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*Wanderings*  
on the  
ITALIAN RIVIERA

*By Frederic Lees*

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**Wanderings on the Italian Riviera**







*The Via Palma and San Siro, San Remo*



# WANDERINGS ON THE ITALIAN RIVIERA

THE RECORD OF A LEISURELY TOUR IN LIGURIA

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BY FREDERIC LEES

Author of "A Summer in Touraine"

*With a Frontispiece in Colour*

BY EDITH S. LEES

*Sixty photographic illustrations by the Author  
and a Map*

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"Give to me the life I love,  
Let the lave go by me ;  
Give the jolly heaven above,  
And the by-way nigh me."

R. L. STEVENSON.



BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1913



## A DEDICATORY LETTER TO J. K.

### ANTIQUARY

Member of the Società Ligure di Storia Patria,  
San Remo

Amico carissimo,

The call of the North has been answered, and here I am once more in my native land, with a gray sky overhead and a cold wind whistling down the street. But as I write my thoughts are elsewhere. The sound of the sea is in my ears, and a succession of southern visions pass before my mental eye. . . . I can hear the rhythmical beat of the Mediterranean on the shore of the Ligurian Sea. I can see the intense blue of the water, the white foam on the beach, the irregular line of the coast, with its creeks and bays and amphitheatres of hills, the purple peaks of distant mountains rising into the azure, the white and red houses of townlets and villages clustering here and there above the shore, and, out in the open, the triangular sails of little fleets of feluccas, resembling huge white mythical birds floating upon the

waves. . . . Ah! now the scene has changed. I am on a steep mule path which zigzags up a terraced hillside, clad with olives, and as, at a point where the stony way winds beneath a rocky buttress, I turn round to rest and admire the landscape, an exquisite view of the Mediterranean and a coast town nestling at the base of a promontory appears enframed within an opening in the gray-green leaves of the trees. Soon the ancient way takes me out of sight of the sea, and, proceeding over hills and into valleys, cleft by the rushing waters of mountain torrents, leads to one of the hill-towns of Liguria, a mass of gray, weather-beaten houses proudly perched on the crest and topmost ridge of a mountain. It stands in the defiant attitude of an eagle which has built its nest on a high crag and is ever on the watch for its enemies—as, indeed it was, in the turbulent days of the Middle Ages. In what a fine strategical position it is placed! and what a view of the valley can be obtained from the point where the pathway enters, as though through the portal of a feudal castle, an ancient gateway leading into its narrow, tortuous streets! Far below my feet winds the main torrent, at this distance a mere

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thread of water shining in the sun ; olive groves and vineyards cover the sides of the broad valley, and here and there, within the folds of the hills, are other towns and villages, each likewise holding itself aloof from the world, under the protection of a church with a tall, painted tower. . . . But once more my surroundings have changed. I am walking through the streets of a *città* where everything carries me back to mediæval Italy. There are ancient, picturesque gates in its crumbling circle of walls ; the narrow streets are bordered by stately houses, with sculptured doorways, spacious vestibules, and marble staircases, whilst carved shrines and paintings in honour of the Madonna adorn many a street corner. . . . And thus, as I write to you from this dear land of cloudy skies, the mental pictures pass one by one before me, each a delightful record of some part of the fourteen months I spent in Liguria, wandering along the shores and up the green valleys of your native province, or else basking in the sunshine in your incomparable gardens.

To complain of one's fate is a common sin among Westerners, but how often we have reason to bless the ills which momentarily

assail us! I, at any rate, shall never regret that necessity directed my steps towards Italy. Times without number have I congratulated myself on having found there a new country, a new language, and, what is better than either, a new friend. How well I remember the day, *amico carissimo*, when I crossed your little sunlit *piazza*, and, in search of books to increase my knowledge of the history of Liguria, entered the door of your shop! Fortune, indeed, led me kindly by the hand on that memorable afternoon; for, among the pictures of Saints and Madonnas, silver and ivory crucifixes, lengths of ancient lace, and the innumerable curios which every diligent antiquary manages to collect around him, I found what was better than a whole library of Ligurian literature—yourself—and, a little later, when our acquaintance ripened into friendship, such an offer of assistance as few travellers have enjoyed. It happened that the time had come when both of us had need to become wayfarers. Your collection of antiquities needed replenishing, whilst I, for my part, wished to obtain a personal knowledge of those natural beauties of which Charles Dickens and John Addington Symonds (to mention only two

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of the many cultured travellers who have found the coast of Liguria unsurpassed for purely idyllic loveliness by anything in the South) have written so enthusiastically in their Italian Sketch Books. So you proposed—and the bargain was promptly sealed—that we should go forth together: you in quest of curios, I in search of the picturesque.

