loving father of his faithful subjects," who declared themselves (as usual) ready to pour out their last drop of blood for the defence of his throne.

It is not necessary to trace here the political events which followed, and which led in course of time to the realisation of many an ardent patriot's dream, but Englishmen, even more than others, have rejoiced to welcome and to recognise the establishment of a Free and United Italy.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS



considerations of security and mutual protection. For centuries the Mediterranean was swept by pirates and freebooters of varying nationality and unvarying rapacity,

and their frequent marauding descents upon the Ligurian coast caused the inhabitants of that district to select for their little towns or villages a class of sites such as would hardly have been chosen had the conditions of existence been less unfavourable and insecure. They were, however, admirably adapted to the requirements of the time, and were in most cases selected with considerable skill. Sometimes a commanding hill-top was chosen, sometimes a steep sheltered slope hidden among woods, where the presence of a hamlet would not readily be suspected; but the preference was always given to a position difficult of access, and lending itself to defence against numbers. Every other consideration seems to have been subordinated to these, and though we shall see that in most cases a torrent ran by at no great distance, yet even the chances of a regular water supply were relegated to a position of secondary importance. It is not difficult to find a reasonableness in this, as the enemies most to be feared by the early inhabitants of the region were wild raiders who only came to plunder, and

under no circumstances would be likely to remain for any great length of time, or to undertake the prolonged operation of a settled siege. Even to-day, in many of the villages there is no water supply beyond that which is brought patiently up in portable vessels of copper or earthenware, along the steep winding paths, from some spring which sparkles a hundred feet below.

The rocky nature of the situation was another advantage, as it provided, close at hand, an abundance of suitable building material, and the pebbles from the stream were burnt into lime, as they still are to-day. Very little clearing and levelling were done, and all the works were of the simplest. The foundations were on the solid rock itself; the inequalities of the surface were taken advantage of to the fullest extent; and instead of cutting away the rock to form an even platform for each house, it was levelled up by walling, and vaulted over, thus forming store places and stabling for the mules. This is why scarcely any of the houses are entered directly from the street level, but there is

C

nearly always a flight of steps leading to the living rooms, thus providing accommodation for the animals, so essential for transport,



Street in San Biaggio.

where carts were not available, without extending the area of each dwelling, which was necessarily very limited. It was not a case of land being costly, but of the necessity for limiting the space to be defended; and, in

many cases, as for instance at Bordighera, the outer walls of the dwellings formed the boundary or enclosing walls of the village, while the "fronts" of the houses faced inwards towards a sort of central court. In considerable proportions the streets themselves were, sooner or later, vaulted over, and the space thus gained thrown into the houses; leaving openings only here and there for light and ventilation. There was, in this system, an additional advantage of mutual support by which the whole village more resembled one large castle or complicated single structure, than an accumulation of simple and independent dwellings. This characteristic was also carried out by the fact that usually only one or two entrances existed, these being sometimes furnished with drawbridges which remained in situ till comparatively modern times.

As may be imagined, the architecture was of the simplest and most elementary kind. There was neither wealth nor education enough to call for luxury and art. The churches almost alone exhibit any indication

of design or enrichment, and in those of mediæval times most of the earlier features such as they were—have disappeared, while those which remain to us have comparatively little value. But churches there were, always, while to the credit of those early builders it must be said—and the praise is high indeed if rightly understood—that they did the best they could. The spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to their creed will, we may trust, be "counted to them for righteousness," though they have not left us a series of artistic marvels, dreams or prayers in stone, such as in Northern lands were of themselves indisputable titles to immortality. The baneful blight of the later Italian Renaissance, with its tawdry stucco, has touched whatever there may have been that was worthy and noble in the buildings of earlier times; and, to-day, any feature with a pretence at being more than mere construction has nothing but that pretence, and the hollowness of it's plaster sham. Everything is plaster,—inside, outside, from plinth to cupola; walls, vaulting, arches, mouldings,-all is levelled under one



Vallebona, from the Road.



smooth coat of cheap and whitewashed false-hood.

Perhaps the only craft which partly escaped the universal degradation was that of the iron-worker; and here and there some scraps may be found, some spandrel or balcony, or grim *ferriata*, where grace of curve and simple truth of execution, the mark of the workman's hammer, and the undisguised force of the material, are worth acres of whitened stucco and gaudy colouring.

The general aspect of these villages is one of great picturesqueness. The irregular lines of the low-pitched roofs; the many dark unglazed openings; the *loggie*, where the tall vines clamber, and the pale hortensia flowers are blooming; the spots of colour where worn garments are hung out to dry; the sunshine blazing on a painted wall, and the deep shadows under the archways that seem so cool and restful, make us content to enjoy the beauty of the *insieme*, without caring to analyse the details of the composition.

In the quaint, quiet streets, not two yards wide, with their rough pavements and steep

slopes, there is little movement or excitement; only here and there a glimmer of sunshine or a peep of blue sky, but everywhere the dark vaulted passages, the cellar-like stalls for the goats and mules; flights of stone steps going upward into gloom which the eye cannot pierce; and yonder a flower-decked shrine of the Madonna with its statuette and tiny oil lamp. The girls go by with copper vessels of water on their heads, coming slowly up from the stream below; the mules pass and repass laden with fodder, with firewood, with wine-barrels, or sacks of flour. little piazza by the church a few youths are playing "Pallone." Old women stumble past, bowed beneath enormous bundles of grass or twigs they have gathered under the olives outside. Except on festa days the place seems almost deserted, like an ill-fated city of the dead; but after school-hours the pretty children play about, and liven up the scene, though somehow they always look a bit out of place, and seem to get old before their time. Here, too, one may often see some very aged creature with bent limbs and

shrivelled cheeks, sitting patiently—in winter in the sunshine at the open door, in summer in the shade on the stone steps—with a calm but vacant look of utter oblivion; without sickness, without pain, but peacefully waiting day by day, just waiting till the quiet end shall come.

It must not be forgotten that many of these villages have still no way of approach beyond their rough narrow mule-tracks, and therefore carts and carriages are unknown. A few, such as Vallebona, have had modern roads made to give access to them, and some, like San Biaggio, have good roads passing near the foot of their slopes; but others, like Sasso and Seborga, are in precisely the same conditions as regards communication and transport that they occupied centuries ago at their foundation; and visitors must perforce reach them on foot or mule-back.

In spite of its mountainous character the district is almost entirely under cultivation, though fields, as we understand the term, are unknown. Nearly all even of the very steep slopes of the hills are planted, but for the

purpose are stepped into terraces, with a patient labour in which these peasants excel, and they are mostly covered with olives. ages the income of the district has been mainly derived from the export of oil, and there seems a peculiar fitness in the association of this industry with the production of wine, for which the neighbourhood has long been famous. Vines grow well and abundantly in these valleys, and, at the present time, there is a tendency to extend the cultivation of flowers, especially roses, which are exported in immense quantities. Vegetables of various kinds are produced with little or no difficulty, and some fruits, such as peaches, cherries, plums, and pears, but the quality of these latter leaves a good deal to be desired. Another and much more profitable fruit which ripens well is the lemon, and tons are annually sent away.

A noticeable feature is that the lands are seldom or never enclosed, and though this may perhaps result chiefly from a desire for economy, yet it is a fact that very little abuse follows from such a state of things; even



Street in Vallebona.

gardens which contain fruit and flowers in abundance are often protected only in the slightest way, if at all. But at a time of special temptation, as when the grapes are ripening, peasants will sometimes watch all night to protect the fruit against possible depredators.

The oil-mills or *frantoj* are of course placed where a little stream of water can be conducted from some neighbouring torrent to turn the wheel; and as the production of oil takes place during the winter and early spring, there is usually a sufficient supply.

The peasants are a quiet, sturdy race, with little of the grace of their Southern brothers, and are generally courteous to strangers. But for any foreigner settling in the district, or having business dealings with the natives, the greatest caution is necessary; and it is well to remember the character given to the Ligurians by Virgil in several passages of the Æneid; <sup>1</sup> for instance:—

Apenninicolæ bellator filius Auni,
Haud Ligurum extremus, dum fallere fata sinebant.

\*\*Eneid\*, xi. 700.

<sup>1</sup> See Hamilton, op cit. p. 46.

Certain it is that the character of the inhabitants in the district lying along the shore, the more educated individuals especially, has not altogether lost the qualities noted in Virgil's time, and Dryden's severe rendering of the above verse is not too harsh:—

A true Ligurian, born to cheat.

A word may be said in reference to the dialect used in Liguria, but no attempt can be made to treat it—as it well deserves—from the philologist's point of view, or to trace the development of language in the peninsula from the aboriginal forms of speech derived from Sanscrit, and divided into various dialects, modified subsequently by immigration, conquest, etc. Among these dialects arose the Latin language, more firmly established than the other forms by means of a fixed orthography, and the overwhelming influence of the Roman people. Then, later, there grew up the Italian lingua, partly the lineal descendant of Latin, partly its rival, yet, side by side with its gradual growth, the various dialects held their own in their several

districts, preserved many of their ancient forms while receiving modifications and enrichments, and have lasted till to-day.

This is not the place to discuss the question how far the unification of Italy, and the teaching of lingua more or less perfectly in all schools, from end to end of the land, will ultimately succeed in driving out and destroying the dialects. The probability of such an event is, of course, greatest in the large towns, and Venice may be cited as an example. There is no doubt that the Venetian dialect the most pleasing of all, and the most worthy of preservation—is rapidly dying out; and the lingua, pronounced with a more or less markedly Venetian accent, is taking its place. Once admit that this current has set in, and the end may surely be foreseen. When the special words and construction of the patois have disappeared, the accent will soon follow. But in the smaller towns and country villages, where educational influences are weaker and less enduring, the dialects will last longer.

In the meantime, all we can do now is to mark a few of the principal differences

between the Italian language as spoken in its purity—lingua Toscana in bocca Romana—and the dialect now used by the people of Liguria.

It has been pointed out by writers on the subject that certain of these main differences, especially in the pronunciation of the vowels u and o, result from the various Gothic invasions, when the conquerors left behind them the Northern, or as we should now say the German, sounds of ii and ö. Another peculiarity is the use of g for b, and c for p-e.g. gianco for bianco, cian for pian (piano), ciove for piove—which, authorities tell us, may be a relic of the primitive idiom. A variation shared with many of the other dialects is the habit of interchanging l and r; thus calcina (softened into calsina) becomes carsina, soldi becomes sordi, Inglese becomes Ingrese, and malato becomes marotto, but the r is not "trilled," indeed itself often undergoes a further modification into  $\bar{u}$  or  $\hat{o}$ . Thus caldo becomes first cardo, then caūdo; calcina, carsina, caūsina, and so on. Again, the letter c is modified into g before e and i, and



Borghetto, from the Stream (north). From an Etching.



c'è (ci è) becomes ghè; chiesa (softened into ciesa) becomes giesa, vecchi becomes vegli. There is a marked softening of the z and s sounds; thus piazza becomes ciassa, and chiesa (see above) or giesa finally appears as giesia, but the last i must not be heard separately, it only modifies the sound of s, making it something like a dull sh.

In vowel sounds originally diphthongs, the two halves are sounded separately, but in other cases vowels are reinforced or doubled, perhaps as the result of an elision. Thus acqua is called aiga, fatto becomes faito (see also below), latte becomes laite, padre becomes paire, and madre maire.

It is easy to understand how any language not sustained by a fixed orthography should be liable to elisions, the result of carelessness, or even mere rapidity of utterance; and in Liguria the terminal vowel—the prevalence of which produces so much of the beauty of the Italian lingua—often disappears; but consonants are still more frequently suppressed. Thus non becomes no, fatto becomes faô (see also above), venuto becomes vegnüô, etc.,

while, to take a further instance, mattoni vuoti (hollow or perforated bricks) are known as *maôi vüöi*, and mattoni pieni (solid bricks) as *maôi giêi*.

It is less easy to comprehend the curious but widely-prevailing habit of inversion which characterises the speech of the uneducated; as, for instance, when Febraro (Febbrajo) becomes *Febaro*, fabrica becomes *frabica*, and magazzin (magazzino) becomes *masaghin*, or, as it is written in some of the old documents, *masaguin*.

It may be interesting to note how the names of our rock villages are affected. Thus Dolceacqua is called (and written) Dosaiga, Apricale becomes Apricare, or even Avrigà. San Biaggio appears as San Giazzio, Perinaldo of course is Perinardo or Perinaūdo, and Vallecrosia is called Varrecrösia.

Other traces of foreign influences can be found in the various idioms employed; for instance, a woman speaking of her husband will always say, mi' omo, as in German, and a person of superior position is always addressed as Vô Scià.

Still more noticeable, and perhaps the pleasantest feature of all, is the pretty *cantilena*, or sing-song, with which the inhabitants of the hills talk; but this cannot be rendered here in words, it must be heard to be appreciated.



Part of Isolabona, from the Nervia Torrent.

### THE OTTO LUOGHI DI VENTIMIGLIA

FROM very early times, and for a long period, Ventimiglia — always under the dominion of Genoa — enjoyed, not only a certain independence, but control over several of the neighbouring places, and in later times some of these were known as the Otto Ville or Luoghi di Ventimiglia. They con-

### Otto Luoghi di Ventimiglia

sisted of Camporosso in the Nervia valley; Vallecrosia, San Biaggio, and Soldano, in the Vallecrosia valley; Borghetto, Vallebona, and Sasso, in the Borghetto valley; Bordighera on the shore.

The varying fortunes and vicissitudes of these little villages, their political struggles and ultimate triumph, form such an interesting chapter in the history of this portion of the Riviera as to merit some special and separate consideration.

These otto luoghi then, as we have said, followed, in political matters, the fortunes of Ventimiglia, the chief town of the district. Its government was carried on by a sort of Parliament to which the ville sent representatives in the proportion of one-third of the total number, and one-third of the Sindici or special councillors, so that even under favourable circumstances the villages were often likely to be in a minority.

This Parliament appointed annually in each of the *otto luoghi* two "Consuls" or magistrates, who were responsible for the administration of affairs, and who judged in small

matters up to the value of 40 soldi. As usual, however, many abuses crept into the system of government. The weaker and poorer were oppressed by the stronger and richer. The officials of the government were exclusively elected from the upper known as the Magnifici; and with its powerful majority Ventimiglia was able to secure for itself all the privileges it desired, including the expenditure of almost all the communal income, towards which the otto luoghi contributed their full share. Vexatious restrictions and bye-laws were imposed on all outsiders, and Bordighera, as a village the inhabitants of which were chiefly engaged in fishing, was the object of specially obnoxious legislation.

The conditions of existence were not too easy in those early times. The roads were in a neglected state; it was impossible to obtain grants for their maintenance; and though the inhabitants of the otto luoghi were compelled to procure many of the necessaries of life at Ventimiglia, there was no bridge over the Vallecrosia or Nervia torrents, so that in bad seasons it was, we are told, impossible to pass.

# Otto Luoghi di Ventimiglia

In addition to vexatious if necessary contributions in the form of tithes upon fruits, olives, wine, etc., the fishermen of Bordighera were compelled to carry all their fish to Ventimiglia, for sale on the *chiappa* or market place, and the prices they might ask there were rigorously fixed by statute.

Rossi, in his history of Ventimiglia, quotes from the statute-book of 1468 a paragraph which mentions these prices. Among a lot of names no longer in use we find, "Sardene collecte" to be sold at 4 denari per lb., "Bughe mediocres" at 5 denari, and "Bughe collecte" at 6 denari, which would be about equal to one farthing, but without making allowance for the difference in the purchasing power of money at that date. Nor was this invidious bye-law the whole weight which fell upon the poor fishermen, for one-fifth part of their produce had to be handed over to the authorities as a contribution in kind, and they were not allowed to sell their fish until this tribute had been paid. It was a poor instalment of justice that the officials, who seem to have turned the contribution into money as

soon as possible, were not allowed to ask a lower price than that prescribed for the fishermen; nor was it of any great advantage that, after having paid the contribution in kind, and failed to sell their produce on the *chiappa*, where the shrewd Ventimiglians would naturally seek their supply, the fishermen might ask a higher price in other quarters of the town.

It is needless to say that tyrannous treatment of this kind aroused bitter feelings of discontent, and protests without number. reins of paternal government were tightened the more, and we can glean some notion of the painful state of subjection to which the inhabitants of the ville were reduced. when we find them abjectly petitioning that at least, as a favour, they might be left free from the importunities of the tax-gatherers and "the officers of justice," as they were euphemistically called, on the days dedicated their respective patron saints. cynical generosity their request was granted, and the concession is to be found formally entered in the Register of Privileges, under the date 17th April 1487.



Sasso, from the Borghetto Valley.

### Otto Luoghi di Ventimiglia

In the early part of the sixteenth century dissensions were rife, and attempts were made to settle the differences by arbitration. a trite observation to say that history repeats itself, but while it may be desirable to get rid of violent struggles such as rebellion and war by the more peaceful method just mentioned, yet it was true in former times, as it is true to-day, that arbitration is chiefly advantageous to those who are in the wrong. An arrangement which by a cruel stroke of irony was called "amicable" was entered into on the 22nd December 1500, through the good offices of Taggia's parish priest, and a lawyer named Gastaldi, but peace lasted a very short time. Fresh imposts and contributions were ordered by the oppressors, and in 1533 an appeal was made to the authorities of the Banca di San Giorgio at Genoa, then in possession of proprietary rights over the district, as we have already noted. Some small concessions were with difficulty wrung out of the obstinate rulers, and the one which most interests us was that the fishermen of Bordighera were allowed to sell one-third of

their fish in the other towns, taking the remaining two-thirds to Ventimiglia for the benefit of that population.

Naturally this pitiable instalment of justice could not permanently satisfy the sufferers, and though they bore up more or less patiently for another hundred years, the explosion, long threatened, came at last.

Rossi tells us that during the war of 1672 a number of the Genoese troops were quartered in Camporosso, and afterwards the "consuls" of the place addressed to the Parliament at Ventimiglia a very proper and reasonable demand for an indemnity. As usual the demand was refused, and, unwilling any longer to submit to such flagrant injustice, Camporosso laid the case before the Senate at Genoa and demanded a "judicial separation" from the authority of Ventimiglia in the matter of all taxes and contributions except those which really regarded the community as a whole. The lead thus taken by Camporosso was energetically seconded by Bordighera, and very soon by all the other subject and suffering villages. The evident fairness

of the demand, the undeniable tyranny of the capo luogo, the complete willingness of the suppliants to continue in perfect union of political relationship with Ventimiglia as regards all national affairs, and perhaps some other more recondite reasons, induced the Senate to grant the request; and on the 11th February 1683 the decree of separation as regards financial matters and internal management was conceded and signed. It was provided that the boundaries of each village should be marked out; that the annual expenses of the district should be fairly apportioned; that the income required for the several places should be provided by each for itself, giving to each a due proportion of the communal income formerly under the sole control of Ventimiglia; and that only for public works of general utility such as roads, bridges etc., should a general contribution be required.

It is not surprising that difficulties arose over the division of the lands and other, though minor, questions; but these were at length disposed of, and the discontent of

Ventimiglia may be taken as a proof that the liberated villages had at last got a fair share of their rights.

The records of the period prove that no time was lost in undertaking the necessary formalities; though no one need be astonished to learn that difficulties strewed the path of the new community. The first step was a formal acceptance or recognition by the several ville of their independence; and, as regards Bordighera, this took place at a meeting held on the 4th of March of the same year (1683), in the Oratory of Saint Bartholomew, of which meeting the formal record is still preserved. The representatives of this place formally asserted their acceptance of independence, subject to the proper adjustment of the financial burdens; stipulating that this should be apportioned upon the basis of the amount of territory and administration (porzione di territorio e azenda), and not be in proportion to the amount of taxation hitherto imposed. They appointed as their deputy Benedetto Gerbaldo (a name still borne by one of the most honoured families in the town), with

express instructions to him not to agree on their behalf if these conditions were not strictly adhered to. It is needless to quote the similar declarations of the other villages, or to follow the disputes which took place over the question of boundaries; Ventimiglia of course fighting hard to keep as much as possible under her own control, and the villages stoutly resisting; indeed it was not till 1693 that the last disputes were finally disposed of by an arbitrator's decision.

To the next date of importance reference has already been made. The Convention between the otto ville, regulating their mutual relations, was signed on the 20th April 1686 in the Oratory of Saint Bartholomew.

In this convention are indicated the various rules or *capitoli* for the government of the new community, and these provide for the election of four *sindaci* to form the executive. Their duties included, among others, the summoning and presiding over the Parliament, and the execution of its decrees, but they were not to vote in its deliberations. It was specially declared that

these officials were to be "persons of the greatest probity and capacity to be found in the place," as on them would depend very much the proper direction and administration of the Magnificent Community and the Magnificent Parliament.