And now let me acknowledge the debt I owe you. Though my knowledge of the glorious history of Liguria was by no means slight before we set out on our wanderings, it had the defect of being gained purely from books: it had not yet become that living knowledge into which history is transformed when read in conjunction with a country's historical monuments. This was the point of view which you taught me to take, and which, as far as was possible, I have endeavoured to set forth in the following record of our journey.

To you, again, is due no small part of the credit for having inspired me to write these pages. So many English-speaking people annually come to Liguria, either in search of health or bent on travel, that, if you remember, we many times agreed that a book on the history and landscape of the province

would be of value both to fireside travellers and those who might choose to follow in our footsteps. Many of those who make it their winter residence have but a faint knowledge of the splendid story of the province which gave birth to Columbus, and where the immortal Dante wandered. Especially is this so in the case of the valleys of Liguria and the beautiful little hill-towns buried away in the mountains ; consequently I have devoted many pages to a description of the banks of the numerous great torrents, whose windings we followed during our three months' wanderings.

But I have written not merely for the tourist. "*Amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare,*" to quote the words which Dante puts into the mouth of Beatrice when she comes from Paradise to speak with Virgil on behalf of her lover ; and verily this record has, to a great extent, been penned for the personal satisfaction which is gained by recalling those many happy days which I spent in sunny Italy with my old friend of San Remo. Permit me, therefore, to dedicate these pages to you, and believe me to be, ever yours affectionately,

F. L.

*London, February, 1912.*



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*Bajardo*

# Wanderings on the Italian Riviera



## CHAPTER I

### UP THE VALLEY OF THE NERVIA AND BACK TO THE SEA

“I CAN assure you, *amico mio*,” said the Antiquary, when we were well upon the road which leads from Ventimiglia towards the Nervia valley, “that the dry facts of the

historian will assume a different aspect during our three months' wanderings. Books can teach us much, but the picture is never really complete until we have shouldered our knapsacks and gone forth to find the traces of our ancestors. Ah! how living history becomes when it is read not merely on the printed page, but on the hills and in the dales and along the highways and by-ways!"

That students do far too little towards supplementing their book knowledge by travel and a personal inspection of a country's historical landmarks was one of my brother wayfarer's favourite themes, and he was in a mood, on that bright September morning, to press the point home. I did my best to aid the current of his thought; for I knew how competent he was to speak about the antiquities of the ancient Italian province which we had set out to explore. There was not a yard of Liguria which he did not know. Year after year his work had taken him there—and ever on foot: now along the Cornice, now along the roads leading up the valleys, linked together by a network of innumerable ancient mule-paths, the smallest of which his feet had trod. And thus, in course of time, he had traversed its entire



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length and breadth, as defined by Augustus—from the Magra at one end to the Varo at the other, and between the boundaries of the Mediterranean and the Po. Few other parts of the world, according to him, possessed such varied interests as Liguria—few other places were so worthy of being visited by the traveller—and, above all, few other provinces could boast of so many still visible proofs of their great antiquity. This method of reading the story of a people's progress, and the many evident advantages which it presented to the specialist and dilettante alike, was, as I have said, one of my old friend's favourite topics, and so, by the time our feet had fallen into step, I found myself listening to an outline of the history of his province, based, for the most part, on what we might expect to see during our travels.

Though the origin of the ancient Ligurians is by no means clear, tradition and the researches of the paleontologist concord in identifying them with those races which, at a time when the lowlands were for the most part covered with water, inhabited the mountains of Italy. To the early Greek writers, who named them first Ligui and then Ligures, they were the people of the western shores of

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the Mediterranean ; but that they had a much earlier origin and were known by the name of Ambroni, Ambri, or Ombri, as many place names in northern Italy show, is evident. An ancient inscription on the architrave of the right-hand side of the principal nave of the Cathedral of San Lorenzo, in Genoa, attributes the foundation of that essentially Ligurian city to Janus, King of the Aborigines, and we shall probably not be far from the truth in concluding that the Ligurians and the Aborigines were one and the same, and that their descent towards the littoral was preceded by a very long period of time—the traditional Golden Age—during which their activity was confined to the mountain regions. One of the most striking features of Liguria, due to its special geographical conditions, is its caverns, and the prehistoric remains which they have been found to contain throw a very important light on the habits and customs of the races of fifty to a hundred centuries ago. The curious rock drawings met with in many parts of the mountains aid, too, in summoning before the imaginative traveller a fairly comprehensive picture of those early days.

Owing to their peculiar geographical

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position, the Ligurians came into touch with civilization from two directions : they entered into commercial relations with the Celtic races of the valley of the Po and with the Greeks who approached by way of the sea. The earlier navigators of the Mediterranean, the Phœnicians, do not appear to have been successful in establishing colonies in Liguria. On the other hand, the Greeks, after taking possession of Sicily and Southern Italy, obtained, in the seventh century B.C., complete mastery of the Ligurian Sea. Genoa, like Aleria and Marseilles a century later, became an important commercial port. Tangible evidence of this Grecian occupation and its influence on the customs of the Genoese, was brought to light in 1898, when, whilst making the new Via XX Settembre, some crematory tombs, attributed to the fifth century A.D., were discovered. As the early Ligurians buried their dead, a great change had evidently taken place in their practices.

Face to face with the allied Etruscans and Carthaginians, the influence of Greece began gradually to decline, and was finally replaced by that of her competitors. Questions of interest probably prevented the Ligurians from coming into very close relations with the

former race, but Polybius shows that they were on excellent terms with the latter. They acted as mercenaries in the Carthaginian army, and the Romans, in their treaties with the Carthaginians, made it a condition that they should no longer raise troops in Liguria.

At the close of the second Carthaginian War, the Romans, comprehending the importance of Liguria from the point of view of the security of the Empire, undertook the long and difficult task of subjugating its inhabitants; and it was at this period that the Ligurians began to assume a really prominent part in history. One must beware, however, of accepting the biased statements which are to be found in the works of Livy and other Latin writers. All who were without the Empire were barbarians, consequently the Ligurians, to the zealous chroniclers of the mighty deeds of Rome, were but savage cave-dwellers, clothed in skins, and devoid of even the most primitive social organisation.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, this false view can be corrected by means of a magnificent document which was discovered at Isolecco, near Pedemonte,

<sup>1</sup> "To other than Roman writers, the Ligurians were distinguished for their sobriety, the simplicity of their customs, and especially their indomitable courage." Arturo Issel's *Liguria Geologica e preistorica*, Genoa, 1892.

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in 1506, and which can be seen in one of the rooms of the Municipal Palace in Genoa. Whilst working in the fields a peasant unearthed a bronze plate, measuring forty-eight centimetres in length and thirty-eight centimetres in breadth, and bearing an inscription which was found to be a judicial decision delivered in Rome in the year 117 B.C. in regard to a territorial dispute between the Ligurians of Genoa and those of Langasco, in the Polcevera valley. The judgment shows that the people of Liguria had already, at the time of the Roman conquest, reached a comparatively high state of civilization. They had long since abandoned the savage life of the troglodyte and had passed from shepherdism to agriculture ; they held their land on lease from their compatriots of the littoral, who were devoted to commerce ; and they were divided, like the people of ancient Greece, into a number of small races, each possessing its definite area of territory.

It was largely owing, doubtless, to these sub-divisions, and consequent lack of union, that they failed to withstand the Roman legions. But the conquest of Liguria was no easy one, and it was only by massacre and transportation that the invaders finally

succeeded in taking possession of the country.

The introduction of Roman civilization into Liguria marked an era of prosperity which has lasted even until the present day. Genoa, which had early espoused the cause of the invaders, was rebuilt and, once more becoming a port, shared with Pisa and Marseilles, now that Carthage was destroyed, the commercial supremacy of the Mediterranean. The country was opened up to commerce by means of roads and trading centres, which after a time developed into towns. The Via Postumia led from Genoa to Piacenza, and thence as far as Aquileia; whilst the Via Aurelia followed the coast from Pisa to Vado, where it was met by the Via Julia Augusta, which, after coming from Tortona, by way of Acqui, continued along the coast, past Albenga and Ventimiglia, right into Gaul.