This Parliament consisted of twenty-four members or deputies, elected annually in the proportion of six members for Camporosso, six for Bordighera, and six for each of the two valleys of Vallecrosia and Vallebona. This representation was at some later date reduced to twenty members, which is the number mentioned in a document of 1770. The meetings of the Parliament took place for periods of three years in each of the, at first three, and afterwards four, divisions in rotation, beginning with Camporosso. very wise provision with regard to the deliberations was that no measure was to be considered as passed unless it obtained the votes of four-fifths of the members.

One of the early proceedings of this new Parliament was the enactment of a law punishing what we should call petty offences with



Street in San Biaggio.

estimable severity. Some of its details may be interesting and perhaps instructive. For instance, gathering snails on another's land was to be punished with a fine of 4 lire if it took place during the day, and double that amount if it were done at night. For stealing vegetables the fine varied from 14 to 24 lire, not quite double, according as daylight or darkness were chosen for the evil deedthe exquisitely delicate distinction in the two cases being probably balanced between the superior attractiveness of the snails as a delicacy, and the rather more substantial character of the vegetables as solid food; the relative degrees of temptation being thus with nicety allowed for. Those who made tracks across cultivated land, or helped themselves to water which did not belong to them, were mulcted to the extent of 20 lire for each offence, whether they sinned by the light of the sun or by that of the moon.

Apart, however, from this general Parliament, these villages or *Luoghi* had each its own municipal or communal administration, with its elected officers, its *sindaci* and consuls

or councillors, its *cassiere* or treasurer, its *cancelliere* or secretary (who was sometimes a public notary at a fixed annual salary), and its separate system of accounts. It is interesting to note that, in general, each little Commune was known as a University, though the term has none of the educational associations with which we are familiar.

Camporosso, which had taken the lead in obtaining independence, seems to have taken the lead also in administrative ability and effort, for its code was afterwards taken as a model by some of the other places. Thus in 1703 permission was given to Bordighera to adopt the same Statutes as were in force at Camporosso.

The mode of forming these communal governments was briefly this, as laid down for Bordighera: On the first occasion a list or register of thirty or forty of the principal persons of the place was made out, care being taken that each individual was at least twenty-five years of age; that he had resided ten years in the place; and that he possessed property worth 500 lire. From these persons

six were to be publicly chosen by lot, the ballot being drawn per mano d'un fanciullo, the first two to be called Sindaci, and the remaining four Agenti. They were to hold office for one year; were obliged to swear that they would faithfully perform their duties; and they were to be served by a public notary, as clerk or secretary, at a salary of 45 lire a year,—this last office being held in turn by each of the notaries of the place, beginning with the eldest. At the same time a cassiere or treasurer was to be elected. He was to be a suitable person (idoneo), of buoni costumi (a somewhat elastic definition), and was to keep the accounts in a "separate book." Besides giving a suitable security for the proper performance of his duties, he was to be held responsible for the due collection of the various items of income; and in the words of the Statute he was to be held a scosso o non scosso, that is, he had to make good the amount whether he collected it or not. His salary was fixed at a commission of 2 per cent on the total amount passing through his hands. In Bordighera it was, we

learn, sometimes impossible to find a suitable individual to hold the office on these conditions, and a modification had to be sought for by giving him 3 per cent instead of 2, and making him hold office for two years.

In 1703 this difficulty of finding a treasurer was so great that a law was passed to the effect that for the future, after the election of the *Sindaci* and *Agenti*, a ballot should take place for the name of the *cassiere*, and that whoever was thus selected should be obliged to serve, or pay a penalty of 50 *lire*, half of which was to be given to the Church, the other half to the Commune.

Usually the taxes and other sources of income were farmed out annually to the highest bidder, and we shall find that the sale or letting usually took place on one or other of the principal Saints' days.

Every village had an oil-mill, some also a corn-mill, and occasionally the ownership of these was shared with private individuals.

Like many other undertakings begun with a considerable flourish of trumpets and the loud proclamation of virtuous intentions,

these little Councils soon began to follow the usual course of human affairs, and to be afflicted with the usual human defects. We have seen how the first election to the council took place, but a curious feature of its continuance was that each year the retiring councillors themselves elected their successors; they being, however, forbidden to elect persons of close blood-relationship, such as fathers, sons, brothers, etc. We can easily see how this system opened the door to many abuses, and ultimately these grew so serious that we find petitions presented to the supreme authority at Genoa praying for a remedy. Plain speaking was freely indulged in, and we have a copy of a document sent from Bordighera to the Senate, in which the abuse of power by the Agenti and Consoli is set forth in a way worth translating literally. It runs thus: "Indescribable are the grave injuries done to the Magnificent Community of Bordighera by the four Agents and two Consuls chosen by lot for the financial government of the same, by assuming the authority and right (or power?) to carry out useless

works and exorbitant expenditure for their own private advantage, and by giving extravagant orders to the Treasurer; not observing the orders of Your Most Serene Lordships and the Regulations of the Magnificent Community which prohibit the Agents and Consuls from any action (operation) unless the same is approved by the Magnificent Council of thirty-two members, going so far as even to hinder its meeting for the past four years, by means of their adherents; treating in this despotic manner all the properties and the income of the said Magnificent Community" (the torrent of denunciation goes on breathlessly without so much as a full stop) "but they pass them over in silence for their own ends, not even taking the trouble to have the previous account books signed by the Magnificent Captain of Ventimiglia as has always been done in this, and is done in the other Communities of the Capitanate." (At last we get a breathing space, and may wonder what the Magnificent Captain had been doing all this time, in not looking after his fee for



The Old Church, Vallecrosia, from the Stream.

auditing these accounts.) "From these irregularities there arise many others" (here we shall begin to find where some shoe is pinching), "and in particular in the quality and price of meat, about which the said Agents and Consuls shut their eyes, not without an advantage to themselves (!), but with great injury to the whole of the people, even as regards health." (It is curious that an extraordinary anxiety for the public welfare is always developed in those who want to suppress their political opponents.) "Seeing this, the new" (lit. modern) "Treasurer of the said Community, who signs the present petition, moved by zeal for the public welfare, has determined not to receive or to pay those orders which he knows to be exaggerated, given by the aforesaid Agents, and he dares alone, without the least hesitation, to appeal to your Most Serene Lordships as the pitying Prince, and Father of this young" (lit. pupil) "Community, making known the abovementioned irregularities that you may deign to take those steps which you may consider necessary for rooting them out, and providing

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against them for the future. Hoping to obtain this from you as only just, he makes a profound reverence to your Most Serene Lordships," etc. etc., and signs himself Joseph Nicholas Giribaldi.

Forwarded to Genoa, this passionate appeal was by the Senate duly referred to the district governor at San Remo, with instructions to examine into the affair and report. He came to Bordighera, was present at the election of new Agenti, to "the great satisfaction" of the people, but reports that the action of the authorities in regard to the meat question was the result of a determination to leave more liberty to the butchers, instead of forcibly fixing the prices they might charge, and this in the hope that a better class of meat would thereby be forthcoming. The result is authoritatively declared to have been very satisfactory, and advantageous to the population.

In some places the senior councillors were called *Priori*, and at Soldano the mode of their election was minutely prescribed. The names of the persons eligible were to be written on

slips of paper, call polisini, and these were to be put into a hat, a sort of electoral urn with which we are still familiar: "messi dette polisini in un capello e tiratti a sorte, i primi che usciranno fori sino (= siano) priori" —the first drawn were to be the priors. Later, when the system of representation had become more elaborate, part only of the councillors retired annually, and the mode of selecting these is also exactly formulated. The president is to place in an urn (we are not told whether a hat would serve) on his right hand, five pieces of paper with consecutive numbers on them, and in another urn on his left other five pieces of paper, upon two of which was written membro che esce, and on the remaining three, membro che sta. Then, commencing with the president, the members of the Council drew from the urn on the right, and, in the order of the numbers thus drawn, they afterwards drew from the urn on the left, and so learned their fate.

Not only did these wise people require that their representatives should be at least twenty-five years of age, but they were also

to be fori del dominio del padre, beyond the control of their fathers.

Another rule which might be usefully adopted to-day was that those who failed to attend a meeting of the Council were each to pay a fine of 10 soldi.

A curious matter which we shall have occasion to refer to later is mentioned in rule No. 8 of this series, which provides that the Councillors shall collect the various accounts due to the University; and "shall also receive the figs from those who have to repay them, and lend them at the proper times to those who need them, and hurry up those to whom they are lent, for the restitution, and divide in the most useful way, but" (here the natural suspicion creeps in) "in company with the other councillors, those which remain over."

Rule II provided that the communal lands were not to be sold unless all the six councillors were agreed on the subject, and that the money was not to be spent otherwise than in an investment at interest, or the individuals offending would be held

responsible to refund the amount themselves.

The property and papers of the Community were formally handed over by the retiring councillors to the newly-elected ones; sometimes with fulsome compliments to the former upon the honourable way in which their duties had been performed; and the list of articles consigned was duly entered on the Minutes. We may quote one of Soldano in 1692 as an example:—

"We consign to the new officers one large paper" (or book) "which serves for the tithes of the Rector, and one small paper" (or book) "for the *mestraria*, and one small paper, torn, two hinges" (or bars) "weighing 20 lbs. with two locks" (or fastenings) "with two new jars" (probably for oil) "and they promise to give us credit for the same."

The *mestraria* was the office connected with the sale of property belonging to the Commune, whether oil, wine, olives, figs, the use of the bakery, slaughter-house, etc., and the officers were called *i mestrali*.

San Biaggio in 1687 had more extensive

possessions to transfer: "We give them the books of the said University and other documents" (lit. writings), "that is to say, No. 24 which there are, and a box just as it is, in which the documents go. With a key in it, and 3 receipts had from the *Sindaci* of Camporosso and Vallecrosia; and the *Cassa*" (that is, the Municipio or Town Hall) "and the oven, and the oil-mill, and the cash-in-hand  $f_{\bullet}$  I I: 5:0."

The salaries of these officers were not very high. Soldano accounts mention the secretary's salary as 4 lire a year, but this official must not be confounded with the notary to whom reference has been made. An entry of 1663 says: "Also paid to maestro Giovanni for the past year of 1662, for having written in the book, and [done] other things for the University, £4:0:0." And on another and earlier occasion, 1652: "Also given to maestro Giovanni for three years that he has helped in writing, £14:0:0." It

<sup>1</sup> The sign "£" in all these accounts indicates the Italian Lira, not the pound sterling, and the above entry reads: 11 lire, 5 soldi, o denari, say, roughly speaking, about ten shillings.

must be remembered that writing was not a universal accomplishment in those days.

The usciere, usher or bailiff, another official, was treated even more generously still—perhaps his duties were more disagreeable—for there is an entry in the books of San Biaggio fixing his salary at 12 lire per year, with the remark that in the past it had been exceedingly slight.

The officers of weights and measures had a fee of 2 *lire*, for their annual examination.

These little villages drew their income from many and various sources. Some of the communal lands were let for grazing purposes, and in Bordighera there is a copy of an old document which complains to the authorities that injury is done to the interests of the Commune by the many and vexatious accusations made against the graziers and shepherds about damage done to cultivated lands. (We have noted that even now lands are not usually enclosed with any completeness in the country places.) The petitioners (who were evidently interested in the speculation) beg that only very clear and definite accusa-

tions shall be allowed, and that these must be made within a limited period. Their prayer was granted. In some parts these rights of letting the grazing over communal lands are still the property of private individuals, who make a very fair income from the same.

It is not difficult to see how lands can have come into the possession of the Community, quite independently of the vast boschi or forests which were public property, because from an early date the authorities were in the habit of lending the public money at interest, and it was frequently secured upon land; indeed the technical term dazione in paga is one quite usually met with in some parts. It was of course neither more nor less than our system of mortgage in another shape, but it took the form of a sale of the property to the authorities with the right of redemption within a stated period, and is still practised.

The old account books are full of the entries of *censi* or *sensi maturati* (interest fallen due); frequently the amount of the capital lent and the land by which it is guaran-



Sasso. Corner of the Piazza.



teed are also mentioned; and sometimes small payments on account were accepted.

The next item is rather curious: "Giovanni Conte, son of Michaele, owes for the balance of past interest 3 lire which were forgotten in the accounts made . . . f.3:0:0."

Other important items of income were the rents for the *forno* (bakery), and the *macello* (slaughter - house and butcher's shop combined). These were let annually—generally on some great festa such as Palm Sunday—at a rent fixed by a sort of public auction. It varied considerably, from 6 or 7 lire in some places, to as much as 100 in others.

In 1666 Soldano let its forno to Paul

<sup>1</sup> Canevaire = cane-growing land.

Amalberto for the year at the modest sum of 9 lire 10 soldi, con pato però, "with the understanding, however, that the bread which shall be burnt through his negligence he must pay for." In 1673 Vallecrosia let its forno for two years at 100 lire per year, and with more elaborate stipulations. The forner or baker was bound to light the fire each time that there was brought a batch of 200 loaves, that is 20 shares of 10 loaves each. Anyhow the oven was to be available for public use four days each week, and, if the bread was not properly baked, it was to be submitted to the judgment of two qualified persons of the place, and the baker was to pay the damage.

To avoid disputes and the possibility of sharp practice among these estimable villagers, such as going off with another person's share, it was expressly provided that at the time of distribution "no woman or other person" was to leave the place with the bread till all had been served. In order also that every one might have due opportunity of using the forno, the baker was authorised to settle with

his customers beforehand on which days their bread should be baked.

Home-made bread is still largely used in these villages, and crowds of chattering women hang about the doors on baking days, or sit round in the dark shadows as they did hundreds of years ago.

At San Biaggio there is still extant a certificate—dated 23rd October 1682—given by an expert who, at the request of the authorities, had examined the *forno*, and declared that he had found it in a perfect condition for baking bread. This certificate cost the Council 10 *soldi*. As a speculation the communal *forno* could have produced very little, as it was continually in need of repairs which must often have cost more than the year's rent, but it was necessary for the public benefit, and so had to be kept up.

In the present day meat is quite sparingly consumed by the peasants, but in the times of which we are treating there was at least a determination on the part of the authorities that there should be a regular supply. The public *macello* was, as we have said, the

property of the Commune, and was let yearly to the highest bidder. No one except the holder of this macello was allowed to kill animals for the sale of the meat, but various restrictions, some of them curious, were imposed on the monopolist butchers. They were bound to keep their shop open with a due supply of meat from Saturday till Sunday morning, but on the following days were not obliged to serve any one who wanted less than a whole quarter. They were not allowed to bring from a distance any dead meat except beef, all other animals having to be slaughtered on the spot. Goat's flesh and beef were to be provided in a sufficient supply from the Saturday before Easter till the Saturday before Whitsuntide, and the price was fixed at 2 soldi and 8 denari per lb. Other kinds of meat were allowed till the feast of S. Bernardo in August, and thence till Carnival a supply of mutton had to be kept up, the price being the same. The heads of the animals were to be calculated as equal to 2 lbs. of meat, and the "lights" to I lb. These conditions are taken from a contract made in Vallecrosia in

1659, and for its due execution there were two sureties, who promised that if the butchers failed in providing the necessary meat, they themselves would make good the deficiency, or incur the same penalty.

It seems a little hard that after such stringent conditions there should still be another binding the butchers to pay any tax on meat which the Commune might see fit to impose.

By 1786 the price of meat had risen. Mutton and beef of the district cost 4 soldi per lb., and beef of Piemonte 4 soldi, 8 denari. Veal cost 5 soldi per lb., and the butchers were obliged to amassare (slaughter) eight animals every week, under a penalty of 1 scudo di francia for every offence.

Beside other items, such as the rent of lands for cultivation of vineyards or olive groves, even such a small matter as the scavenging of the place was made a source of income, and the *rumenta dela piasa* was let at 1 *lira*, 4 *soldi* for a year. The overflow from the public fountain was also carefully disposed of for the benefit of the communal funds.

Some of the contributions being paid in kind, these were afterwards disposed of, and the amounts duly entered, as at Soldano, 1653:—

Oil being one of the staple products of most villages hereabout, it is not surprising that one of the taxes took the form of a contribution of 4 per cent of all the oil made. The municipal office or town hall possessed a masaguin (magazzino) or store, where were kept the giarre (jars) of oil, to which some reference has already been made. The oil, like the olives, was sold by the rubo, a measure of 8 litres, and in the early seventeenth century was worth 3 lire the rubo.

Those who have explored the Vallecrosia valley will have noticed the large number of fig-trees still remaining, and, in former times, figs formed a considerable part of the wealth not only of the people themselves but of the municipality. They were dried and stored, and one of the most curious and interesting



Sasso, from the Vallebona Read.

of the old customs is recorded in, for instance, the documents of Soldano. A separate account was kept for this department, and it was known as "The Book of the Figs." In order, probably, to facilitate business operations at sale times the municipal stores of figs were annually lent to private individuals, recorded in the register, and repaid subsequently. The measure used was a carta or quarta, a measure still recognised, and equal to a doppio decalitro. The value, which must of course be considered as the wholesale, not the retail, price, was about 28 or 30 soldi per carta, and the measure was divisible into 4 moturali.

On one occasion an act of charity—not unlike many of those perpetrated to-day—is noted in the accounts of 1610, on the 31st of January. A resolution of the Council ordered the *priori* "that the old figs which are in the magazine must be given away in charity"—being no longer of any use. History repeats itself indeed! We find many who are very liberal with their "old figs" and other useless rubbish, though chary enough of favours involving some self-sacrifice.

We have already said that the accounts were kept casually, and one of the books which came under observation seems to have had no regard paid to the natural sequence of the pages, but to have been used just where it happened to open. We have seen that the secretary's salary was modestissimo, and his work was certainly not extensive, the year's accounts seldom occupying more than a couple of pages; but while the calligraphy is illformed, the orthography elementary, and the task of deciphering the abbreviated notes none too easy, there is a subtle and indescribable fascination in handling these stained and yellow pages, with their faded records and their hushed voices of a long-forgotten past. We seem to see before us the living figures of the men who wrote, and to read between the lines of their brief laconic entries some details of the lives they lived, and the scenes in which they moved. Hidden behind the mere bald record of a payment or receipt, a repair to town gates when the enemy was near, or the gift of a pot of oil to the priest for the lamps of the sanctuary, there is a

whole picture of the labour and the struggles, the pain and the devotion, that filled up with their stern realities the palpitating existences of these little village homes.

Let us turn then, for instance, to an account book of San Biaggio, dated just three hundred years back, and we shall see how the new priori or chief councillors Antonio Morinaro and Giovanni Maccario-names still familiar among the families of to-day—received from their predecessors of 1596 the cash balance of their administration in the sum of 24 lire. Small figures these compared with our municipal and provincial loans of millions, and taxation on a heroic scale! But these villagers of San Biaggio had learned to take care of the pence as well as the pounds, and the very next entry is that of poor Maria Maccario's modest payment of 2 soldi for her little "measure of oil." Was she a widow. we may wonder, like another we have read of, and did the rich ones of her native place, or at least her more fortunate neighbours, out of pity for her poverty take care to replenish as might be necessary this little cruse when it

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began to fail? Then a good *Bartolomeo* paid 2 *lire* 12 *soldi* for the balance of the figs he had borrowed, *et cosi a canselato*, and so he cancelled his debt. Let us hope that his speculation had been a good one, and brought him the means to fill hungry little mouths at home.

Afterwards we find Master Luca Croesio—one of the rich men of the place, and part owner of the communal oil-mill, but masterful and overbearing like too many fortunate ones elsewhere—paying proudly his 61 lire 7 soldi and 10 denari for his share of figs,—a merchant-prince's share compared with those of his neighbours, but why did he not knock off the soldi and denari to make even money? It is usually only the poor man who pays "the uttermost farthing."

Then comes along poor *Bernardo* with his 12 soldi for figue veglie, some old figs, all he could afford to buy. Next there is *Pietro Maccario*, who had evidently seen bad times in his business, perhaps had been boycotted by some of the malicious and narrow-minded people of the place, and so was behindhand with his rent, but he loyally paid up, when he

was able, his 6 lire 4 soldi for the use of the communal oven some three years before.

Let us now look on the other page and see how the public money was spent:—

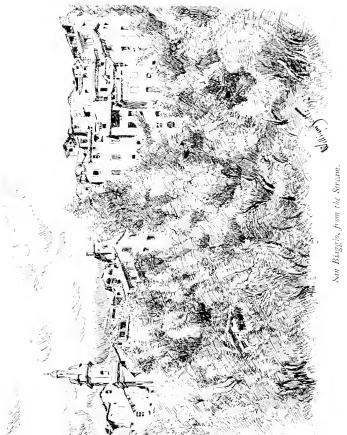
Antonio Morinaro had worked nove giornate, not a nine-days wonder, but the hard labour of carrying bariloti of oil, and so they gave him, et cosi per sue giornate se dato, 11 lire 8 soldi; not high wages these, but up to the average of the times.

And then there was given to Luigi Maccario for going all the way to Vallebona about an instrument (that is, a document) regarding the vineyard—2 soldi, while I lira was expended in buying two books in which the Community might scrive li debitori—write down the names of its debtors. Master Luke Croesio, evidently a keen business man, comes in also on this side of the account, for he receives a payment of 20 lire in connection with some land belonging to the village; and he being, as we have said, half owner of the oil-mill, had carried out certain repairs, and now presented his liste or bills to the authorities, who refunded to him one half, namely

7 lire 13 soldi, as their share. On another and similar occasion, the payment seems to have been made with some unwillingness, and a suspicion that everything was not quite as "straight" as it ought to have been, for the entry of the money is accompanied by the remark, "which he says he has spent." However, as usual, Nature's law held good, "To him that hath shall be given," and Master Luke got his money; but the remainder of the proverb is curiously exemplified by another entry stating that a poor widow, whose husband had been security for two other men, pays into the treasury on their behalf 7 lire 10 soldi,—perhaps a large share of the little all that was left her.

At least we can see that if Godliness were abundantly provided for by mending the parish church, and regularly supplying oil for the lamps, its next-door virtue Cleanliness was not altogether neglected, for we have an entry:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> It is only fair to add that, so far, this item has only been found once in accounts extending over three hundred years.





A very curious entry, unique as far as our experience goes, and very interesting to those who are fond of research into the history of old habits and customs, is the one which says:—

Dato alla gioventura per l'arboro di magio (given to the young people for the May-pole) . I lira 8 soldi

There was a yearly audit of accounts by the Commissioner or Capitano at Ventimiglia, and this official received a usual fee of 2 *lire* from most of the villages for his trouble, but Vallecrosia had the questionable distinction of paying twice as much, on account of its reputation for greater prosperity—as we may have occasion to explain later.

Items which did not meet with the Captain's approval were unhesitatingly struck out, and the Councillors were ordered to refund the money from their own pockets. There may have been "fudging" of the County Council's accounts even in those days, especially in the "Works Department," for when in 1633 Vallecrosia charged a variety of items to the repairs of the Bakery, the auditor wrote in

the margin, against an entry of so many days' work, his peremptory declaration non ve sono state le de giornate—"there have not been the said days' [work]"—followed by his initials P.G.N., and, farther on, where the authorities claimed to have paid to Peter Somebody a certain amount, the auditor writes: "Nothing whatever has been paid to the said Peter."

Doubtless one political party (if there was such a thing in Vallecrosia at that date) will have lauded the Commissioner for his uprightness in denouncing a flagrant and dishonest waste of public money, - righteous indignation is a cheap commodity in public matters, though often expensive and difficult to arouse in private life,—but the other party will have seen only the deep-laid plot of a corrupt official, or, shall we say, a delicate hint that the Captain would not object to share any plunder. Some light is thrown on such matters by entries of a few years later at Soldano. We are still examining the unhappy times when Home Rule had not been granted to the villages, and Ventimiglia

was very jealous of her sovereign authority. The tyranny and oppression of the ruling caste had driven the people to protest, and as we have already seen, an appeal was sent to Genoa. The expenses of the messenger—there was no cheap postage then—were divided between the various Communes, and Soldano account book for 1654 has a very quaint entry:—

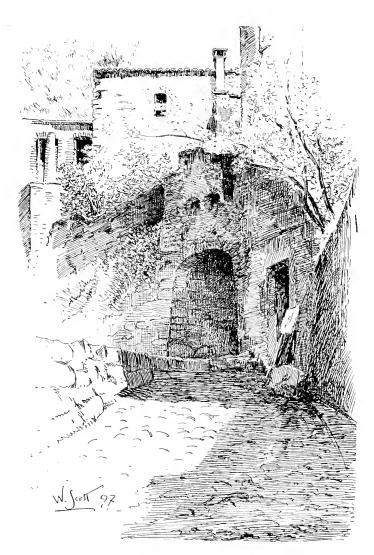
p avere mantolevile un homo a genoa con suprique da il Senato cenerisimo p nostra parte (the towns having sent a man to Genoa with a petition to the Most Serene Senate, for our share). £3 0 0

At the next annual audit, the indignant official pounced upon this specimen of turbulent audacity, and his note on the occasion strikes out the offending item, ordering the new Councillors to insist upon the old ones refunding the money, or to repay it themselves. This "minion of a hated Tyranny"—to quote the phraseology of modern agitation—deserves to have his name immortalised. He called himself *Paul Jerome Dargagli*. In the following year the coun-

cillors found another trifling item disallowed—just to keep up a show of authority—but they had learned wisdom by experience, and we may, without too much indiscretion, pry into the secret. The accounts contained this entry, duly approved:—

The Captain's severity on a former occasion may have been provoked by the Consul's forgetfulness; for on looking back to an earlier account of 1627 we have entries of—

In 1673 Vallecrosia neglected to obey the orders of the Most Illustrious Captain with regard to the supply of mattresses for the soldiers, and the result was a fine of 100 lire. There were apparently no funds in hand to



Entrance Gaterway, Vallebona.

meet such a large amount, so the Councillors borrowed the money from one of their number, a certain Master Francesco, upon the security of their own private properties, and at the rate of 5 per cent. The expedient was to be only a temporary one, for less than a month later the minutes of the Council record the letting of the Forno-already mentioned—at the very exceptional rent of 100 lire a year for two years, the first instalment to be paid within eight days, and the second on the ensuing feast of S. Andrew. The minutes conclude with a pathetic note to the effect that the rent is required so quickly because the University finds itself under an obligation to satisfy its creditors, or rather, as the poor secretary in the fulness of his heart has curiously written, "satisfy its debtors"; and the 200 lire of rent are to be disbursed, part in matters of urgent necessity, and part to pay off the Master Francesco to whom reference has been made.

No one who possesses a reasonable acquaintance with ecclesiastical history, especially as regards Italy, will be surprised to find

that the Church, under its material as well as its spiritual forms, occupies a very considerable place in these old records. Among the very earliest items is the frequently recurring note of oil given to the parish priest for the church lamps,—about five or six *rubi* a year,—and there are frequent accounts for repairing the fabric, and sometimes the priest's house.

A Soldano account-book notes, with more brevity than reverence, that a deposit of 15 lire had been given to a workman "for whitewashing the Madonna," and we are left to find out from later entries that a church dedicated to Our Lady was intended. Surely it is a rather unusual thing to find, as at San Biaggio towards the close of the last century, that a priest became part owner, with the authorities, of the communal oil-mill, at the sum of 290 lire 10 soldi, he being the highest bidder.

About that time it was necessary for a priest to hold a certificate of citizenship (fede di civismo) in order that he might preach; but, in return, the preachers seem to have

been particularly well paid, 60 *lire* being expended by the Commune for one man's course of Lenten sermons.

The Bishop's Confirmation visit in 1660 cost 36 lire; and among the most amusing and interesting accounts are some of those relating to Episcopal visitations. We may take a fairly representative instance from the books of 1598, when the priest of Seborga came down to San Biaggio, and we may quote the entry as it stands:—

£ I	9	0
0	ı 8	0
0	I 2	0
£2	6	0
0	3	0
0	2	4
0	2	0
0	2	0
	0 0 £2 0	

The old popolani evidently treated their

priests well, and these were not above following the injunction of the Apostle of the Gentiles; for this same Batista, who, as we have seen, had the honour of entertaining his spiritual pastor, was afterwards paid for a day's work in going to Ventimiglia "about the wine for the priest, 8 soldi."

Let us now look at a more detailed account of some festivities, this time at Vallecrosia, when the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Don Lorenzo Gavotti, Bishop of Ventimiglia, was entertained by the parish on the 4th of May 1637. No need to waste words in a minute description of the ceremony. The list of articles purchased for the occasion is full of a simple eloquence, and we have only to read between the lines, and so fill in the rest of the picture for ourselves.

Thus runs the communal account :--

For	expenses	incur	red by	Signo	or Seco	ondino	э,			
	the othe	r cons	sul, fo	r salt	chees	e, 3 ll	bs. ,	ζo	15	0
For	fresh che	eese, 2	$rac{1}{2}$ lbs	. at 8	soldi	the lb	٠.	I	II	6
For	2 lbs. of	fat b	eef					3	17	0
For	pepper							0	6	0
For	garlic							0	10	0

Pignoli .			•	•	•		£٥	4	0
Cloves .							0	6	0
Sugar .	•						I	0	0
4 pounds a	and $rac{1}{2}$ of	Fie	<i>delle</i> (sr	nall p	<i>aste</i> si	ıch			
as are	used to	o-da	y).				I	8	0
Bacon fat							0	6	0
To a woma	an for ca	rryi	ing the	se thi	ngs fr	om			
Venti	miglia						0	3	0
For cleaning	ng the k	titcl	nen				0	4	0
For a kid s	sent for	to	Perina	ldo, t	yan	ıan			
on pu	rpose						3	18	0
For 9 lbs.	of goat'	s m	eat				0	I 3	0
One fowl							I	6	0
3 dozen eg	ggs at 8	den	<i>ari</i> eac	h.			I	4	0
For bread							4	2	0
For a won	nan						0	4	0
For cuttin	g slices						0	10	0
For a fowl							I	0	0
For bread	•						0	16	0
For more	bread			•			0	18	0
For bread	•						0	16	0
For meat							0	9	0
For a won	nan						0	3	0
For two r	icotti						0	10	0
For 28 eg	gs .						0	19	8
For ricotto							0	6	0
For liver							0	2	0
For a fow	l.						I	С	0
For peas							0	IO	0
For artich	okes an	d sa	lad				0	15	0
								-	

For wine given to those of Vallecrosia for carrying Monsignor's things . . Lo 8 4

More wine for the family—six amole at the rate of 32 denari per amola . o 16 0

This is interesting as indicating the cost of wine at that time.

More in sorrow than in anger we may pass over the next items which hint delicately at a less amiable side of human nature, and show that then as now the refining and elevating influences of a generous and nobleminded priest's ministrations were sometimes insufficient to preserve order among the congregation, and it was considered necessary to have guardie da Bordighera — policemen or carabineers from Bordighera — at the church doors, lest any one should misbehave himself; and a quite disproportionate number of lire were dedicated to the purpose.

So far the first consul; but his companion had to take a share of the responsibility and labour; so the account continues:—

Expenses incurred by Peter, the other Consul, at the said visit:—

For a barrel of wine . . . £3 16 0



Street in Vallecrosia (" sotte le crotte").

For more wi	ne						£I	8	0
For meat							I	16	0
For cloves							0	3	0
For spices							0	3	0
For artichok	es						I	0	0
For dried fig	S						0	7	0
For meat				•			I	15	0
For candles							0	16	0
For eggs							0	16	0
Ricotto							I	0	0
For oil .							0	8	0
For firewood							0	16	0
For almonds	and		- (the	word	is in	de-			
cipheral	ole—	shall	we sa	ay rai	sins ?)		0	ΙO	0
Then la	ıst,	but	not l	east	:				
The cook's b	ill						£6	10	0

The whole of this splendid repast being thus provided for about 60 *lire*, we get an insight into the character of a feast in those days.

It must be admitted, however, that sometimes these Monsignori succeeded in exhausting the patience of their devoted adherents. A *festa* was in anticipation; people were anxiously awaiting the arrival of their prelate; the hours pass wearily, and the councillors are

in despair; so a messenger is despatched to inquire with a certain peremptoriness whether Monsignor is coming or not. The pent-up irritation of the good secretary finds vent in his curt entry: p vedere se Monsignor venisse o si ho no, per avisar lo puopolo, 2 soldi. All must have finished well, for the bells were rung, at all events. No! to be accurate, the bell was "beaten"—at a cost of 2 soldi. The next item entered must be mentioned with bated breath, but there is something irresistibly amusing in its silent tribute to the weakness of human nature. It reads: "Also given to the Chaplain of the Most Reverend Monsignore, 8 soldi." Fancy a bishop's chaplain quietly pocketing a tip of fourpence when his master's back was turned!

The expenses of these Episcopal visitations seem to have become unduly extravagant, and a burden on the people, for a decree of the Senate at Genoa, dated 10th May 1696, expressly forbids that on the occasion of a visit from any Bishop, Archbishop, Prelate, or Superior of a religious confraternity of any

kind, the people of "our" jurisdiction shall be charged with, or shall pay for, the expenses of the said visit.

But even these old papers have their notes of pathos as well as of rejoicing; and there is still extant a copy of a letter sent to the bishop of the diocese during a period of public sorrow. It reads thus: "It is now two months that we have always continued to use the prayer prescribed by your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship, that God in His infinite mercy would deign to preserve us from the contagious disease of Cholera Morbus. Now this Parish Church has become almost entirely unprovided with candles, and has no funds with which to meet expenses, so as to be able to continue such a pious exercise; and therefore we have emboldened ourselves to appeal to Your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship, humbly supplicating you to consent to suspend the aforesaid prayer." Poor worshippers! It was hard enough to live in constant dread of the cholera, but to be reduced to giving up prayers for deliverance for want of candles to pray by, and be

G

compelled to ask his Lordship's permission before even that could be done, was an excessive accumulation of *malore*.

Let us turn to a more lively subject. Some documents still existing in Bordighera throw a curious light upon former ways of thinking. It appears that in those times, according to the rules of the Church, the *sponsali* or marriage ceremonies were to take place in the house of the abbot or priest; it is distinctly so stated in a document of 1656, with this proviso, that if the *sposi*, the bride and bridegroom, were unwilling to go to the abbot's residence, then the *sponsali* were to take place in the *Parrocchia* or parish church.

More than this, it appears that the usual custom was to present the priest with a fogaccia or cake, as his fee for the ceremony, but the document just referred to has this important declaration: "If any one does not wish to offer the cake, the said offering is understood to be fulfilled by the payment of 10 soldi."

It would be interesting to trace the connection between this offering of a cake to

the priest, and the modern custom of eating the wedding cake at home, and inviting the parson to come and take his share.

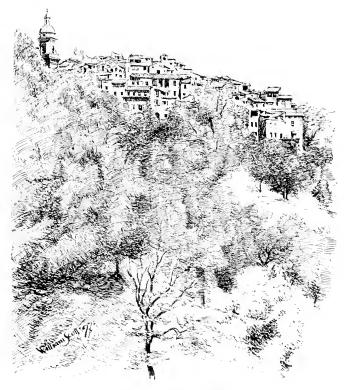
In those days we are speaking of there were, as now, priests unfaithful to their high vocation; men who used the position assigned to them to further their own selfish ends. Not too rarely we find petitions and protests sent by the Town Councillors to the Bishops of the Diocese complaining of abuses or misdemeanours.

In 1699 the Bordighera officials forwarded to the Bishop at Ventimiglia some serious accusations against their parish priest. He is said "not to observe the measure and value of the tithes settled by the Episcopal Court, but" (quoting quite literally) "he forms the measure in his own way, and raises the price above what is usual."

The artfulness of this priest was such that he had the measure for grain made larger at the top than at the bottom, so that while nominally holding the same amount the broader superficies would allow of a larger heaping up outside.

Though he is obliged to celebrate the Mass on festivals without elemosina, yet he has talvolta riscossa dalli Priori di qualche Capella, in fact, sometimes "bagged" the offertory. Though he is bound to perform the rite of matrimony prendendo una fugaccia o dieci soldi, accepting a cake or ten soldi, egli ne pretende venti, he claims twenty soldi; and, as if to add insult to injury in the case of impatient lovers, "very often he puts off the function for several days, just as it may seem fit to him." Not content with the two candles he is authorised to exact at the burial service, he pretends to have a right to six.

Let us hope that the good bishop had the moral courage to put an end to such unworthy behaviour on the part of the priest, and did not refuse to interfere in the dispute, or advise his petitioners to let the matter drop. He seems to have been a man of sufficiently masculine calibre, for at all events there is a document of the same year—1699—most likely subsequent to and in consequence of the petition just mentioned, which is in the form of a



San Biaggio, from the West.



decree settling the exact rights and duties of priest and people upon the points raised by the petitioners, and upon some others of importance; which seems to show that he dared to support the right even against personal pressure, and did not seek to hide himself behind a miserable subterfuge for the sake of protecting an errant priest. The decree prescribes that the *barilotto* or measure for wine, and the *moturale* or measure for grain, are to be deposited with the Secretary of the Commune; and—an important detail—the measures are to be given, not heaped up, but levelled off.

An inventory of parish property is to be made every four years.

The fee for marriage is not to be more than 10 soldi in place of the fogaccia.

The Abbot is to provide a *Chierico* (that is, a cleric who has the first tonsure but has not yet reached the higher orders) "for ringing the bells and doing other necessary things," but the University is to provide his *tunica talare* and *cotta*, and the Abbot is bound to present the man of his choice within

eight days, so that the secular authorities may be able to furnish the vestments. Then follow detailed instructions with regard to certain litanies, masses for the dead, and so forth.

Those who are interested in the much discussed question of the proper relations between the Church and the Stage (at all events as regards "private theatricals") may like to know that the oratory which stands in the centre of Camporosso was used for the purpose of sacred plays even till the early part of the present century. So was another church of the district, that of Seborga, and on one occasion some difficulties arose between the shepherd and his flock, which led to disastrous consequences.

The story is told so effectively by the persons most interested, in their letter to the Bishop of Nice under whose jurisdiction Seborga was held, that one cannot do better than quote it at some length. After declaring that the parish priest had suddenly abandoned his charge, and will probably, in order to excuse his departure, have spoken ill

of this population of Seborga, the secretary goes on :—

"This population had a strong desire to see, during the past Carnival, the Passion of our Divine Redeemer represented in our Parish Church, the only place adapted for such a spectacle, and therefore many of the inhabitants requested permission from the Rev. Parroco (parish priest).

"Some time after, he, having obtained a license from your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship, yielded to their wishes, on condition that they did not have in the place the usual Carnival balls. Everything went on with the utmost decency and quiet, but on the evening of the 7th inst. some peasant having played a drum, and another an ill-tuned violin, some youths met together in a private house, and amused themselves for an hour or two by dancing. This fact furnished an excuse to the Rev Parroco for announcing to the public that on the first Sunday of Quadragesima he would no more allow the representation of the mysteries of the Most Holy Passion of our Lord; on

this account many of these inhabitants conjured him, and humbly begged him to recede from his idea, furnishing him with most convincing arguments. Not only was he immovable in refusing permission, but, to the surprise of every one, on Sunday the 12th inst he announced from the altar that he had determined to abandon us, in order to leave the field open for the people to do what they wished. The population, and we as Communal administrators, could not be persuaded that without just reason the Rev. Parroco would carry into execution such a project; but as it has pleased him to depart from our Commune, it only remains for us to beg your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship to inform us of the accusations he may have made to the discredit of this people, in order that we may justify it entirely; and at the same time to provide us with a parroco who to wisdom shall unite also good sense, and the virtues which should shine in the Priests of the Lord."

If we turn back from ecclesiastical to communal matters it is easy to trace points

of interest in connection with the special characteristics of the little towns themselves. The necessity for defence against invasion, and the obligation to contribute soldiers to the army of the Genoese Republic, explain many of the entries in the old account-books, and the contents of a large number of con-And when the temporary documents. fortunes of war had placed this district under the rule of France a century ago, the troubles of a subject race may be clearly traced in the records of the time. Long before that period, for instance in 1672, the realities of war were drawing closer to the little villages, and the Illustrissimo Capitano of Ventimiglia, or the "Commandant of the Valley," or the "Officer of War," ordered the walls and gates of Soldano to be repaired. There was no money available for the work, so "with the consent of two-thirds of the place," a loan of 100 lire was contracted. Gunpowder was bought to the value of 25 lire 10 soldi, and 9 lbs. of balls. This was not sufficient, and a distribution of ammunition took place at a further cost of 25 lire 9 soldi

8 denari, with this deliciously quaint little note: "Distributed as may be seen in the Book of the Figs, where are written those who have taken it." The explanation is that the Book of the Figs, to which reference has already been made, was found a convenient register in which to enter each man's share of powder and shot. This book is still in existence, and we may stay to quote one of the entries: "... given one pound of powder and one of balls to Gregorio Molinari; and also to Filippo Conte, son of Antonio, given one pound of powder and a pound of balls, on going to Castel Franco."

There are several little notes of bom-bagio, probably cotton to make wads, given to the soldiers, and sick soldiers were supplied with lensoli (sheets) at a cost of 12 lire. San Biaggio even went to the considerable expense of 23 lire for a tanburo da guerra (war-drum), and the man who fetched it from Ventimiglia got 2 soldi for his trouble.