Well-preserved portions of these great thoroughfares—to mention only one part of the work of the Roman architects and builders—are frequently met with by the traveller in Liguria. He finds, too, that later periods in history have also left their indelible mark on the face of the country. The Byzantine epoch is represented in the

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architecture of a number of early Christian edifices, whilst recollections of the Middle Ages are constantly revived by many an ancient ruin. He can picture, for instance, how great must have been the agitation in Genoa, in 641, amongst the numerous Italian refugees who had collected there, when the news came that the Lombards, who had occupied Milan since 570, had invaded Liguria. For it was then that the wall running from the hill of Sant' Andrea to San Siro, and the remains of which were recently brought to light among the foundations of the Convent of Sant' Andrea, was erected. As to the days when the feudal system was established, after the Papacy and the Italian nationalist party, tired of the Lombardian domination and eager to revive the ancient empire of the West, called Charlemagne to their aid and crowned him Emperor in Rome at the close of 799, how vividly they are recalled by the many picturesque castles in the valleys of Liguria! And again, there are the towers along the coast and the villages hidden away in the most inaccessible parts of the hills to serve as a perpetual reminder of the Saracen raids of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. . . .

But is it possible to point to an epoch in the varied and stirring history of Liguria which is not illuminated by ancient monuments? My companion did not think so. All times, he promised me, were richly represented: the Commune of Genoa and its Renaissance; the two centuries of warfare between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, led by the Fieschis and the Grimaldis on the one hand, and by the Spinolas and the Dorias on the other; the establishment of the Republic and its constant but vain efforts to bring the towns of Liguria under its dominion; the centuries when the city again had recourse to the foreigner and—in the days of the great Andrea Doria—came under the domination of Spain; and, finally, its slow decay in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Before leaving Ventimiglia I had done my best, under the antiquary's enthusiastic guidance, to throw myself back into the past of his beloved province. And I was grateful to him for his inspiring aid. For to me Ventimiglia had been known merely as a very exasperating stopping place on the way into Italy. It was merely an international railway station, on the boundary line between France and Italy—the spot where there is fifty-five



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minutes difference in time between the clocks of Paris and those of Central Europe; the spot where weary travellers wait for their luggage to be opened and examined by exacting custom-house officers. But on leaving the station I found that Ventimiglia was something more than a place of martyrdom. On the slope of the hill above the broad bed of the Roja, which, as one of the principal rivers of Liguria, is mentioned by Pliny the Elder, and by Lucan, under the name of Rutuba, are grouped the picturesque houses of the old town, with the ruins of the castle of the Counts of Ventimiglia—the castle around which the inhabitants took refuge in the Middle Ages when constant strife reigned between Ventimiglia and Genoa. The manner in which they are clustered together—not with an air of fear, but as though for attack, admirably sums up that long struggle for the sovereignty of the little coast towns. In 1130 the reigning Count of Ventimiglia went to Genoa to bend the knee and swear fidelity to the Commune, but his subjects—conscious of their rights and their strength—more than once rebelled, and, indeed, were not subjugated until 1222, after many a strenuous fight.

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Our ramble in the old town was followed by a visit to the cathedral and baptistery, which are classed among the national monuments of Italy. The former is on the plan of a basilica, with three naves, and it was built on the remains of a temple dedicated to Juno. In 1842, having suffered considerable damage in the thirteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries through earthquake and neglect, it was abandoned. Two parties then arose, one in favour of its destruction and the building of a new church, and the other in favour of restoration. Fortunately the latter gained the day. But the work was so ill done that it had to be started entirely over again, this time under the skilful direction of Count Edouardo Arborio Mella. Work was begun in 1875 and concluded two years later. As far as possible the building was restored to its pristine state. The decorative part is due to Giuseppe Costa, the frescoes to Antonio Hartman. At present the cathedral contains eight altars, but originally there were only four; and at one time it possessed numerous famous relics, including precious silver ornaments. Now, its only possessions are the coffer and bust of San Secondo, the principal patron saint of

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Ventimiglia. The three chapels preceding the bell tower are thirteenth century constructions. Adjoining this cathedral is the baptistery, which architectural authorities consider is one of the finest examples of early Christian buildings. It was doubtless built in the fifth century. Its form is octagonal, exactly eight metres, forty-three centimetres in diameter, not including the eight little niches—four of them semicircular and four rectangular—which surround it. The height of these niches is six metres fifty centimetres, and above their round arches rests the upper portion of the octagon, which is terminated by a semicircular cupola, surmounted by a lantern.