The soldiers were favourites in those days, as now, and among the quaint entries in the

At one time an order was given by the military authorities to the municipal ones to produce an account of all the available arms in the place; and the report, after saying that the order has been published, goes on to say: "Yet only 22 shot guns, 2 swords, and 8 bayonets have been denounced. We give notice, however, that among the said guns 13 are in a state to be made use of, the others are useless. Here our Municipality keeps 14, which in order that they may be made use of must be repaired, otherwise these also would be useless."

Even under the rule of the Republic, military service was enforced with some severity. In 1799 Francesco Moreno, Adjutant of the 5th Battalion, writes from Bordighera to San Biaggio, and protests that he has not yet seen the arrival of a contingent

he had ordered to be furnished by that place, but only one "citizen" had turned up, and he a man of thirty-nine years of age, according to his own statement. He calls attention to the fact that the intention and orders of the Government are to send into the field only men of not over 30, and not "povertystricken ones." He concludes that the authorities have been showing partiality in their selection, and reproves them for the same. He goes on to say that he is hourly expecting a force of 50 armed men, who will ruthlessly quartered on the offending Councillors personally, unless the proper number of conscripts is at once forthcoming. He adds: "I beg you not to cause that these armed people be sent to your Commune, for they have most rigorous orders which might make people weep," and he gives the authorities till noon of the following day for the despatch of their 10 men.

It is curious that, though all these documents of the Italian Republic are headed with the words Liberty and Equality, unlike the French ones they never have the word



Street in San Biaggio.



## Otto Luoghi di Ventimiglia

Fraternity, which only occasionally comes in with the signature at the end.

Another of the unpleasant realities of war is brought to our notice by a receipt for 1200 lire, being the share which San Biaggio had to pay towards the "forced loan" of 20,000 francs which General Massena imposed on the district in the year 1800.

Previous to this, a peremptory order had been issued by the Republic that the gold and silver vessels from the churches were to be catalogued and taken to Ventimiglia, to be turned into cash for the needs of the Government. It must have been but small consolation to the poor Priest Rebaudo, who was deputed to the melancholy office of carrying the sacred vessels to the spoilers, that he was entered in the minutes of the Communal Assembly with the noble title of "citizen."

In spite of its pathetic character there is something unquestionably humorous in a petition from a company of the Republic's "citizen" soldiers, asking for nothing less than a holiday of fifteen days to rest and recruit after the fatigues they had undergone in one

of their marches. They reported that after four hours of marching they had been overtaken by a terrible storm, with a deluge of rain, and they had to put up with it, as there was no shelter to be had; and they had passed the whole night on the mountain, wet through, exposed to the storm, with horrible cold, on the bare ground, without bread, wine, and water. (One would have thought they need not have lamented the absence of water with all that rain about.) On this morning, after another four hours' march, they arrived at the village, fasting since the previous morning, very much knocked up (strappassati) by the journey, and the inconveniences they had suffered.

This document is signed by the Captain and a Lieutenant.

Having noted the mention of two classes of professional men, the priests and the soldiers, it is only fair to see what history says about the doctors. There are not many entries which mention them, but these few are suggestive. Perhaps, as a class, their professional pride had not reached its present

## Otto Luoghi di Ventimiglia

pitch of exclusiveness, and their tradesunionism was less effectively organised; anyhow their modesty must have been great, for they gave advice at a much lower rate than their descendants would undertake to cure us for. Under date of 1614 there is an entry at San Biaggio to this effect: "And first, for advice from the doctor, spent 4 soldi." Here the modesty seems almost excessive; 4 soldi for a doctor's advice, when a parson got 10 soldi for a simple marriage ceremony! But then the parson's work at least was lasting, indeed could not be undone; while the doctor's might have to be repeated, if not revised.

There is another mysterious entry, of about the same date, which may well exercise our ingenuity. It is on the income side of the ledger, and, translated quite literally, reads thus:—

"Received from francesco amarberto for the balance of a carta of figs, 8 soldi, and these octo soldi have been spent in so many eggs as a present to the doctor."

At least the doctors of those days made themselves generally useful, and gave advice

right and left on all sorts of subjects; in proof of which assertion we may quote verbatim an entry in one of these old documents:—

"Given to the doctor for advice about the barrels (!), how they may be repaired, 4 soldi."

But dark days dawned for Bordighera. She had trouble with her doctors even in those early times, and we have a solemn report of the Governor of San Remo to the effect that the finances of Bordighera were so bad in 1745 that it was necessary to dismiss the doctor, and for five whole years the place did without one; but in 1750 the population "was oppressed by a sort of influenza, and thus those who were not very well off, not being able to go to the expense of getting a doctor from Ventiniglia—still less the very poor—they were obliged to perish without assistance." On this account the authorities set themselves to study a way of providing for a Medico, with a suitable salary, and they hit upon the expedient of letting out a monopoly in wine-retailing to six shops of the place.

We have looked at records of the "cure of souls," and have seen how the priests

## Otto Luoghi di Ventimiglia

sometimes abused their rights; we have learned what the cure of bodies, or at least of barrels, used to cost, and how the public money was spent in eggs for the benefit of the doctors; let us now look at the "cure of manners," a much more delicate question, and we shall find an unmistakable resemblance to certain habits of our own day, in pursuance of which not a few pious people are so anxious to have something "naughty" to think of and talk about, that when there is nothing real they will suspect something instead, and dwell upon the same persistently. A document still to be seen at San Biaggio states that before the Mayor, Clemente Molinari, who was also a police-officer, there had been summoned a poor widow woman named Paola Biamonte, with her daughter Bibiana, who was still unmarried, and they were charged with having allowed the frequent visits of a young man, also named Biamonte, and also unmarried; in consequence of which there might happen un qualche inconveniente. No doubt the young man was honestly paying court to the girl,

97

Н

but his parents objected, and so induced the authorities to take these high-handed proceedings. The result was that the poor creatures were made to promise that they would never receive the young man into their house again. Not being able to write, each made the sign of the Cross, and the Mayor appended his signature as witness.

On another occasion a girl of seventeen wanted to get married, but was unable to do so, as her father was not at home to give his permission; so, to facilitate matters, the communal authorities gave her a certificate that he had been absent from the place for fifteen years.

Here and there among these old papers are some of a merely private interest; and one is a sad letter from a husband and father, compelled to live at a distance, begging his wife to give him news of their son, and what number he had drawn in the conscription. After stating that he had already written to her several times without getting any answer, he adds with a touch of pathos: Già so che di me ne fatte poco conto!



Borghetto, from the East.



#### THE ROCK VILLAGES

#### BORDIGHERA

TILL recently a mere fishing village, and now familiar to foreigners as a winter resort, Bordighera need not be described with any minuteness; but it is the most convenient centre for those who are visiting the villages of the district, and therefore may with propriety be taken as a starting-point for the notes which relate to them. It is, however, necessary to remember that the Bordighera inhabited by foreign visitors is distinct from the older one, and is known as the Marina, extending along the seashore from the Capo Sant Ampeglio, westwards; and from the shore, northwards, to the new Via dei Colli. All the hotels, villas, shops, etc., are to be found here, but the old town, known as the Citta Alta, is that which alone concerns us now.

It was one of the otto luoghi di Ventimiglia to which reference has already been made, and took a prominent part in the struggle for



Porta del Capo.

independence. Situated on the breezy Capo di Sant Ampeglio, overlooking the sea, and celebrated for its favourable climate and healthgiving air, it can count a recorded existence of over four hundred years since the date of that curious building contract which is so usually, though

erroneously, looked upon as its certificate of birth. Its real origin certainly dates more than a century farther back, as has already been noted, to when in 1238 a number of refugees from Ventimiglia settled upon the

Capo, nor is it impossible that at a still earlier date this inviting position may have been the site of human habitations.

The building contract mentioned above is in the form of a document which sets forth how, on 2nd September 1470, some thirty-two families then residing at Borghetto agreed to build, or rebuild, a little hamlet for themselves on this Cape, and the senior members of each contracting family signed the deed, in the church of Saint Nicholas in Borghetto.<sup>1</sup>

According to the limits indicated in this agreement, the germ of our now favourite resort must have been a very insignificant one; but it is sufficiently clear that the pioneers were in earnest, for a second, and almost precisely similar, document was drawn up and signed in the following year, though the necessity for it is not so clear. One of the boundaries of the land taken up by the settlers is thus indicated: "... usque ad terram dictorum Georges et Nicholai de Plana," etc.,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Hamilton, op. cit. p. 21. I am also indebted to the Sindaco of Borghetto for an old MS. copy of this document, but it only gives twenty-eight names of signatories.

and a well or pozzo is mentioned as existing on this land. The lineal descendants of the family here named still occupy property in what seems to be this identical position.

Among other noticeable details it is clear that the name Burdighetta or Burdighea, still used by many of the peasants to designate what we know as Bordighera, was at that time already in use as applied to this very locality, for, according to this contract, the signatories bind themselves to: ". . . dificare locum unum in territorio Ventimilii, loco detto la Burdighea."

From the earliest times this little village appears to have been surrounded by walls; and the gateways, which still exist, had gates and drawbridges that remained until a comparatively recent period. One of the streets is yet known as the *Via dei Bastioni*.

There seems to have been little or nothing of an architectural character in the buildings, if we may judge from their present state; but one of the houses near the church has a rather curious stairway, with some old details in stone

which may most probably have been brought from a distance, as they do not correspond with anything else in the neighbourhood;

and the building, formerly a private residence, which is now the police court, *Pretura*, has a ceiling, modelled in "stucco," which is extremely artistic and interesting, and deserves careful preservation.

The campanile, probably of much greater antiquity than any other part of the place, is at some slight distance



Street in Bordighera (Via dei Bastioni).

from the church, and was formerly a watch-tower, such as were common in early times on this coast, and of which another example may be seen in the vicinity, called the *Torre Mostaccini*.

The streets of the Citta Alta, though narrow, steep, and winding, are less rude and sombre than those of other places on this coast. The plasterer's trowel and the white-washer's brush have been more freely used, and there is a growing air of modernity and progress. A road has recently been made round the Capo, and vehicles can even enter by the modern Porta Maddalena as far as the church and police court, which are near neighbours.

Some of the buildings, such, for instance, as those of the Via Dritta (see frontispiece), are outside the old boundary walls, and several villas have been erected in close proximity; in fact, Bordighera already considers that it is a place with a "future," and is laying itself out accordingly.

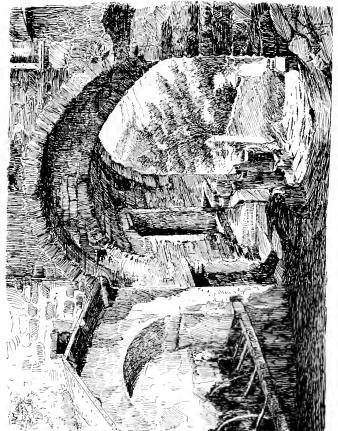
While endeavouring strictly to avoid merely controversial matter, and the expression of any opinion as to the trustworthiness or otherwise of certain historical records or vague traditions, it would be unfair to omit mention of that pious individual whose name is closely intertwined with memories of the early Bordighera,

and is widely venerated to-day as that of her patron saint.

Of Saint Ampeglio's early history it is declared by some that he was a native of Arezzo, a city founded by the Etruscans, and that in later years he went to live an anchorite's life in Egypt, where he is reported to have been seen in the beginning of the fifth century. His original occupation was that of a fabbro-ferraio, an iron-worker or blacksmith, and it is said that he often made agricultural implements, and gave them away to the poor peasants of his neighbourhood. The legend of his life would not be complete without some reference to a special temptation, and we are told that a fallen angel, or the arch-fiend, appeared to poor Ampeglio in his humble workshop, in the form of a beautiful woman who tempted him to sin. Unwilling to yield, the saint seized with his bare hand a bar of red-hot iron, and, without staying to consider how ungallant an irreverent posterity might esteem his action, thrust it in the face of the temptress, who fled howling and uttering maledictions. Historians have, of course,

nothing but good to relate of the saint's life and charitable works, and they add that he was able to perform many miracles; for instance, he continued always to possess the faculty of holding red-hot iron with his bare hand without suffering injury.

His fame spread so widely that he began to be oppressed by it, and, preferring to live far from the society of his fellow-men, he obtained permission to leave his monastery in Egypt, and set sail for Italy, choosing his resting-place in the neighbourhood of what we now call the Cape of Bordighera. Here he continued his work as a blacksmith, but always with a charitable object, and for the benefit of the poor peasants who crowded to his retreat from Ventimiglia on the one side, and Matuta, now called San Remo, on the other, taking advantage of his noble generosity. His fasting and self-denial were continued to such an extreme that he became seriously ill with an affection of the feet and legs; when an angel suddenly appeared to him, and, assuring him that his prayers and pious endeavours were accepted by the Almighty,



The Entrance to Perinaldo.



kissed him on the forehead, and immediately cured him of his sufferings. We are not told whether or no this new vision appeared in the form of a beautiful woman, and it might be indiscreet to inquire; but we do know that even now, whether on the battlefield, in the hospital ward, or in the cottage home, gentle women hover wherever men's tortured frames are racked in their agony; and we believe that they are in very truth "ministering spirits" who go nobly forth to minister to those who are the heirs of mortal suffering and pain.

One special miracle of Saint Ampeglio is placed on record for our benefit. It is said that a ship passed near the Cape during a terrible storm, when the awe-stricken sailors, seeing their imminent peril, and remembering the neighbourhood of the saint's hermitage, prayed to him for help. He gave them his benediction, and then with prayer and the exercise of faith commanded the waves to be still and the winds to cease. Again was his prayer favourably received, and the sea became calm, so that the ship and its crew were saved; nor did the latter omit to render thanks to

their saintly benefactor and saviour after landing on the shore. At last, in the fulness of years and exemplary piety, the good old saint passed away from earth on the 5th of October, in the year A.D. 428; and the ancient chroniclers tell us how on that day the sky was filled with an unusual splendour, as if the choirs of the blessed had descended to meet and welcome him who was leaving the sorrows of earth to join their ranks in Heaven.

Looking over this blue Mediterranean Sea to-day, it is hard to realise that only about a hundred years ago it was still swept by real Barbary Pirates, Corsairs, or, as they were called, Barbareschi, and Turks. That such was, however, the case is proved by contemporary documents. One such record is a copy of a report dated 20th April 1787, and addressed by the Magnificent Agenti and Consoli of Bordighera to the Serenissimo Senato in Genoa, to give information about the "Turks." The word Turk was a generic name for pirates of whatever nationality, and seems to have been used as a synonym for all that was bad; indeed there are pious people

even nowadays who use it in a similar sense; and it is curious to note that the well-known proverb about the shortest month being the worst, Febbrajo corto, peggio di tutto, becomes in the patois of the district, Febraro corto peggio d'ün Türco.

Well! this report went on to say that a certain Lebofe of Gaeta left Toulon on the 16th of April in his tartana, but the next day, in this neighbourhood, fell in with a Sciabecco Barbaresco, and, to use the exact words of the report, "gave himself with his equipage to a precipitate flight, followed by the little shallop of the Corsair, which fired upon him with musketry, so that his boat was found to be pierced in two places with the balls, and one man was slightly wounded in the breast." In the afternoon of the following day, two pirate ships and a smaller vessel were descried from these parts, so the coastguard made use of the usual warning signals, and, as the writers say, "to tell the truth the affair went off well,"-apparently that is just what the pirates did. But the next day another vessel came in sight, and got out its big

launch, which was sent towards the Golfo della Ruota (round which now winds the road to Ospedaletti) where were some boats laden with grain. On these boats some of the men had firearms (archibuggi), but they had no occasion to use them, for "under the fire of the cannons posted on the Capo S. Ampeglio, at the Ruota, and at Ospedaletti, the pirate ships, although defended by the guns of the Sciabecco, were compelled to retire without any booty."

From the remainder of the document it appears as if the other seven villages were quarrelling with Bordighera about sharing the expenses of this system of coast defence.

But a few years later these same cannons on Capo S. Ampeglio got the little town into a good deal of trouble, for one day in 1811 a small English ship, perhaps driven this way by stress of weather, was seen off the coast, and, its movements not being comprehended by the inhabitants, they insisted that the coastguards should fire upon her. There are several varying accounts of the occurrence, some in Italian and some in English, but at

all events the gunners were such good marksmen that the English vessel had some more or less serious damage done, while the captain did not feel able to reply with his guns, and so got out his boats and towed his ship out of range of the perky little battery. The rejoicings of the inhabitants at their easy victory were, however, destined to be shortlived; for, five days later, a couple of English men-of-war appeared off the Capo, and unceremoniously proceeded to bring the Bordighese to their senses, by opening upon them a steady fire. No very great damage was done before a prompt and unconditional capitulation took place, explanations were given, and, says one historian, the Mayor of the town was invited to dine on board the English ship.

This termination, à la Kipling, may have been the real one, but we are assured by the Cav. Piana, formerly Sindaco of Bordighera, that the matter was sufficiently serious. He says that the English landed and sacked the town, carrying off a number of what bazaar-stall-keepers would call "useful and fancy articles." He has shown us a long list made

by his great-grandfather, who was then living, enumerating the various things taken from his own house, or ruined in the bombardment.

It is evident that the memory of this tragic episode in the family and communal history is not likely to be soon effaced, and there still remains a certain bitterness of disappointment that compensation for the damage inflicted has not yet been made; nor is conviction carried by our good-natured suggestion that the English visitors who have crowded to Bordighera ever since "Doctor Antonio" made it famous, may already have paid many times over in excessive charges the value of any injury their offended marines may have caused.

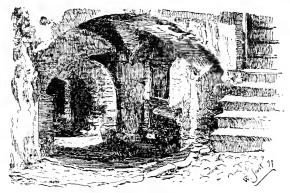
#### Вокснетто

The first valley to the west of Bordighera has on its western slopes the villages of Borghetto (from which the valley itself is named) and Vallebona; and on the ridge of the eastern slope, about half-way between these two, is Sasso, which, however, gives its name

### Borghetto

to a valley on the east of Bordighera. At the farther end of the Borghetto valley is the village of Seborga.

This valley is narrow and winding, the hills on each side are steep and mostly covered with olives, but worked into terraces with dry



Street in Borghetto.

walling of rough work. Here and there near the bed of the stream canes grow luxuriantly, and the gardens are thickly planted with vines. A road runs by the side of the little torrent, which sparkles along its pebbly bed in winter, but is nearly always dry in summer; and this road continues till it reaches the foot of the steep mule-path going up to the village.

Ι

Carriages will turn to the left at about half the distance, where a new road branches off, and by a moderate slope winds along the hillside among the olive trees and gardens till it reaches the upper part of the village, where the two churches are, and then passes on to Vallebona, where it ends.

Like so many of these old places, Borghetto has not been careful of its historical records. Little can be gleaned that has any interest for us to-day. It seems to have been the custom for the registers and other communal documents to be kept by the Mayor of the time being at his own house, with a result which may be imagined; and although it is possible that among the Archives of the Republic of Genoa some information might be obtained, there is nothing to be had nearer home.

The one thing of which the inhabitants are proud — after their wine, which is indeed excellent—is the fact that, some hundred years ago, the celebrated Italian historian and patriot, Carlo Botta, resided for a time at their village, in a house now the home of the present Sindaco, who possesses some very interesting

## Borghetto

letters written to his great-uncle by Botta when an exile in Paris in 1808. They are

marked by all an exile's pathetic longing for his native land, and speak affectionately of Borghetto, and the pleasant time he had passed there.

The wine of the village deserves more than a mere mention, as it is one of the best produced in this district; but



Church Tower and Priest's House.

visitors must by no means judge it from the samples usually supplied at hotels elsewhere under that name. The greater portion is red, with a peculiar and delicious aroma; but there is also a pleasant and light white wine, which, however, like nearly all the white wines of the country, does not keep well.

It is curious to find that all these tiny places have regular municipal arrangements; a Sindaco or Mayor, and a Municipio, with a Secretary who does nearly all the business, and attends at the office on two afternoons a week; the other days being usually given to similar duties elsewhere. The appointment of the Sindaco is made by the Government, but it is generally found to run in certain families for generations.

Signor Rossi, the present holder of the office, says that the old church of Saint Nicholas—the one in which the famous document relating to the rebuilding of Bordighera was signed—certainly did not stand, as is commonly supposed, on the site of the existing building, but adjoined the cemetery, which has been the burial-place of the Borghettesi from time immemorial.

There are some remarkably fine specimens of old olive trees on the hillsides above the village; and a good deal of lime is made close by, including an excellent hydraulic kind which is in great demand all over the neighbourhood.