In the centre of the building stands an octagonal stone basin, with two steps leading up to it, and in one of its remaining sides—for a portion of the basin is missing—are two curious semicircular indentations, evidently intended to allow the officiating priests to get nearer to those they were admitting into the church.

I suspect that the Antiquary would have liked to have lingered longer in this ancient town, where some important archæological discoveries have recently been made; but I was so eager to get to our valley that we

decided to see there only what was absolutely essential. And once we had taken to the road, it was not long before we came within sight of the Nervia. The highway skirts the railway for some three-quarters of a mile—an uninteresting stretch of ground—and then, after crossing the line, follows the broad, stony bed of the torrent.

Suddenly the landscape changed to a thing of beauty. The bone-dry bed of the river was thick with vegetation, and helped to form, with the distant village of Camporosso, an almost perfect picture. In the foreground were oleander and tamarisk bushes; in the middle distance the partly hidden houses, with a tall and graceful church spire rising above a clump of trees, kissed by the morning sun; and beyond, the cloud-capped hills, veiled with a delicate blue haze.

Camporosso was one of a number of little townships of the coast which, throughout the fourteenth century, struggled for independence against Ventimiglia, and it is thought by some that it takes its name from a blood-stained battlefield. But it is more probably named after the rose-coloured flowers of the *Nerium oleander*, which abounds all along the *Val Nervina*.

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Passing through a shady avenue of plane trees, the main road leaves the village on the right and continues along the winding bed of the torrent, and the nearer you approach the neighbouring town of Dolceacqua, the narrower and more beautiful the valley becomes. It is in great part devoted to the growing of olives, and on either hand groves of these lovely gray-green trees, interspersed here and there with vineyards and orchards, stretch up the hillside.

There is nothing that stimulates contemplation so powerfully as the olive groves of Italy. They are continually inviting the wayfarer to leave his hot and dusty highway, to recline under the cool shade of their leaves, and to let his thoughts run free. When within about a mile of Dolceacqua, at a point where we got our first and most perfect view of the town and its hill-crowned castle, they began to exercise their potent influence upon us. Only a few yards away, a grassy plateau, overlooking a precipitous descent into the valley, was waiting to receive us ; so we sat under the trees to take in the beauty of the surroundings at our leisure, and to let our vagabond thoughts dwell on their history. Far below was the

first indication of the Nervia : a silver thread meandering amidst a stony expanse until, here and there under the rocks, it collected in deep, dark-green basins of water. Not wholly, however, did the river bed suggest a wilderness. It has been reclaimed in part by industrious peasant proprietors, who have planted there some of the vineyards from which the noted red wine of Dolceacqua, *il rossese*, is made ; and these verdant oases add in no small measure to the picturesqueness of the landscape. Rocky pine-clad hills form a background to the picture, the most prominent feature of which are the irregular houses of the little town, rising one above the other under the lee of the castle.

The ancestral home of the Dorias is a massive parallelogram, furnished at three of its corners with towers, one of them round, the others square and crowned with parapets. It is a characteristic building of the fifteenth century, when castles were at one and the same time residences and strongholds. As such it was supplied with a deep moat and a drawbridge, and the various living rooms and chapel were, as is shown by ancient inventories, richly furnished. The splendour of its halls and library and picture-gallery



*The Castle of Dolceacqua*





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has, however, departed, and there remains only that air of majesty which continues to float around the dismantled walls and grass-grown courtyards of these romantic relics of feudalism.