Seberga, from the East.

### Vallebona

#### VALLEBONA

Beyond Borghetto, the new road winds on, always upward, for another kilometre or so, with scattered little cottages of the peasants, and their well-kept gardens, on each side. By the road there is a primitive butcher's shop in wood, only open on festas. Everywhere olives, olives—above, below, and around, with lovely peeps down the slopes into the valley, or across to the other side, where tiny Sasso lies perched upon the opposite ridge, and away behind is a vista looking out between the hills to a stretch of sapphire sea.

The first view of Vallebona from the road shows it entirely set in olives, with, in the distance, the graceful outline of Monte Caggio. The only striking feature is the curious campanile, more elaborate than most of its rivals, and with some attempt at colour decoration. The road terminates in an open space outside the Porta della Madonna, just where the old mule-track—till lately, the only way of communication—comes up from the valley.

Passing under a low archway, the street begins at once to rise steeply. Here and there it is vaulted over, forming a series of little tunnels, and it winds right away up to the top of the village, with only a level break where the Piazza is, by the Church of St. John the Baptist, and where a sort of "Pallone," the national game of ball, is played by youths and men on festas. The hours of play are regulated by municipal authority, as indicated in a curious inscription to that effect on the wall of the church.

Beyond the primitive "Place," the steep street mounts again, and, as one looks back, a nearer view of the Campanile is obtained; then more tunnels, and an occasional peep out into the valley. At several points in the ascent is a shrine with some faded flowers, and a cross or picture. In one of these shrines is a curiously naïve instance of adaptation to circumstances. The little image—apparently of the Madonna—has been broken, and only a shattered fragment remains, but the background is filled, instead, with a print of the Madonna and Child which is the well-

### Vallebona

known advertisement of a Torinese soap, "La Vergine." Truly advertisers have much

to answer for—here or elsewhere.

The stairways and doorways by which some of the houses are reached have a most forbidding aspect, but the views from many of the windows are stupendous, stretching far away over the valley to the sea.

Arrived at the extreme end of this principal street, the Via Maggiore, we emerge upon a good muletrack which winds up higher and higher along the hillside, and always



A Street in Vallebona.

among the olives; a most delightful walk, leading on in several hours to Perinaldo.

Descending on our return, we may take

one of the few and narrow cross streets, and find ourselves at the back of the church, by the quiet little "Campo Santo," where there is no pretence at care or formal order, and the graves are only marked by plain black wooden crosses sloping picturesquely all sorts of ways; but it seems a charming place to rest in, with the sun shining brightly on thousands of scarlet poppies which wave in the cool lush grasses, fit emblems of a long and dreamless sleep.

The church has no feature of interest, unless for the quite remarkable amount of gilding and decoration in the interior. The stone lintel of the principal doorway has a simple and badly-cut inscription in one line:—

+madda LxxvIII}

bie xvIII { LvLII }

hod hopvs { Pedim }

Pieri} Ihomnes { ... } R}

In the centre of the lintel is the usual emblem

### Vallebona

of the Lamb and Flag, coarsely cut; to the right an ornament of four leaves and a flower; and on the left a shield, but so defaced that it is difficult to make out its signification. A close examination shows that it is intended to represent a sort of tower.

Vallebona also has taken little care of its records, but the Secretary of the Municipio informs us that such as there were disappeared in 1844, in the "Rivoluzione delle Donne," when, owing to the proposal of the authorities to sell certain communal lands on Monte Nero, where a few families had been accustomed to help themselves gratis to firewood, the women of the place rose in revolt, and set fire to the Municipio. Needless to say, that, as usual, after this exhibition of temper, they got their own way, and the authorities purchased peace by surrender.

Means of communication with the outside world are not abundant, but the postman, being "up to date," bicycles up and down more or less regularly; and there is a curious ramshackle omnibus kept by a lame tailor, who announces he has no fixed hours for

running it, but goes when two or three people want it.

If this does not suit us, or if we want a picturesque walk, we may go down by the old mule-track towards the torrent; not, however, where it first turns to the left, but crossing a rustic stone bridge, under which in winter a noisy little torrent rushes, and in about ten minutes we shall reach a couple of tumble-down oil-mills. All summer these mills lie idle, and sometimes, when the seasons are very bad, may be almost unused for years. Here are the channels for the water, and the pits where the refuse is washed—all now dry and dusty; the great black water-wheel is still; the chambers where the big stones crush the ripe fruit, and where the creaking press squeezes out the oil, are all given over to silence and decay.

Below this again we descend to the bed of the torrent; in summer there is little water running, and some of that little is jealously conducted away in canals for irrigation. Adventurous spirits may cross the stream on the big stepping-stones, and follow one of



Part of Perinaldo at Sunset.



#### Sasso

these little canals which will serve for a path, and though in some places one has to walk along a twelve-inch wall at a somewhat giddy height above the bed of the torrent, and finds one's self landed in a garden among the lemon trees and vines, nobody seems to mind; the peasant boys playing in the shade will be sure to show us some more or less rompicollo (breakneck) way of getting along, and so we can go back to Borghetto and the road.

#### Sasso

The smallest of all the villages along this part of the coast, but yet a prominent and picturesque object in many of the views hereabout, Sasso can tell little of its history. There are only a few municipal records, going back no farther than the earlier portion of the present century, and they contain little or nothing of interest.

The village is reached by a communal path leading from the back of the old town

of Bordighera - Bordighera Alta-along the ridge dividing the two valleys already mentioned, and, for the greater part of its extent, giving pretty peeps into the valley which bears the same name, Sasso. There is, however, another and less known way, by going up the Borghetto valley, and crossing the bed of the torrent opposite the new road to Vallebona, where a rugged and very narrow path—not to be recommended after heavy rain, as it is then usually the bed of a miniature torrent—winds up under the olives and joins the main path a short distance before reaching the village. On a summer morning this is a delightful walk, always under the cool shade of the olives made lively with the cicala's chatter in the branches overhead. There will be an occasional peasant at work among his vines, or bringing his laden mule down the rocky path; the village girls are singing on the slopes as they gather the weeds, or pull the long grass for fodder; the broad green leaves of the fig tree with its ripening fruit glisten in the sunshine; and when the ridge is passed and the path turns

#### Sasso

to the Borghetto side, there is a lovely view of Vallebona nestling in its olives.

Sasso was once a castle, and though its history has been lost, some portions of the original plan can be clearly traced. tower at least still remains, built in among the houses, but there is nothing whatever of architectural interest in the place, beyond the charm of an effective chiaroscuro when the sunshine is blazing on the time-stained walls where the plaster is peeling away, and fragments of colour or lines of faded decoration are varied with the dark shadows of unglazed openings, broken shutters, or blackened chimney caps. In later times, houses were erected outside the old boundaries, which have gradually disappeared, and the original plan was modified into what we see at the present day. As in other places, there was a public forno or baker's oven, and one of the tiny streets still bears the name Via del Forno.

Reference has already been made to the peculiarly picturesque situation of this village, and from so many points of view it is a noticeable object in the landscape. There is

a greater glow of colour from the plastered exterior than in some others of its neighbours, especially on the side towards Borghetto, and less of the usual rugged blackness, when seen from a distance; but the view from Sasso valley itself is good, though difficult to find.

Municipal business is always transacted on Sunday mornings, and this day is here specially marked as the women's holiday, for the men are then charged with the care of the babies, while their better halves go to mass, or walk arm-in-arm along the mountain paths, under the vines, in their best frocks, and, in summer at least, not forgetting the coquettish use of their cheap fans. The little girls too are, for the time being, painfully correct in their movements, and accompany their mothers to church; but whether the babies appreciate the rather clumsy caresses of their male nurses cannot be discussed here.

#### SEBORGA

Beyond Sasso, along the ridge separating two valleys, past a quaint shrine at the turn

where a path leads down to Vallebona, the way to Seborga runs, roughly speaking, northwards. For good walkers it presents no difficulty, but rises steadily for about an hour, passing first under olives and then among pines,—a good deal of the land alongside being under cultivation. The rocks with their indications of gigantic convulsions, and their varying strata, are interesting to the geologist, but there are no very startling or striking features.

Seborga itself possesses characteristics generally similar to those already noted in connection with other places; the situation is even more isolated and difficult of access than usual, and the view from the hill behind the village is superb.

If you inquire of the Seborghese about the origin of the place, you will find that, in the popular opinion at all events, it dates from the most remote antiquity. The centuries disappear rapidly in their calculations of its age; the Counts of Ventimiglia are soon left behind; "Avanti Christo" is quickly reached; and, if you listened long enough, they would

probably arrive at the famous if somewhat indefinite "Year One."

Very old, however, the place certainly is, as documentary evidence shows. Its early name was *Castrum Sepulchri* or *de Sepulchro*, gradually changed into Sebolcaro, which finally became Seborga. There is no doubt that about the tenth century it was a fief of the Counts of Ventimiglia, and, certainly not much later, it belonged to the Abbey of Lérins.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing definite can be found in history to tell us when it passed into the possession of this monastic corporation, as the famous will of Count Guido, dated 954 A.D., purporting to bequeath it to the Abbey, is now universally recognised as a forgery; but there were other and genuine bequests which at least extended the property already in the possession of the monks, so that their ownership is indisputable, however it may have been originally obtained.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Abbey of Lérins was the seat of a branch of the Benedictine order of monks, and built on the island of Lérins off the coast of Provence, not far from Cannes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See I Conti di Ventimiglia, Il Priorato di San Michele, ed il Principato di Seborga, by Conte E. Cais di Pierlas (Turin, 1884), p. 17. This work has been of considerable assistance in the compilation of the following notes.

In 1079 Count Spedaldo bequeathed to the Monastery of Lérins the property he possessed in Sebolcaro and Conio (Cuneo); and in 1288 the monks themselves bought a property known as La Braia, situated on the south side of the village, where their residence was afterwards erected; and the name remains in use to this day.

Seborga was itself a Principality, and the Monastery of Lérins conserved all its seigneurial rights, even so far as to coin money on its own authority. Probably, however, the rule of the monks was lax or ineffective, for the neighbours on all sides dared continually to make encroachments and commit abuses which would have been quickly disposed of by a strong ruler. They would cut down trees, change boundaries, pasture their beasts on the lands of the poor Seborghese, and even imprison those of the latter who ventured to drive out the trespassing animals.<sup>1</sup> Indeed they went so far as to claim tribute from the patient and suffering inhabitants.

There can be no doubt that much of this

<sup>1</sup> Cais, op. cit.

was directly prompted by the Republic of Genoa, which was very jealous of an authority so absolute, possessed by others within its own borders—for the Principato of Seborga was entirely surrounded by lands belonging to the Republic. So late as 1583, the Abbot was obliged to protest strongly to the Republic against the usurpations and injuries suffered from the people of Vallebona; but, as can be imagined, no lasting remedy was found; and in 1678 application was made to the French Government for protection; with equal use-lessness.

Reference has already been made to the government by means of a Podestà, and Cais¹ prints in full a document, dated 3rd December 1394, in which the relations between the monastery and the inhabitants were regulated and defined. It is in Latin, and too long to be quoted here, but the inhabitants declare themselves homines dicti monasterii, and acknowledge, among other things, their obligation to pay tithes of grano, ordeo, fabis, et sege. They recognise as their lord the prior of

S. Michele for the time being, and promise neither to do nor permit to be done any act against him; but, on the contrary, to defend him to the best of their ability. On his part the prior engages to protect his subjects, and not to exact from them more than the tithes stipulated for; so that as regards other products, — figs, wine, grapes, et aliis leguminibus, — they were to enjoy complete liberty.

Even this clear agreement did not suffice to prevent disputes, and there were several rearrangements and modifications, usually resulting, as may be imagined, in fresh concessions on the part of the monastic authorities; but in 1439 a part of the new agreement provided that the inhabitants should be obliged to work on the lands of La Braia, in the proportion of two days per year for every pair of oxen and for every man above the age of twenty years.

The Podestà was nominated by the monastery, and each family paid him one boccale 1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A measure which to-day is generally of the capacity of a litre, but what it was in former times is not certain.

of grain. He had the right to exercise alta e bassa giustizia in the territory of Seborga, and bassa giustizia only for Vallebona. He received the fines in criminal suits, and when he wished to build or repair any property he could order the transport of materials without any wage beyond the daily food (de quoi vivre honnestement). Beside this he had the monopoly of pasturage, which was limited, however, as it is to-day, to 300 head of sheep or goats.

The number of inhabitants does not seem to have averaged more than 200 souls, as against 400 in the present day; but some idea of the productiveness of the region may be gathered from the statistics given by Cais¹ as referring to the early part of the seventeenth century: "The cultivated land rendered about 350 loads² of cereals, 600 *rubi* of oil, 800 loads of wine,³ 50 loads of figs, and 25 loads of chestnuts."

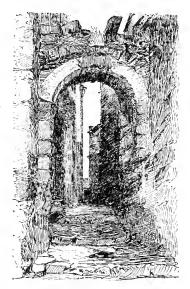
<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Mule-loads are of course meant.

<sup>3</sup> The usual load of a mule is now from 60 to 65 litres, say roughly 15 gallons, carried in two long narrow barrels of oval section.

Prominent if not foremost among the points of interest connected with the history of Seborga is the Zecca or Mint, to which

reference has already been made, and with which it is generally connected in the minds of those who know anything of the place. The building in which it was housed is now the Communal School; but changes are proposed which will



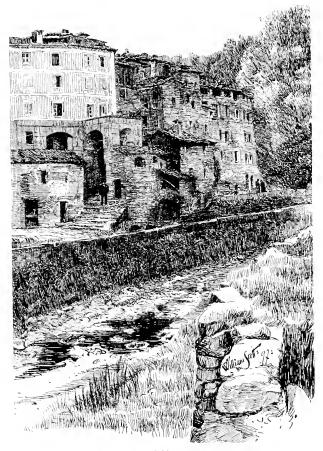
The North Gate, Seborga.

be of a very radical character as regards the use of the structure, yet without destroying its identity, and there are no architectural details or features to need special preservation.

Unfortunately the documentary evidence relating to this question is very limited, and

not yet has it been possible to discover whence the right of coining money was acquired, or when it began to be exercised. Most probably, however, the monks simply assumed it as independent sovereigns in their own little Principality.1 No assistance is given us by the coins themselves which remain, for they are extremely rare, and belong only to the period referred to in the documents mentioned below, consisting of the contracts between the monks and the outsiders to whom they let out their rights for given periods. The earliest document hitherto discovered dates no farther back than 24th December 1666, when Bernard Bareste of Mougins took the contract at the price of seven hundred lire tornesi per annum. One of the conditions imposed was that all the coins produced, whether of gold or silver, should bear the effigy of Saint Benedict, with the name and arms of the monastery. The monastic records mention another contract—this time for three years — with a certain Abril of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Discorsi sopra Argumenti Spettanti a Monete coniate in Italia nei Secoli xiv e xvii, by Giulio di S. Quintino, Turin, 1847.



Soldano.



Nîmes,<sup>1</sup> the conditions being as in the earlier one, but the price to be paid was doubled (1500 lire).

This Abril or Dabic was a Huguenot, and the agreement was destined to bring about disastrous consequences for the monastery and for Seborga. It is impossible to explain how the monks could have allowed themselves in such troublesome times as those immediately following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to enter into business relations with one whom they must have considered a heretic. Perhaps they thus secured more advantageous terms than it was possible to obtain from others, and calculated on immunity in their proceedings from the fact that the actual seat of their operations was outside French territory. Be that as it may, the matter having been brought to the notice of the French Government, a peremptory order, dated the 1st of July 1686, and signed by the infamous Colbert, stated 2 that: -

<sup>1</sup> Quintino, op. cit.

Hamilton, in his Bordighera and the Western Riviera (p. 97), gives the name as Dabic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Hamilton, op. cit.

"The king in council has broken and annulled the said lease, as also all other leases general and particular of the farms and dependencies of Sabourg made to the contractors of the R. P. R.¹ by the abbots and monks of the said Abbey of Saint Honorat at Lérins, whom his Majesty expressly forbids and inhibits from letting the said properties to others than catholics, or to give shelter to these heretics; neither to continue any longer the coining of money at the said town of Sabourg upon any pretence whatever . . ."

Quintino<sup>2</sup> tells us that the coins of Seborga were formerly current in the state of Genoa, but that only three were known to exist when he wrote. Cais, however, mentions that four other examples are to be found in the king's collection at Turin, and observes that though the concession of 1666 speaks of the right to mint both gold and silver coins, it would seem that only those of the latter metal were actually produced.

The two specimens most generally known are those in the Imperial Collection at Vienna,

<sup>1</sup> Religion Protestante Réformée.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit.

and are described and illustrated by Quintino.¹ He says they are both of silver,² one being a *lira*, with, on the obverse, the bust of S. Benedict, without an aureole, and with the inscription: "MONASTerium LERINENSE Princepi · SEPVLcri." On the reverse are the arms of the monastery, the date 1667, and the motto: "SVB \* VMBRA \* SEDI \*" The other coin is a half *lira* of the year 1671.

Similar to this last, but with an aureole round the head of the saint, and with the date 1669, is the one possessed by Signor Quintino himself.

In 1672 the then Bishop of Nice, while making a report upon the proposed sale of the property at Seborga (see below), speaks of abuses and frauds that had been discovered in connection with this mint; and another report, addressed to King Vittorio Amadeo in 1729 states that there were still in existence in Seborga the machines and utensils for

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Hamilton, op. cit. pp. 96, 97, wrongly speaks of them as gold pieces; gives both dates incorrectly; and quotes, also incorrectly, the inscription on the obverse of one of them.

coining, and estimates their approximate value at 1000 scudi.<sup>1</sup>

Curiously enough, and as if to prove the truth of the old adage about blacksmiths' horses, the monks of Lérins, possessing a mint of their own, were very often in serious want of money; and, like many impecunious people of the present day, were reduced to borrowing. As early as 1298 we find them paying off a loan, but only to contract others not long after. In 1317, for instance, they borrowed from the Marchese Doria of that date, and do not seem to have repaid him, as he passed on the credit to his brother many years later. Seborga was the property usually mortgaged for these various loans, and in 1584 it came into the hands of the Republic of Genoa as security for a considerable sum

In these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the authorities of the monastery conceived the idea of disposing altogether of a property which does not seem to have been managed very cleverly, or to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Cais, op. cit. p. 64.

have brought them the advantages it was capable of yielding. Before the close of the seventeenth century negotiations were already commenced with the Duke of Savoy, and a preliminary contract was signed in 1697; but a long series of difficulties commenced, many of them being provoked by the Republic of Genoa, which was jealous of so desirable a fief, situated within its own dominions, passing into the hands of a rival power. The negotiations continued with more or less interruption and mystification till January 1729, when the final contract was signed, at the price of 190,000 lire.<sup>1</sup>

There exists a long and interesting account of the ceremony of taking possession of the purchased fief. The inhabitants professed themselves delighted with the change of rulers. The municipality offered "refreshments" to the representatives of the king; and these in turn distributed presents of money. It is rather maliciously reported that

<sup>1</sup> Cais, op. cit.

Quintino gives the price as 165,500 lire of Turin, equal to 147,000 lire of Savoy, and it seems that the difference was made up by a conditional payment to the authorities of S. Michele at Ventimiglia.

they "were able to succeed in inducing the parish priest to accept a small present, charging him to say a mass for them next day!"

The change does not seem to have produced very beneficial effects at first, for ten years later we find that the inhabitants were reduced to thirty-four heads of families, and that their chief resource was in carrying firewood and charcoal to S. Remo.

The village was formerly surrounded by walls, with gates and drawbridges, and it possessed a public *forno*, besides an oil-mill, and a press for the grapes. Outside the walls was a flour-mill. The public *forno* is still a source of revenue to the place, and is let for an average rent of 200 *lire*. The streets are narrow and rough, but more open than those of some other places we have seen. The air is pure and bracing, and, if the projected carriage road from Bordighera be ever carried out, Seborga may have a successful future.

In searching among the papers of the Municipio nothing has been discovered dating back earlier than the commencement of the present century, except a carefully-drawn



Fountain at Isolabora.



large-scale map of the whole of the properties and boundaries of Seborga, made in 1759.

The *Causato* or annual estimate of expenditure, which had to be examined and approved by the Intendente of the Province of San Remo, begins in 1818, with the expenditure for that year, and bases upon the same the estimates for the succeeding year. It gives some items of interest, but it is impossible to find space here for more than a very few. At that time the public *forno* 

brought annually 51 lire; the slaughter-house, 6 lire. The salary of the Sindaco or Mayor was 20 lire; and that of the Secretary, 100 lire. The population is entered as consisting of 240 souls.



#### VALLECROSIA

Westwards of the Borghetto valley, and



Street in Vallecrosia.

divided from it by the Cima dei Monti, is the Vallecrosia valley, taking its name from the first or lowest village it contains. There is a good modern road running along by the side of the torrent, passing first near the foor of Vallecrosia village, and continuing onwards past San Biaggio and Soldano, till by a zigzag at the end it terminates in the heights of Perinaldo.

The most modern

houses come right down to the banks of the torrent, but the streets are steep, dark, and winding, cool and shady even during

#### Vallecrosia

the heats of summer; and their cleanliness is very creditable to municipal management. They seem to have been very slightly changed during the last two or three centuries, though the town walls have mostly disappeared, and some of the old customs and traditions still cling to them. The curious vaulted passage shown in one of the sketches (p. 78) sotto le crotte, is the spot where public meetings of the Council took place, especially for the appalto or letting of the forno, or the macello; and even to-day, when any property, such as the fruit of an olive-tree or other communal possession, has to be offered for sale, it is in this cantuccio that the operation takes place.

Fortunately for us, the Municipio has preserved some of the old records, but chiefly in the form of account books. These were kept with marvellous simplicity; a couple of pages, one for income and the other for expenditure, sufficed for a whole year. There are also the registers or minutes of the resolutions of the Council, and other interesting information.

The earliest accounts we can discover

belong to the seventeenth century, and many pages are almost illegible, partly through the fading of the ink, and partly from the extraordinary character of the handwriting. These accounts were kept in a very haphazard way, apparently being entered quite casually just where the book happened to open, and without any regard to the sequence of the pages, a fact which enormously increases the difficulties of research, but the date of each item is usually to be found. The handwriting varies, necessarily; but those specimens which indicate a certain culture or superior education are usually so spoiled by carelessness or affectation as to be much less easily decipherable than the simple, hesitating letters of the more ignorant or less practised scribes. Here and there are to be found some really fine specimens of calligraphy which are worthy of study and full of character. The spelling is often quaint and usually phonetic; and the ordinary rules of grammatical construction have not infrequently been set at defiance.

For our present purpose a minute analysis of these accounts would be impossible, and

#### Vallecrosia

even undesirable; but a few examples taken almost at random will suffice to show what interest is therein contained.

The items of expenditure are of a fairly miscellaneous character, and range from the payment made for entertainment "when the Captain came with the soldiers; mules, bread, wine, fruit, 5 lire 12 soldi," to the costs of legal proceedings against the neighbouring town of Soldano, when a "writing" cost 10 soldi, and a "certificate" 4 soldi; but their "Procuratore" or lawyer down in Genoa was only sustained by payments of 14 and 20 lire at a time, the race having evidently been the same from the beginning.

The forno was very frequently in need of repair, but was one of the principal and most regular sources of income to the Commune. Its rent varied very considerably, from 40 to 100 lire, and was settled by public auction. In 1673 it was let for two years at the larger price, but with special conditions. This contract is the fullest of the kind that we have found, and is worth recording. The contracting baker is bound to light the fire when-

L

ever 200 loaves are presented for baking; and if the bread is not properly baked, it is to be examined by two experts, and the damage adjudged by them. If any of the inhabitants refuse to make use of this *forno* during the two years of the lease, the leaseholder has the right to be refunded a corresponding sum, according to the custom he has lost. The circumstances which led to this unusual arrangement have already been referred to on p. 73. At the present time this *forno* only produces 30 *lire* a year, a private and rival one having been erected in the neighbourhood.

Another important feature was the public macello (slaughter-house and butcher's shop), the contractor undertaking to provide a sufficient supply of meat at prices rigorously fixed by the authorities, and it is expressly stipulated that "he may not sell one kind of meat for another," but we are not told that the authorities anticipated an inundation of frozen mutton from Australia. The maximum price allowed to be charged for beef and kid was 2 soldi and 8 denari per pound. For each infraction of the conditions a fine of

### Vallecrosia

12 lire was fixed; and of this one-third was to go to a religious corporation—the Society of Corpus Domini; one-third to the "Capitano" at Ventimiglia, whom it was continually necessary to propitiate; and the remaining third to the informer.

The annual payment to the officers of Weights and Measures for verifying the same was 2 *lire*, and the fee for examining the accounts by the *Capitano* at Ventimiglia was 4 *lire*, Vallecrosia being considered richer (perhaps wiser) than some of her neighbours, whose accounts were overhauled even more severely for half that sum.<sup>1</sup>

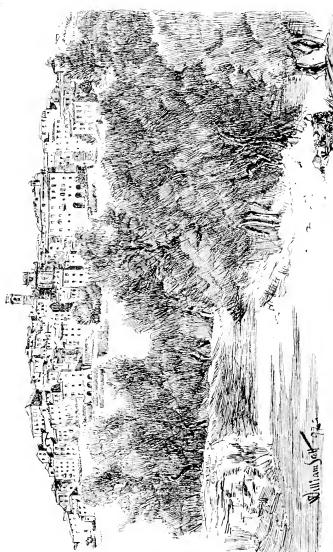
In 1652 the "Reverend Rector" is allowed 5 lire towards the repairs of his residence, but a few years later, in 1659, a resolution of the Council decides upon an expenditure of 200 lire for a new house, with the very just provision that if any one should object to this use of the public money, some other arrangement must be made. Apparently no one did object, for we find a due entry of the building contract, and payments for the work.

<sup>1</sup> See the notes on Soldano.

In this case the following easy way of raising the necessary fund was invented: a number of individuals who owed money to the Council, in sums varying from 12 to 33 lire each, were publicly named, and the Treasurer was ordered to summon them before the Court in Ventimiglia to enforce payment.

Fired with a desire for speculation, the Council suddenly decided to petition the Senate at Genoa for authority to set up a shop for *Comestibili* (groceries and eatables generally), and to let it out to the highest bidder for the benefit of the Commune; but in 1683, a public clock or *timpano* having been put up, formal entry is made in the minutes to the effect that two of the councillors present did not approve the proceeding, and considered the money to have been "badly spent."

In the same year permission is given to an individual to vault over and use the space between his house and the city wall, for the sum of 26 lire—"on condition that in time of war he shall leave the door open so that persons may go in and out for the defence



Perinaldo, from the Madonna della Visitazione.



#### Vallecrosia

of the place, and that he shall leave the archebugiere (loopholes), as already existing," etc. etc.

The councillors or representatives of the people held office for a year, and at the expiration of the term each one "elected" his successor, as is noted regularly in the records; and the new Treasurer took over any balance there might be in hand from the previous year's account.

By his will dated 12th February 1578, a certain Antonio Lamberti of Vallecrosia left to his native place some property, the income from which was to be applied for the public benefit. Each year one half of this was to be capitalised, and the other half divided among the people. There was the usual pious provision for the benefit of the testator's soul, and the will continues thus:

"... et distribuere in et per tottam dictam villam Valliscrosie omnibus et singulis personis de ville et que seu quibus tunc temporis reperient..." etc.

Unfortunately, during the troublous times of the Napoleonic era this capitalised fund

went the way of most other public moneys; and a legacy which would by this time have made Vallecrosia one of the richest towns on the Riviera, has been reduced to such a trifle that when, every two years, the distribution takes place, the share of each person is not more than 4 or 5 soldi. The natives cling very jealously to their rights in this respect, and the last coin is rigorously exacted from the authorities; though, at the moment of the distribution, an urgent appeal is made to each recipient to give up his share for charitable purposes!

#### SAN BIAGGIO

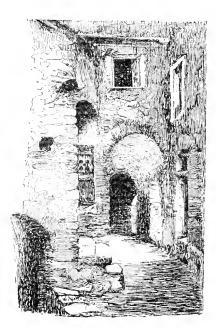
Chi vuol fare un buon viaggio Per la lunga Eternità, Raccomandisi a San Biaggio Che di guida gli sarà.

This pious sentiment is inscribed over the door of a chapel dedicated to the patron saint of a very picturesque village, perched on the sheltered hillside, just a quarter of an hour's walk beyond Vallecrosia. A cross by

### San Biaggio

the roadside marks the commencement of the steep and winding ascent, which by exaggeration of courtesy may be said to be paved,

but the word must not be taken too literally. The village itself answers perfectly to the general description already given with regard to others, and though not yet developing modernity in its buildings, has an air of



Street in San Biaggio.

liveliness and prosperity. The streets are clean and fairly well kept; the water supply is good, though not very abundant; and the inhabitants are civil and courteous. Plain

food of the common sort can be had, cleanly though roughly served, and the wine is excellent. Most of the men are occupied in the cultivation of the land, and many of the women carry fruit to the neighbouring market of Bordighera. Some of the younger men also walk to and fro, and find employment as masons, carpenters, labourers, etc.

Immense numbers of figs are grown in the neighbourhood, and their drying and packing may be said to be the small industry of the place. There were formerly several looms in the village, but this kind of work has died out.

There can be no doubt whatever that, in such small places as most of these villages are, an immense deal depends on the personal qualities of the communal secretary, who is really, though not nominally, the important person of the place; and San Biaggio is at present fortunate in the possession of a specially active and intelligent official. He may even be seen playing pallone with the other men on the little ciassa or piazza by the Municipio; and though his decidedly portly figure would not, at first sight, suggest devotion to

### San Biaggio

athletic pursuits, he can hold his own in this local, if one may not say national, game. Those who have seen the real pallone played in the courts of Florence or Rome, would perhaps smile at its elementary "pat-ball" rival, as played under some difficulties, in these little villages; but it is a real game for all that, and especially to be encouraged when we remember that it is the only one giving any kind of athletic exercise at which Italians ever play; unless we can so consider the melancholy jig which with them serves for popular dancing.

This village pallone is played by two sides of four players each, two "forwards" and two "backs," and they take turns in serving. The play is chiefly with the hand, round which a handkerchief is sometimes twisted, but kicking the ball is allowed. The scoring is, "fifteen," "thirty," "forty," "game," with the fallo or difetto (fault), and the umpire walks about the centre of the ground with an air of considerable importance, especially if the accompanying friendly dinner has taken place before instead of after the play, and both sides have generously plied him with encourag-

ing stimulants. He holds a bunch of fig leaves, with one of which he marks the spot where the ball fell when, from having struck some recognised obstacle, it could not be fairly taken. The following play is then made backwards and forwards over that spot instead of the centre of the court. It must be remembered that the game is played where archways, jutting houses, overhanging roofs, projecting balconies, and, sometimes, open shutters form obstacles which have to be taken into account and allowed for. We say sometimes open shutters, because the risk to windows is so considerable that such a phenomenon is rare in the neighbourhood of the ciassa during play hours, to say nothing of the Italian's inveterate habit of shutting all windows and leaving open all doors.

San Biaggio has just recently resolved to set its house in order by sorting the documents which for generations have encumbered its shelves. Happening to arrive there in the midst of the operation, piles of the older papers were at once willingly placed in one's hands, to wade through as best one might.

### San Biaggio

Much more remains from the past than can be noticed here, but a few notes have been selected almost at random.

The oldest records yet found date from 1598, die 22 di frebaro, when the priors acknowledge the receipt of 24 lire from their predecessors as the communal balance in hand.

Other items of income for the year are :-

maria maccaria for a measure of oil . 2 solai bertome amarbto 1 for the rest of his share

of figs; and so he has cancelled . 2 lire 12 soldi

On the opposite page are noted the items of expenditure. A certain *lodisio* had been sent right across the hills to Vallebona for some document relating to a vineyard, and was paid for his trouble 2 *soldi*. Another man pledged his house to the Commune for three measures of figs; and the legal document relating to the transaction cost 4 *soldi*. Two books in which to register the names of those who owed money to the Commune cost 1 *lira*.

The struggles with Ventimiglia were still

Bartolomeo Amalberto.

going on, and a lawyer had to be sent to Genoa to plead the cause of San Biaggio, at a cost of 20 lire.

In the same year agusto amarberti, who had become surety for his friend nicolao, had to pay the debt of 30 soldi, plus 5 soldi for the expenses of the court; and a poor widow, whose husband had been surety for two other men, was made to pay 7 lire 10 soldi.

Labour was cheaper then than now, for a mason's time was charged 1 *lira* per day, and 13 days of women's work cost 2 *lire* 12 *soldi*.

The priests as usual have their due share among the entries; for we have:—

For expenses incurred	with	n the	pries	t of	
Seborga .			•		ı lira 9 soldi
And besides for fowls					18 soldi
And besides to master	Lu	ca for	the	day	
he went to Mons	ignor	e.			I 2 soldi

The search for the relics of the patron saint was a serious business, and required, in the first instance, a *monitorio* which cost 4 *soldi*. Then this had to be published by the Provost of Ventimiglia at a further expense:—

# San Biaggio

1 ~	6 0
For eggs bought for the same o	3 0
For bread bought for the priest o	2 4
Item for expenses incurred for the priest	
in the house of Batista Amalberto . 10	0 0
Some way down the list is an entr	y of
8 soldi for a day's work in going to Ve	enti-
miglia "about the wine for the priest."	
Again we have :—	
For going to carry fowls to Monsignor, and	
expenses incurred by the consuls	
and officials £5	0 0
As the years go on, still the Church	and
its officers occupy a large share of the reco	oras,
and in 1603 we have :—	
For a kid sent to the Most Reverend	
Monsignor £2	4 0
For the expenses incurred for the same	4 0
Most Illustrious and Most Reverend	
when he came on a visit 13 1	
when he came on a visit 13 1	I O
He and his retinue had to be prop	perly
mounted at the expense of the people:-	
Calculated the mounts provided him 2	
lire, and the hay another 2 lire . L4	0 0
For "beating" the bell o	2 0

Their reputation for liberality was evidently dear to these old councillors, for, not content with giving away to the poor the old figs they did not know what to do with, and "tipping" the Bishop's Chaplain, they refunded to *filippo amarberto* the 10 *soldi* he had disbursed on an occasion when some soldiers "happened" to pass through the village, "and for our honour we paid for their drink."

In 1632 there was apparently a quarrel with the authorities of Soldano, who won their case, for there is an entry of 25 lire "paid to the Consuls of Soldano for the utensils which they had detained"; and at the same time:—

Paid to the aforesaid Andrea for having been in prison three days . .  $\pounds^2 \circ \circ$ 

It is necessary to pass over many important and interesting records of this period in order to glance rapidly at some of a later date. The documents belonging to the last years of the eighteenth century and the early days of the present one cannot be



Seborga. The South Gate.

### San Biaggio

fully appreciated without bearing in mind the rapid changes and developments which were taking place in political matters at that time. In these changes this part of Italy had its full share, including variations between Republican and Monarchical Government and the fetters of foreign domination.

It is not surprising that in such troubled times there should be demands for soldiers, orders for the denunciation of arms, and even rejoicings for success in war.

In reply to a request from the central authorities to be informed of the number of arms available among the inhabitants of the village, the councillors of San Biaggio forward the modest statement already quoted on p. 91.

It is not surprising that a revolutionary Government, whose arrogant motto was "Liberty and Equality," found it necessary to suppress all liberty and equality which were not in accord with its own notions; and San Biaggio still preserves the original notice posted on the walls a hundred years ago announcing that in consequence of

tumults, disorders, and "seditious movements," energetic measures had become necessary.

Among other provisions it is decreed that the authors of seditious movements, those who shall incite the people to take up arms, who throw down the "Tree of Liberty," or invite the people to be wanting in respect and subordination to the constituted authorities, are to be punished with the extreme penalty of the law.

The priests were treated with unusual harshness, for they were to be held responsible for the tumults and seditious movements taking place in their respective parishes, unless they denounced the authors of them to the police authorities.

The ringing of the church bell a martelli was to be punished with death, and if bells were so rung, the parish priests were to be considered the authors of the deed, unless they denounced the same to the authorities.

During the Napoleonic régime, the deliberations of the various communal councils had to be forwarded to the Prefect of the Province

for his approval, and the earliest copy to be found here was translated into French, with a mistake in one word which brought an unpleasant inhibition to the Commune; the red-tapeism of the Prefect triumphing over good sense and long-established custom.

The later reports were not translated, but the distaste for foreign control seems to have led the councillors to use for their communications any miserable half sheets of paper they could lay their hands on, in order to send copies of their resolutions. One of these shabby notes was returned with the following official reproof on the back:—

"Monsieur Le Maire est invité à faire faire à l'avenir les Extraits des Délibérations sur du plus grand papier; il ne convient pas de présenter des chiffons tels que ceux-ci à Monsieur le Prefet."

#### SOLDANO

A short walk beyond San Biaggio lies Soldano, of disappointing and uninteresting exterior, coming close down to the public

16 T

M

road, but with the usual steep winding streets, and curious dark corners. There is little or nothing for the artist, but the village is



Soldano, from the north.

extending, and has, relatively speaking, an air of prosperity. There are open more spaces and more new houses than usual, and the women are much occupied with weaving, by hand - looms of course, the

plain but durable linen of the country, which finds a ready market at Ventimiglia and elsewhere. The old women sit about on their doorsteps and spin the flax, while the girls wash the lengths of finished linen in the

stream below. A torrent runs right through the village, and by its sides grow enormous fig trees, this fruit being now, as in old times, one of the staple products of the place.¹ Vines are numerous, and one old stem growing in a very unpromising corner reaches to the terrace at the top of the house, a height of some 40 feet, before it branches out and covers the *pergola* with its welcome shade and luscious fruit. The streets are clean and well kept, and though there are absolutely no architectural features of interest, it is possible to discover in some of the joinery, such as house-doors, etc., an attempt at something beyond the usual commonplace.

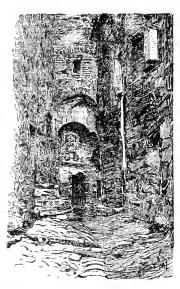
Professor G. Rossi<sup>2</sup> believes the town to have been founded by the Commune of Ventimiglia in the middle of the twelfth century, with prisoners taken in wars at Tortosa and Almeria, but gives no arguments in proof of his somewhat fanciful conjecture. He adds

Delicious little sweet black figs, freshly gathered, are sold in Bordighera during August and September, at the rate of from twenty to thirty for a penny.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Storia della Citta di Ventimiglia, Oneglia, 1886.

that the Castrum de Soldano is mentioned in a document of the year 1257.

Here also some old account books are



Street in Soldano.

preserved in the Municipio. They were all courteously produced for examination, oldest and the one pointed to with pardonable pride. A close examination soon showed, however, that this was only a register of a religious corporation. and rechurch corded

accounts exclusively. In fact, the parchment in which it is bound shows clear traces of old black-lettering and red initials, as if it had formed part of some office-book of the church. The chief sources of income mentioned were the money offerings of the faithful—on one

occasion a legacy of 2 lire—with, more rarely, the value of a sheep which had been contributed to the church by some devout worshipper who had no money to spare. Mutton must have been cheap in those days, for one of these pecore was entered at the modest value of 2 lire and 12 soldi, little more than the cost of mending the confessional on 4th June 1592, or the etem doe giornate (two days' work), for painting the Canon's residence and the church in 1597.

Amongst the expenses, candles, wax, and incense of course hold important places, besides rope for the bells, and, not least, "a pound of powder for the day of Corpus Domini"; which last item cost 14 soldi.

The oldest register of accounts really belonging to the Municipal authorities commences early in the seventeenth century, and we find that at that period payments and contributions were still made in kind, especially in oil. In the year 1663, Giacomo Amalberto is credited with having paid "20 lire"

<sup>1</sup> See the notes on Vallecrosia.

and 4 soldi in so much oil, that is 5 rubi, and a pound and a half, placed in the jar of the storehouse," etc. etc.

There also was a public oven annually let at varying rents; and in 1690 we find the first mention of a public slaughter-house, which was let for the year at 10 lire 17 soldi and 4 denari. It may interest some to note that this letting took place annually on Palm Sunday. Perhaps the speculation did not pay, for the next entry shows the rent to have been only 7 lire and 5 soldi; while a year or two later, it had sunk to 5 lire 8 soldi.

Although in those days public corporations had not invented sewage farms, etc., yet the old councillors were not disinclined to turn an honest penny out of refuse, for in 1680, on the 19th of July, they began to sell the Rumenta, the sweepings of the place, for 1 lira and 4 soldi; and this item is repeated in the accounts of subsequent years at a gradually increasing value.

About the middle of the seventeenth

 $<sup>^1</sup>$  The usual measure for olives or oil, formerly =25 libbre, but now = \$ kilogrammes.



Street in Apricale.



century the average income of the Municipality, or "University" as it was called, seems to have been under 200 lire, and to have sufficed for the expenses. This accountbook was regularly carried to Ventimiglia to be audited by the proper officials, and under the date 1711 there is an interesting page, in beautiful handwriting, being the auditor's certificate, which also orders the newlyappointed councillors to take over the sum of 6 lire 16 soldi 8 denari, the balance in hand, out of which they would have to pay 2 lire to the retiring councillors for their trouble in taking the register to be examined, and to the auditor a fee of 2 lire for the audit itself.