The Marquisate of Dolceacqua, formerly in the possession of the Counts of Ventimiglia, came into the hands of the great Doria family at the end of the thirteenth century, when Genoa, after dominating both the Rivas, became the scene of bitter civil war—the struggle between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines—which ended in 1270 with the victory of the latter, under the leadership of Oberto Spinola and Oberto Doria. It was in that year that Oberto Doria, the son of the Pietro Doria who gained the naval battle of Khandia in 1266, and the descendant of one of the most illustrious families in Italy, acquired Dolceacqua. A few years later he counted other neighbouring towns and districts among his possessions. Apricale and Isolabona were gathered in in 1287, Perinaldo in 1288, and San Remo in 1297; and thus was built up the fortune of the house which looms so large in the history of Liguria. Several distinguished members of the family first saw the light at Dolceacqua: Enrichetto

in 1444, Imperiale in 1553, and Stefano in 1580 ; and in the fifteenth century one of Oberto's descendants—Caracossa—married Ceva Doria, of Oneglia, the father of that Andrea Doria who displayed, in so remarkable a manner, his ancestors' traditional courage, clear-sightedness, and genius in diplomacy.

The oldest part of Dolceacqua is that which lies immediately beneath the castle walls ; it is locally known as the *Terra*, to distinguish it from the *Borgo* on the right bank of the river ; and the two are joined by a most picturesque old bridge of a single span of thirty-five yards. It is well worth while crossing this bridge to explore the dark, cool streets—all secured together at the top with earthquake arches—to discover there the many ancient things which mean so much to the lover of old houses : carved wooden doors, wrought-iron balconies, barred prison-like windows, and dates on antique lintels ; and then, by way of the *Via Castello*, to climb up the hillside and wander among the ruins. On these mountain paths the air is scented with thyme, mint, and marjoram, and there is nothing to disturb one's thoughts save the pleasant noise of the sure-footed mules as they clatter down the stony ways burdened

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with huge loads of firewood, sacks of pinecones, or sweet-scented fodder.

A red-sealed diploma on the walls of a *trattoria*, declaring that its holder, the proprietor, had been granted a gold medal for ten years' faithful service in the household of a German baron, held forth the promise of good fare, so before continuing up the valley, we had our mid-day meal ; a Spartan meal, if you like (it consisted of olives, a tomato omelette, fresh figs, and peaches), but perfect in every detail. It was our rule—and all walkers and climbers would do well to follow it, to eat frugally whilst on the march.

At the Ponte Barbaira, two-thirds of a mile from Dolceacqua, a branch road leads to Rocchetta Nervina, a mountain town which for many years upheld the Guelf party against the seat of Oberto Doria's marquisate ; but as our round, before returning to the sea, was to be a long one, we kept our feet well on the banks of the Nervia and, ever rising, went on to Isolabona and Pigna. Ere reaching the former place, which rests at the foot of a steep hill, with a tall cypress on the left bank of the stream, we were once more reminded of the Dorias, this time in their commercial capacity, which (or they would

not have been Genoese) was very fully developed. As early as 1290 they established parchment manufactories in their domains, and here, near Isolabona, was one of them still standing—that in which Magister Bartholomeus Villanus worked in the early years of the sixteenth century.

Pigna, which stands a thousand feet above sea level, in a strong position on the right bank of the Nervia, recalls the names of members of the House of Savoy and the long struggle between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. Nearly a thousand feet higher, on the opposite side of the valley, is perched the village of Castel Vittorio, still stronger strategically; and as this formidable mountain stronghold owed allegiance to Genoa, there was incessant strife between the rival parties. At last, in 1365, peace was signed on the Ponte di Lagopigo, which crosses the torrent just beyond Pigna. But the time came, in 1625, when it was broken, and Pigna, in spite of its strength, was captured by Battivilla, the commander of the troops of the Republic. These memories interested us less, however, than what Pigna had to offer in the way of works of art and natural beauties, and before we left it behind we



Pigna



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heartily agreed with some reflections which we found written in the visitors' book at the *albergo*. "Apart from the charm of the village and the interest of the frescoes in the cemetery church," ran the words of our unknown brother wayfarer, "what a delightful centre for excursions is Pigna. What lovely walks to Castel Vittorio, to Buggio, or up the Muratone and Olivetta valleys! What splendid longer excursions to Monte Toraggio, Monte Grai, Monte Ceppo, Bajardo, or up the Rio Incisa, or to the woods near Gola di Gota! And what a centre for wild flowers! Now (March 29th, 1909) the banks are all covered with primroses and hepaticas, and later laburnum, fritillaries, peonies, scarlet Turk's Cap lilies, columbines, gentians, edelweiss, and the rarest ferns of this part of the world are all to be found not far from Pigna."