This fee of 2 *lire* was regularly paid for many years; and the control of the *Capitano*, or *Comisario* (commissioner) was very severe—in certain directions.

The annual salary of the Secretary of the Municipality was only 4 *lire*, and we can but hope that his duties consisted in little more than the few entries which these records show. They are indicated very summarily in the

following item: "1663, piu pagato a Mro. Gio. p lana pasata del 1662 p aver scrito nel libro e altra cosa p luniversita, 4:0:0." There is an air of delightful simplicity about the expression: "for having written in the book and [done] other things for the university," especially as it refers to the duties of a whole year.

The influence of the Church was quite sufficient to obtain the payment, out of the public funds, of many expenses connected with the maintenance and repair of ecclesiastical buildings, in the furnishing of oil for the lamps, and wax for the candles, etc. These last items were by no means trifling, for each year the Revde. retor (Rector) received about 6 rubi of oil, and on one occasion the cerie pascale are noted as costing 6 lire 16 soldi.

The walls of the present buildings bear witness to a considerable love for pictures of Saints, and other pious reminders, in addition to the regular street shrines; and while the art is of the poorest, the spirit which prompted its exercise must be respected.

Even in the year of grace 1648, the clergy

were not able to keep their flocks from squabbles in the law courts, for we have a record of "expenses on account of a lawsuit"

in which a certain "Reverendo" figures, and for which the town had to pay, in two instalments, the magnificent sum of I lira and 16 soldi. Justice, or at all events law, like mutton, was evidently cheaper inthose "good old times!"



Street in Soldano.

The solemnities of Good Friday and Easter-Day 1652 must have been remarkable, for the new *sepurco* (sepulchre) cost f.66:5:0, and it was made by *maestro Gugli*-

elmo, and maestro Antonio Mauro, to whom be all due honour.

The devotion of the consegieri (councillors) to their church sometimes got them into trouble, for in 1663 they spent a good deal of money on the canon's residence, only to find that the Ventimiglia official refused to sanction the expenditure, unless upon a certificate from the Illustrious Magistrate of Coità, to be presented within eight days; otherwise they would have to refund the amount themselves, with interest at the rate of 6 per cent so long as it remained unpaid.

The clergy were sometimes the cause of trouble and anxiety to their flocks, then as now, for there is an entry apparently belonging to the year 1801: "For two days' work, and a carriage, for going to seek the parroco (parish priest), f.5:4:0."

The income of the Commune was derived from various sources, but in the records that have come down to us there is no mention of a regular money tax; individuals are registered

<sup>1</sup> Coitā = Communità.

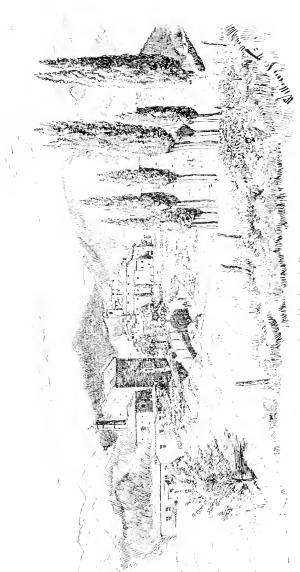
with their several payments. It seems to have depended largely on the interest of money lent on the security of land, or, more rarely, rent for the land itself held from the Commune; but the letting of the public forno and the sweepings of the piasa were regular items. Beside these there was an income from the sale of oil produced by the public lands, the olives themselves, figs, and wine, of which contributions were made in certain proportions. There were certain officers called mestrali, or overseers, whose duty it was to look after these sales.

In 1672 or thereabouts we enter upon a new era of development. We begin to find disbursements for public works, made upon the orders of the Commandant of the Valley, and the "officers of war." The gates of the town are repaired again, and there is a charge for a rubo and a half of gunpowder at 25 lire 10 soldi, with nine pounds of balls at 2 lire 12 soldi. The armaments of those days were insignificant indeed, but there is something almost comic in the solemn entry of 21 lire 9 soldi 8 denari for "powder distri-

buted, as is seen in the book of the figs, where are inscribed those who have taken some of it."

The education question takes a serious turn also at Soldano. In 1754 a certain Giovanni Bartolomeo, a native of the place, left some pieces of land and a house with instructions to the authorities to let them to the "greatest possible advantage," and to hand the proceeds to the parish priest for the time being, with the obligation on his part to celebrate thirty masses annually for the soul of the testator, and in addition to teach reading and writing and a little abbaco 1 to the children of the place. For the past thirty years the property has produced 606 lire annually, of which 500 have been regularly paid to the priest for the school, and 106 for the masses. In 1887 a difficulty arose because according to the Italian law it was necessary to have a certificated teacher, and the priest did not meet the requirements. Now that the lease has expired, a new dispute has arisen. The property has immensely increased in value. The authorities wish to

<sup>1</sup> Abbaco = Arithmetic.



Perinalde, from the East.

#### Perinaldo

sell it and apply the proceeds to educational purposes, at their discretion. The priest claims the whole under the terms of the will; and the question is now in the hands of a Government department, which will probably take an indefinite period to come to a decision.

#### PERINALDO

Imagine a vast and splendid amphitheatre of hills, approximately in a horseshoe form, with its longer axis placed north and south. The sides are covered with verdure; pines and chestnuts clothe the upper slopes; enormous vineyards cover the lower ones, where the regular terraces look like seats prepared for millions in a grand spectacle of the Gods. The open southern end of this grand arena stretches away along the valley to where the sapphire blue of the Mediterranean fills up the far horizon. Nearly across this amphitheatre, towards the upper end, an irregular ridge runs almost at right angles; and, scrambling along the highest portion,

crowning the summit, clinging to the steep slopes, basking in the full Southern sunshine, and towering high above all rivals, lies the village of Perinaldo.

For position, few places along the Italian Riviera can be compared with it unless such as its smaller sister Seborga; and it has, besides, a charm all its own. With a couple of thousand inhabitants, an air which leads them on to a good old age, wine so excellent as to be the envy of the neighbourhood, and so plentiful as to be exported in considerable quantities to the lowlands beneath, it is not to be wondered at that the villagers are proud of their home and its attractions.

Within the last year a road has been made which places Perinaldo in the way of communication with the rest of the world by means of wheeled vehicles; but as yet little advantage has been taken of it. Some distance beyond Soldano the road which follows the torrent, and begins to rise more rapidly, reaches the foot of the slope leading to the cross-ridge before mentioned. Here it has been necessary to make a series of

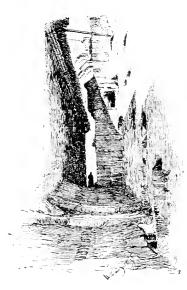
#### Perinaldo

zigzags with a rather rapid gradient, and the distance up this slope is calculated at about four miles.

Even where this new road terminates there is a short but very steep climb into the village itself, and then the main street runs along the ridge about east and west with others below, and some of the cross-streets are simple stairways in tunnels. The upper street, though narrow, is fairly open, but the lower ones are weird and strange. One seems to be wandering in a dream, and stumbles across the oddest kind of dark corners and dusky vaulted passages; not to mention the mules which take up all the roadway with their bundles of brushwood or fodder, and oblige you to take refuge in a doorway or stairway while they go by.

The cleanliness noticed in other places is decidedly wanting here, but the people are pleasant-mannered and courteous to strangers, though the children are chiefly noticeable for an utter absence of discipline, and an astonishing want of respect for their parents and elders.

Accommodation is of the most elementary and primitive kind, and not yet such as to tempt one to stay for more than a few hours.



Street in Perinaldo.

Even food is literally-too literally—of the simplest; butter is practically unknown; cheese is rare; meat only obtainable about two three days week, and vegetables extremely limited in choice, though fruit of certain kinds, such as

grapes, figs, and pears, may be found. But the wine—pure, excellent-flavoured, and cheap —makes up for many defects.

At nightfall a visitor must provide himself with a lantern if he wishes to walk about, for there are no lamps in the streets, and the

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darkness is such as may be felt very much indeed by an adventurous pedestrian who happens to stumble into one of the many holes or stairways, stables or by-paths, over which the night has thrown a friendly veil.

Mules are very largely used for transport of all kinds, and women load and drive them. Building materials, among others, are carried in this way from one point to another, and the women ride splendidly on the high packsaddles, between the two halves of a load, up and down the steepest slopes. A considerable knack is required to load and unload these beasts, and the operation is by no means as easy as it seems.

Here as elsewhere in the district there is little or nothing of any architectural interest; but the church has a carved lintel over one of the doorways in the principal façade which gives the date:—MCCCCLXXXX6 · DIE · III · MENSIS IWNII · 1 (the remaining portion is very indistinct and partly destroyed). The centre

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The peculiarities of the old and imperfect lettering cannot be exactly reproduced by the immaculate regularity of modern type.

panel has the Lamb and Flag, and on each side is an eagle extended, crowned; while outside these are two smaller panels, one of them containing vine leaves, and the other what seems a heraldic cognisance, of which we have not yet discovered the meaning. In the flank wall of the steps leading up to the entrances is built a broken slab which seems to have been the lintel of the opposite door, but is of rather rougher workmanship, and also much defaced. The existing portion of the inscription is: SVB · SIXTO · POT  $\cdot \cdot \cdot + M \cdot \cdot$ , the rest is destroyed. The design seems to have been similar to that of the lintel first referred to, with the Lamb and Flag in the centre panel, and an eagle on each side.

In the interior of the church there is absolutely nothing of interest, and the colouring and gilding are of the least pleasing sort. There is a modern altar-painting by a certain Cassini, and of the usual type.

Over the doorway of a house in the street leading to the church is a little *Capitello* or shrine, once probably containing a statuette,

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and, with the exception of the carved lintels above referred to, the only architectural detail of the place with any interest. It consists of a pierced slab with graceful ornament in very low relief, and the inscription:—OGNV · CHE · PASSERA · P · QVETA · VIA DOVERA · SALVTAR · GIESV · MARIA. The last word is crowded and badly spaced, but the lettering and carving are excellently well cut. At one side is an elegant lamp-bracket in wrought iron; and the spandrel of the door below is also filled with ironwork of a simple but effective design. There is no date to the work, but it is perhaps safe to attribute it to the early *Cinque cento*.

In the Municipio there are some documents of the sixteenth century, and one—apparently a copy—referring to a convention between the Marchesato of Dolceacqua and the city of Ventimiglia in 1355.

Nearly all the other papers, accounts, receipts, resolutions, reports, etc., are of the eighteenth century, and give us the same kind of information as we have found in other places of this neighbourhood.

In 1718 the Bishop of Sarzana, as "Donatorio" of the Bishop of Ventimiglia, claims the payment of tithes which have not been given for nine years; and by his agent explains that they refer to "corn, oats, lambs, kids, cheese, and other like things," as well as money; and are due from a number of places in the neighbourhood: also that the amount due annually from Perinaldo is due scutti d'oro Italia, et un quarto di scutto argento di Genova, payable on the day of All Saints.

A reason for the non-payment of these tithes had been found in the fact that the Bishop had till recently not consented to nominate a Vicar in partibus, but this excuse having ceased to exist, he intends now to exact payment.

In the communal accounts for 1766 is noted a payment of tithes "as per receipt dated 18th December 1765," amounting to 18 lire 11 soldi 10 denari.

The good priests of those days seem to have taken care of themselves, for they were remunerated proportionately much better than



Street in Apricale (Via degli Angeli).

#### Perinaldo

any one else, except, perhaps, the lawyers. In 1735 the Rev. D'Alessandro Rondello, Lenten preacher for the year, was paid by the Commune his "honorarium" of 56 lire; and in 1738 the fee paid amounted to 85 lire.

There are various entries of payments for masses as (no date): "lire 3 soldi 15 paid by the Treasurer of the Magnificent Community of Perinaldo for the usual masses of the Holy Spirit"—which is rather indefinite, but another paper, dated 1736, acknowledges the receipt of 3 lire 12 soldi for messe cantate, and mentions the "Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit."

Repairs of the church and its belongings were paid for out of the public funds. In 1738 the Prior of the Society of Corpus Domini acknowledges the receipt of 40 lire—"For a similar amount consumed by me in the restoration of the silver vessels and other fittings of the parish church."

There are various receipts and papers regarding payment of the annual contribution to the Marchesato of Dolceacqua, and in 1731

the Communal Council passed a resolution that a petition be presented to the Marquis begging that the inhabitants of Perinaldo be confirmed in, and allowed to exercise, their ancient right of cutting and carrying away dead wood from the forests.

A receipt dated 1736 acknowledges the payment to the Marquis of that day of the sum of 29 *lire*, and the "usual presents," which consisted of "one sheep, a hundred eggs, twelve fowls, and fresh cheese."

In the communal accounts for 1766 is an entry of 20 lire 12 soldi paid to the Marquis; but whether this was accompanied by presents in kind we have as yet no means of knowing.

Reference has already been made to the bye-laws of the "otto luoghi" with regard to petty thefts in fields or gardens.

Perinaldo found it necessary in 1733 to establish a corresponding code, and several of the provisions resemble those previously quoted. It was expressly forbidden to gather snails on any one else's land, the reason assigned being that great damage was done by the trespassers, and that their avowed

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object was only a cover and excuse for other depredations. If any one were convicted of damage to the extent of 5 lire and 5 soldi, he was to be subjected to a fine of 10 lire for each offence—one-third of the amount to be paid to the authorities, and the remaining two-thirds to the injured person, to be, however, by him shared with the accuser (informer) if there were one. Another curious clause provides that, if the offence be committed at night, besides the payment of the fine above mentioned, the owners of lands adjoining that damaged can compel the offender to pay them the value of all damages committed on their properties by unknown offenders within the previous six months! It was specially forbidden to go on another's property on the pretence of searching for fruits remaining upon the trees after the owner had finished his gathering; nor was it allowed to collect the leaves of such trees as the chestnut, beech, or oak, which were necessary to the enrichment of the soil, or those of fig trees and vines, which served as food for animals. Several clauses provide against damages by animals,

whether straying or led for pasture. In order to avoid temptation to steal for the sake of selling, it was expressly forbidden to purchase fruit from any person whatever at night; or, in the day, from children, or women who were not heads of families; and, it being considered that keepers of taverns and eating-houses were the worst offenders, they were absolutely forbidden to purchase fruit from any one at all! The drastic severity of this last provision was barely modified by another to the effect that, if any well-known person wished to buy fruit, he must present himself to the authorities, obtain a license, and deposit a guarantee of at least 100 lire!

In spite of all this, dishonesty prevailed, and troubled the authorities as well as their fellow-townspeople; for in 1747 the Council passed a resolution couched in terms of amusing exaggeration and grandiloquence, declaring that in consequence of "the great disorder and sackings or rather thievings (sacheggiamenti o per dir meglio rubamenti) which daily take place, and are committed on other people's property by taking ears

#### Perinaldo

of corn and barley and other edibles (lit. victuals)," it was desirable to appoint four guardians to protect the property of the citizens.

Even the authorities themselves had black sheep among their number, for in 1727 a "Parliament" was summoned to consider certain abuses which existed in the management of the affairs of the Commune. Representatives of all the principal families of the place were present, and were mentioned by name in the minutes of the proceedings. Definite accusations were brought on written evidence. It was stated that instead of the full number of councillors being appointed, two kept the matter in their own hands, and one of them was heavily in debt to the Commune itself. In fact things were generally in a bad way, and, as Italians say even nowadays, it was necessary to "provide seriously"; which only means a great deal of talk, and letting things go on as before.

Irregularities must still have continued, if not always in the same direction; perhaps there was even "factious opposition" in the

Municipal Council, for under date 1731 we have a petition of two unfortunate councillors who, after having held office for eight months, were suddenly suspended and forbidden to take part in the meetings of the Council, on the accusation that their election was null and void; and they appeal to the superior authorities of the district to be confirmed in what they consider their rights.

By the middle of the century the Council was in fresh trouble, this time about the depredations in the forests belonging to the Commune; so they sent their officers to examine and report. These individuals, who must have gone in considerable force, discovered "two women and three asinine beasts" (!) from Colla, prepared to carry away dead leaves. The officers found the damage so great that they ordered the instant arrest of the "asinine beasts," which were described in the report as being "both feminine, of a whitish colour, and medium size." Whether from an excess of courtesy, or - more probably - from fear of consequences, the women were not carried off,

#### Perinaldo

but no sooner had the animals been despatched to Perinaldo than there appeared on the scene some one who declared that he was the son of another man named Bobone, and the husband of one of the women aforesaid. Besides this he was the owner of one of the animals that had been arrested; he said the other belonged to a friend of his; and he refused to oblige with any further information.

At the foot of this report is a note of two magistrates of the place to the effect that they had ordered Bobone to appear before them to answer for damages to the forest. Only portions of the accompanying documents can be found at present, but it appears that Bobone replied by claiming damages for the detention of the animals; and there is a fragment of a decision ordering that no further steps are to be taken by the Council of Perinaldo till the relations between the Marchesato of Dolceacqua to which Perinaldo belonged, and the Commune of S. Remo to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Even to-day, in Italy, every authority, however petty, always wants to know who your father was.

which Colla belonged, had been properly defined.

The income of the Commune was derived from the usual sources-letting of the ovens (there were three of them), the sale of rubbish, contributions in kind (as, for instance, four per cent of all the oil produced), the possession of communal lands with olives etc., and a public lime-kiln. This last ought to have been specially profitable, for in the accounts of expenses connected with its construction in 1755 we have an item: "To a priest for the Benediction and the Mass for the prosperity of the furnace, 18 soldi." On the same date was noted the provision of 16 pints 1 of wine at various times for the men who had assisted, and provided the firewood necessary to the workers to make the said furnace, at a cost of 1 lira 12 soldi; nearly twice the cost of the Mass and Benediction.

Eatables were also provided for the men and women who had "assisted"; the men's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The pinta, a measure very seldom met with, was possibly about a quart, judging from the cost of the wine.



Perinaldo.



#### Perinaldo

food costing at the rate of 4 soldi, and that of the women at 2 soldi each day.

It is impossible to do justice to these old documents in our limited space, but a word must be said about the cost of litigation. We have a full account of the expenses incurred by the Commune in a suit at Dolceacqua. The fee of the Procuratore or lawyer was 10 soldi for each attendance, and the Sindaco or Mayor got 15 soldi for his day's expenses. The summoning of two witnesses cost 2 soldi, and they themselves were paid 2 lire and 10 soldi, about as much as a witness gets to-day in an Italian Court of Justice. A procura or power of attorney cost 10 soldi, and a messenger who carried a report was compensated for his trouble by a fee of 1 Perinaldo enjoyed the services of a doctor who received a yearly stipend of 250 lire, besides an annual present, on the feast of S. M. Magdalene, of 16 lire 10 soldi.

The old monastery has been turned into communal schools, but it contains no features of interest, and what remained of its Library has been transferred to the Municipio. Its

documents, alas! which must have been of considerable value and interest, were for a long time the prey of all who chose to help themselves on festas, when the place was thrown open to the public; so that we shall never know what treasures Perinaldo has lost through its carelessness and indifference in this respect.



Perinaldo, from Apricale.



#### APRICALE

Chi acqua beve Mai non riceve Grazie da me.

The sentiment here expressed must not be attributed too indiscriminately to the inhabitants of this most delightful and unusual

village, but it is inscribed as the motto of a local Temple of Bacchus, one of the wineshops on the little Piazza.

To reach this pleasant resort of the roystering divinity, one may come down an extremely steep and rugged path from Perinaldo-chiefly along the terraced vineyards—cross the stream by an old and narrow stone bridge of a single arch, and then climb up another less rugged but almost equally steep path on the opposite side of the valley. But modern resources have, within the last couple of years, made a fairly good carriage-road from Isolabona along the hillsides above the torrent, reaching the lower point of the village; so that Apricale may now be said to be in communication with the outer world. For perhaps a thousand years it had stood alone in its "splendid isolation," a feudal stronghold which must have been in those times practically impregnable; and among all our Rock Villages it is the most picturesque, the most interesting in its history and records, as well as in some other respects the most

pleasing and attractive object of an excursion to-day.

Of its foundation and earliest history scarcely anything is yet known, but some have asserted that in very ancient times a monastery was founded there by Benedictine monks from Pigna, originally from Ventimiglia, and that their church, S. Pietro in Ento, stood where the present cemetery is. The remains of early structures take us back undoubtedly to the twelfth century, if not much farther. There is still, below the Piazza, a gateway with plain wrought stone arch and jambs, where the provision for barring the massive gate is yet visible, and on the right-hand jamb is an inscription with the date 1164. The gateway evidently led, in former times, into the precincts of the castle itself, and of this latter building some massive walls are yet standing, incorporated into modern dwellings; while ancient subterranean chambers run under some of the little streets, and even below part of the church itself. Beyond a few arches in wrought stone, but without any mouldings, there is very little of what can

o

be called an architectural character, and the church, as usual, has been so completely bedaubed with plaster, that all traces of earlier work have disappeared. At first independent, the castle and its properties passed later into the possession of the Marchesi of Dolceacqua, and it must have been one of their favourite residences. With the varying fortunes of this noble house, and the growth of Apricale itself outside the castle walls, a measure of civil liberty was assured to the inhabitants, but this was too often hindered and curtailed by the tyranny and prejudice of the feudal lords.

It is probable that the proportions and outline of Apricale may once have been very different from those it now exhibits. Apart from several gateways to be seen within the present boundaries, indicating a more limited area of occupation, there are proofs that, in one direction at least, the village extended farther than it does now. In digging for the cultivation of the terraces on the eastern slopes, the peasants sometimes come upon old walls of solid masonry, and

some of the gardens are known to have vaulted chambers beneath them.

Itself perched on a steep hill, down which it stretches in a particularly picturesque

fashion, it is surrounded by higher hills, and is therefore protected from the winds which sweep so fiercely through the streets of its rival Bajardo. The air is pure and soft; and the natives assert that during the winter the usual



A study of olives.

severities of that season are felt much less than at other places in the neighbourhood. The inhabitants, mostly engaged in agricultural pursuits, are nearly all landowners, and real poverty is almost unknown. One of the communal authorities states that, at the present time, only about three families can be called needy (bisognosi); and certainly one never observes such marked distinctions of

class or caste as prevail elsewhere, but, instead, an air of general and genial equality, with an appearance of comfort if not prosperity. Unlike what we find along the shore, the manners of the people are marked by unvarying and indeed exceptional courtesy; and a respectable stranger moving through the place will find himself saluted on all hands. On one occasion, an Englishman, who was sketching in the neighbourhood, seeing that an old woman passed without the usual Buon Giorno or Signoria, himself offered the pleasant good wish; but the peasant passing on with her load of firewood apologised for having neglected her duty, and explained that she had been afraid to disturb him. The only individuals who ever exhibit any approach to want of civility are, as may be expected, those who in the vitiated moral atmosphere of larger towns have imbibed an exaggerated notion of their own importance, or learned the latest shibboleth of political cant, without the moderating influences of a proper education. It is pleasant to record this special characteristic of the inhabitants of Apricale, because in

other respects they also compare very favourably with the population of the *Marina*. It would seem as if many centuries of isolation had tended to preserve a natural, almost naïve, simplicity, and an unusual purity of thought and life. Perhaps the generally favourable conditions of existence may have had a much larger share in producing this good effect than doctrinarians would be willing to admit; for while escaping on the one hand the inevitable deterioration resulting from large commercial transactions, they also escaped the necessarily brutalising influences of extreme poverty.

Perhaps the pleasantest season for visiting Apricale is in the vintage time, when the annata, the year's yield, has been a good one, and allegria reigns supreme. All day, from dawn till dark, the laden mules bring in their full corbini of purple grapes; men, women, and children carry on their heads baskets filled with similar luscious clusters, covered over with goldening leaves. Nearly every householder is making wine, and all along the streets there is the sweet pungent odour

of the ripening must, or the purple refuse from the empty vats. Every one is invited to taste the new wine, or, may be, to feast to his heart's content on the grapes piled everywhere in rich profusion. The whole air seems full of a mild excitement; and the deep, dark, vaulted cellars, where the grapes are trodden during the soft autumn nights, ring with song and laughter, while oil lamps flicker from the gray old walls, and brawny arms are stained with ruby tinctures.

Apricale produces some of the best wine of the district, in good seasons, but light and very wholesome; and with improved methods and more care it could be made a splendid resource for the village. Unfortunately, improved methods generally mean adulteration, and so, for our time at least, let us leave the old habits to go on their way, and keep the present absolute purity of the grape-juice unimpaired by new-fangled processes and scientific mystification.

One curious method is sometimes practised to produce what is called *vino sforzato*, forced wine. In this system extra strong barrels are



Street in Apricale (Via del Palazzo).

used.<sup>1</sup> They are filled with must and grapes altogether, just as they are pressed, and then the barrels are at once tightly secured with

iron fastenings, and are left thus for a whole year before pouring off the wine.

No other village of the district has so splendid a situation, or presents a greater number of picturesque views. Less than half-way from Isolabona,



Part of Apricale, from the north.

along the new road, one begins to see its quaint sinuous figure, like a gigantic living thing reposing on the rugged slopes; and each fresh turn of the road brings some new and varied prospect. It is hard to say which hour gives the lovelier effect,—when on an autumn morning the whole vast pile of rock

<sup>1</sup> It is only carried out on a small scale.

and village, with its dark sky-line sharp against the glow of dawn, stands up like a dreamy phantasm of soft blue mist from out its bed of silvery olive sheen, all details lost in indistinctness, and seeming unearthly and unreal, - when with a sunset glow on the last roofs and pointed spire, the oliveclad slopes are getting grayer and grayer down to the shadows of the torrent bed, and the dark mass of the old bridge which leads towards Perinaldo spans the stream, with its broad arch in strong relief against the softer distance,—or when in the soft summer nights the moonbeams flicker playfully on tree and wall and casement, making weirder and more fantastic the long dark lingering shadows of gloomy vault and mountain path.

Apricale has been so fortunate as to have preserved a number of historic records. In the archives of the Municipio, courteously thrown open for our inspection and research, there is a mass of documents which merit careful examination and study. Even to enumerate them here would be out of the question; a mere glance must suffice. The

oldest, all on parchment, and exhibiting sad signs of neglect and ill-treatment, range from A.D. 1254 to A.D. 1442, but many are mutilated. It is recounted by several of the authorities that on one occasion, when the church was redecorated, the painters were allowed to help themselves to the old documents, and cut them up to make their stencil plates! They are even now covered with dust and mildew; and, with their companion papers, have evidently afforded great sport to certain mischievous little rodents, whose respect for antiquity is not highly developed. Some of the specimens of calligraphy are very beautiful of their kind, and the notarymarks they include would in themselves form an interesting subject for study. Some documents are conventions between Pigna and Apricale, others treat of the erbaggio e pascolo della bandita oltranervia, and one is an agreement between Apricale and Podius Rainaldi, interesting to us now as indicating the origin of the name Perinaldo.

There are many papers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but kept without

any order or arrangement. The priests were, as usual, well to the fore, and have left their mark on the communal accounts here as elsewhere. Some of their actions sayour of an excessive masterfulness, as, for instance, when, about 1585, the bishop summarily ordered the construction of a new church. One of the reasons adduced for his order was that great inconvenience was caused to the existing church by smoke coming in from the houses underneath it. The people sent a humble petition to his lordship, and began it in these terms: Li huomini di Apricale restano poveri in particolar et poverissimi in universale, di modo che apena po'no suplire alli carichi annuali, etc., and they beg that, being, as above quoted, "poor individually, and very poor collectively," they may be allowed to repair the existing church instead of building a new one; promising that no more nuisance shall arise from the smoke. In date 1586 is the bishop's authorisation to carry out this proposed restoration, in place of executing his former commands. His name was Nicolaus Mascurdus.

There is a receipt of 1741 for lire sedeci for tithes due to the Episcopal See at Ventimiglia, and another by which a priest acknowledges the payment to him of 33 lire 6 soldi as chaplain elected by the executors of a certain Durante. The preachers continued to be well paid also here, and Fra Alberto da Breglio Prede. Capno. admits he has received 100 lire di genova for his offices in that capacity.

It seems that in the early part of the seventeenth century Apricale was carrying out on its small scale the principle of providing corn for the use of the population. There was a communal Magazzino del Grano, and one of its books of accounts, dated 1616, is still preserved. After the usual statement or balance-sheet between outgoing and incoming officials, it goes on with the Notta delli grani comprati per il Magzo. Grain was bought by the mina, the price varying from 21 to 22 fiorini per mina. A good deal was obtained from the various mulattieri who brought it from different places in the neighbourhood; some came from Saorgio in the Roya valley,

<sup>1</sup> A measure of 20 rubi.

and some was taken of the "Most Illustrious Signore" of the place itself. Afterwards follow entries of the purchase of ordio, barley, at the rate of 14 fiorini per mina, while in another part are noted sales of the same to private individuals in small quantities, and on credit, the name of each purchaser's security being also given. The only note which mentions a sale price gives 14 fiorini per mina, so it would seem that the authorities did not make any profit on the transaction, but only attended to the problem of distribution, anticipating later events with a mild form of socialism.

We must not omit some extracts from the ordinary accounts of the Commune, and there is a well-written register on stamped paper, dated 1741, from which we learn that when in February the Mayor was sent to Nice, on business in connection with the oil-mills, he was allowed 6 lire for three days' expenses. Then on 20th May there was paid to a mason, ad un Mro, for repairing the Fountain on the Piazza, £1:10. The materials were not expensive:—

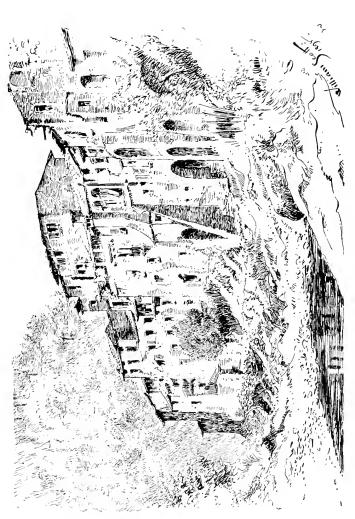
On yet another occasion the *Sindaco* had to betake himself to Nice. This time it was to conduct a soldier who had been requisitioned for the provincial regiment. As usual he was paid 6 *lire* for his three days' absence, as duly entered in the accounts. Then follows another item:—

This soldier having been rejected by the authorities, the Sindaco took a second. There was the same entry for his own expenses, and the same for the soldier's rations. As ill-luck would have it, this second soldier was also rejected, and the Sindaco went over the ground again with a third, who seems to have been accepted. But while Sindaci proposed, the Magnificent Captain at Ventimiglia disposed, for against each item regarding the soldier's food is written in the margin si dipellisce, and they were duly struck out.

Accustomed as we are to live in full security from attack, it seems strange to read that the *Sindaco Martino*—perhaps the same who went so often to Nice—had to send and buy powder and ball, at a cost of 2 *lire*, "to be used against the bandits who have shown themselves on the confines of this place."

These communal accounts were subjected not only to the supervision of the Magnificent Captain at Ventimiglia, but also to a sort of public audit; for the messo giurato, an official of the Commune, announced them to the assembled people (called together by the beating of a drum as they left the church after divine service), the Secretary dictating them word by word. This took place on three separate days, and after each publication they were affixed in a public place, and left "from the rising to the setting of the sun," for the inspection of those who could, or cared to, read them.

To treat, with any fulness, of the relations between Apricale and the Marchesato of Dolceacqua would require a whole volume to itself, and the references thereto



Part of Isolabona, from the Apricale Torrent.

among these documents are neither few nor uninteresting. The authority of these feudal lords was so complete that we cannot wonder to find it sometimes abused. There

is a copy of a communication, unfortunately without date, which was sent to one of these nobles by the Commune of Apricale, protesting against his announced intention of constructing an oil-mill for himself near the



Ruins of Castle, Isolabona.

mills belonging to the Commune. It pleads that the water supply will not be sufficient for both parties; it remind. His Excellency that he has already promised not to build without first coming to terms with the men of Apricale; and, after reminding him that the Commune has sent to him several times without getting satisfaction,

proposes that the matter be referred to arbitration.

It appears that this Signore had even forbidden the men of Apricale to grind elsewhere than in his mills, under a penalty of 10 gold *scudi*; and another document declares that he had ill-treated and abused the messenger of the Commune. The authorities were very patient, for they begged him not to put them to the expense of a lawsuit, and again offered to refer the matter to the decision of one of his own near relatives.

At least there was one of these proud Marchesi who had some care for the interests of his people, for in 1653 Francesco Doria issued a manifesto ordering every notary to keep a register of all documents, deeds, wills, etc., he may have executed. This was in order to prevent frauds by the said notaries, and it would seem there were good grounds for the provision.

Among the accounts is one which contains a record of the various contributions in kind and in coin, which were regularly transmitted to the Marchese. On the feast of Santa

## Apricale

Lucia he got £11:13:4; at Easter, 2 kids; on the feast of S. Maria Maddalena, a whole sheep, 12 fowls, and 2 lbs. of a cheese called *Toma.*<sup>1</sup> So far this does not seem excessive, but other entries mention a tithe amounting to 11 *selmate* (mule-loads), and 14 *moturali* (fractions of a *selmata*) of corn, so that a good deal of land must have been under regular cultivation at that time.

There is an interesting report on work done at the Campanile in 1747, but it is too technical to be given here; and there are also documents referring to damage wrought by the heavy rains in 1777, when half a mile of the Favaro path—the one leading towards Perinaldo—was seriously damaged, and the bridge was broken down. An expert was called in, and his estimate for all the repairs, including the rebuilding of the bridge, amounted to 257 lire. Then took place the public incanto or auction, at

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A kind of cream cheese made with boiled milk, to which are added the flowers of a sort of cardo, something like the artichoke, but the pistils are first removed. There is also another kind called Tometto, commenced in the same way, but salt and pepper are added, after which it is put into a mould.

which offers from contractors for the execution of the work at a lower price were invited.¹ No one was found to make an offer, so the Commune applied to the authorities at Nice for permission to have the works carried out without a contractor. These documents are valuable as fixing the date of this picturesque bridge, which forms so prominent a feature in one of the most favourite views of Apricale.

A similar system is in use to-day in connection with all public works.

# Bajardo

Without emulating the feats of the Alpinisti, or even when we have got "within measurable distance of the end," we may still enjoy the pleasure of long walks among the mountains. One of the most delightful, if the weather



be favourable, is that which will take us out from the Northern exit of Apricale on a bright clear morning, past the little church of San Rocco, leading on till a rugged and rather steep climb has brought us in about

twenty minutes to the crest of the hill. Here begins a series of magnificent panoramic views-not to be painted, certainly-but to be thoroughly enjoyed. On the one side, a vast stretch of the Nervia valley, in the direction of Pigna and Castel Vittorio; beyond, stand the steep hills which shut out the view of San Dalmazzo di Tenda, Briga, etc. Their sides are more than half bare, in contrast with the nearer slopes, regularly terraced, and planted with olives and vines. The path winds along the ridge, showing sometimes, on the other side, the pine-clad hills which lie between us and Perinaldo. After a time this village itself comes into view, stretching along its narrow ridge; and then a curve in the path takes us among the chestnuts, only to turn once more into the open, along rough ground, with occasionally a peasant's rude hut, until we plunge into chestnut woods again, or choose the shorter but rougher path among the pines, leading round the brow of a hill, and then Bajardo is seen perched high on its rocky pedestal, in a position not altogether unlike that of Perinaldo,



ripse of Ruined Church at Bajardo.

but less straggling, more piled up into a solid mass crowning the summit.

From a distance the effect is magnificent; a vast crown, like a fortress, dominates the whole field of view. Our path has led us steadily upward till we have reached a height considerably above that of Perinaldo, though the intervening hills block out the view of the sea. The air gets fresher and fresher, but the last half-hour's climb—though professed alpinisti might affect to consider it a "mere promenade"—is not to be despised as a real gymnastic effort. The whole walk will occupy two and a half hours, but it is well to have a guide, as the paths often intersect others going merely into the various cultivated portions of the valleys.

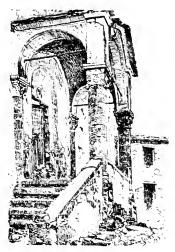
On reaching the old village one finds the usual characteristics of narrow and steep streets, roughly paved, and disposed with the most elementary notions of convenience. But there is rather less than the usual picturesqueness, and we may observe an air of poverty, even in the character of the buildings themselves. Not far from the

principal Piazza is one of the ancient gateways, with the holes for its great bar still visible. Below this gateway, some of the older inhabitants still point out the spot where, in former times, thieves and other evildoers were bound by the wrists to iron rings in the wall, to enjoy the sarcastic comments of the populace, in a fashion between the pillory and the stocks, but not without some of the advantages of both.

Of architectural or decorative features there is—with one exception—nothing to record beyond some simple but very good specimens of iron-work, chiefly in spandrels over doors, and other similar positions. The exception just mentioned is the porch of the old and ruined church occupying the highest point of the hill. The columns and capitals are undoubtedly original, and may be referred to the twelfth century, though the vault is probably later. The jambs of the doorway also seem to have belonged to the original building. They are of wrought stone, but have of course been plastered over, and are only discoverable in places. The lintel, with

IHS on a raised medallion, is of doubtful antiquity. Inside the church, near the entrance, a shattered pier shows enclosed

within it an ancient column of stone exactly similar to those outside, but it is not possible to see whether cap or base remains as well. The whole church is in ruins, having been the scene of a terrible catastrophe on the morning of 23rd February 1887,



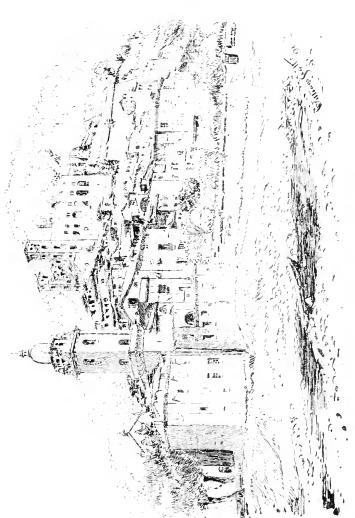
Porch of Ruined Church, Bajardo.

during the earthquake which shook the whole Riviera. Divine service was proceeding at the time; the vaulting and roof fell upon the congregation, and, besides numbers of injured, two hundred and ten dead victims were taken out from the *débris*. The circumstance is recorded on a marble tablet in the burial ground on the other side of the village, and

the sketch accompanying these notes gives a faithful representation of the interior of the edifice at the present time. Only one of the side chapels has remained intact; great iron tie-rods swing down from the walls like ribbons; weeds grow in rich luxuriance on the heaps of rubbish; and amid the death-like silence, ever and anon, some poor old creature comes to say a prayer for a child or parent lost on that awful morning.

There is little to tell about the village itself. Like its neighbours, it was in old times under the rule of Genoa, but as the communal records, such as they may be, were not available for inspection at the time of our visit, owing to the absence of the secretary, it is impossible to say what there may be of interest.

We are still among the vines, and the wine here produced is excellent; but one of the chief products of the place is chestnuts. They are grown in very large quantities, and dried in the season, in the peasants' houses. They are laid out on cane hurdles or *grai*, piled one above another, with sufficient space



D has per, General Viese, soits the Garde of the D va.

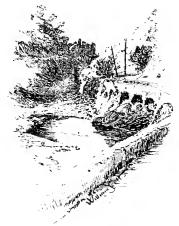


between for heat and smoke to penetrate, and thus supply one of the characteristic features of the village; for the cottage interiors become quite black from the smoke, and are not whitewashed from year to year, so that their gloomy appearance is exceedingly curious.

Though the winters are said to be rather severe, the climate is yet favourable to the production of a larger variety of fruits than is to be found in Perinaldo or Apricale, and a fair amount of corn is also produced. This is threshed on the public Piazza or Ciassa, and the very courteous mayor of the place, a fine specimen of the Italian agriculturist, came, flail in hand, to sit with us at the inntable, and talk about the features of the little village over which he presides.

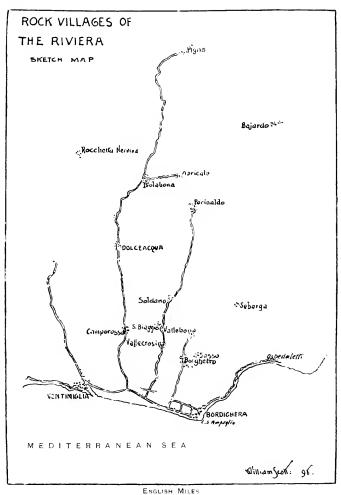
In spite of the above-mentioned appearance of poverty in the older constructions, it would seem as if Bajardo were fairly prosperous; and the one desire of the inhabitants is for a carriage-road to place them in communication with Ceriana, and, through this, with San Remo.

There is a charming walk through the pine forests, shady and cool even in summer, which has been poetically named the *Viale degli Innamorati*; and in graceful compliment to possible English visitors, a neighbouring rock bears the inscription, "Alley of the Lovers."



Castle of the Doria, Dolceacqua

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