Winding up the hillside, the steep main street of the village leads to its principal square, the Piazza Umberto I, where, in addition to an extensive view over the house-tops, an interesting carved doorway is to be seen. We found that this led to an ancient covered square with vaulted roof supported by columns, in one of which is an iron ring to which malefactors were formerly

attached, this being the place where the people of Pigna were wont—as indeed they are now—to congregate. Not far away stands the parish church of San Michele, which was built in 1450 by two illustrious Genoese: Giorgio Dellamotta and Giovanni Bisone. It contains, among other works of art, an exceedingly fine picture of the fifteenth century by Giovanni Ranavesio of Pinerolo, the artist-priest whose presence in Pigna in 1482 is proved by the admirable frescoes in the neighbouring Chapel of San Bernardo, adjoining the cemetery. It is painted on wood, on a gold ground, and is divided into thirty-six compartments, the principal one of which is devoted to the Archangel Michael. “The vivacity of the faces,” writes one of Ranavesio’s eulogists, “the naturalness of the carnations, the brilliancy of the armour and draperies, and the fine brush-work, testify to the artist’s by no means common skill.” Certainly this praise is none too high, and it was with eagerness that we set off for San Bernardo to see another example of this artist’s work. But, alas! after a quarter of an hour’s walk up a mountain path shaded by olive trees, we found that his frescoes had lost most of their early beauty. The chapel



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of San Bernardo is now a national monument, but, as is so often the case, the protection of the State came too late. Damp, the falling into ruins of the roof, and clumsy restoration of the paintings after the earthquake of 1887, have played havoc with Ranavesio's handiwork. One of the most important of his frescoes, that representing the Last Judgment, on the wall on the left, is utterly spoilt. However, let us be thankful for the Via Crucis and whatever else remains ; thankful that, unlike the mural paintings by the same artist in the Benedictine church of San Tommaso, whose ruins stand among the olives, some twenty minutes' walk away, these once beautiful frescoes have not been entirely destroyed. Ranavesio seems to have done a good deal of work in this district. He also decorated the chapel of N.S. del Fontan, at Briga, in the Roja valley. We sought in vain, however, for the work of another artist-priest, the Dominican Father Emmanuele Macari, which is strange, considering that he was a native of Pigna. The name of his parents and the exact date of his birth (supposed to be in the year 1522) are unknown, but he is said to have come of a family which for long years occupied the chief civic posts

there. He joined the Dominican order in his youth, and was attached to the convent of Santa Maria della Misericordia, at Taggia, where he probably learnt the art of painting from Corrado di Alemagna, and was a fellow-student of Ludovic Brea, of Nice. "So it is at Taggia and elsewhere, but not at Pigna," said the Antiquary, "that we may expect to find his work."

When we commenced our climb to Castel Vittorio, with far-away Bajardo, nearly three thousand feet above the sea, as the ultimate goal of another day's wanderings, I had no idea how trying an Italian mule-path can be to the legs of an inexperienced climber. The well-seasoned Antiquary, scorning the easier but circuitous *via carrozzabile*, contended that the ancient way was infinitely the better, and that a short walk would bring us to the summit of the hill. And, indeed, seen through the marvellously clear atmosphere, Castel Vittorio seemed at but a stone's throw. Yet that zig-zagging *strada mulattiera* meant (to me, at least) three-quarters of an hour's stiff climbing: an excellent introduction, as my friend put it, to our ten kilometre journey (equivalent to double on the level), and a sort of apprenticeship to our mountain

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excursions in Liguria. One soon learns, in fact, to prefer these mule paths to any other ways, owing to the exquisite views which time after time appear before one's gaze and draw forth involuntary exclamations of admiration.

Shortly after reaching Castel Vittorio, where we passed through a diminutive square, and narrow, tunnel-like streets, we found ourselves once more on the hillside, looking down upon the village. Up and up our mountain path, winding in and out amidst huge boulders, up and up, through chestnut groves and past wayside shrines we mounted, until at last the valley lay at our feet, with both Castel Vittorio and Pigna shining like gems in the sun. At a height of a little over two thousand feet we came to the Chapel of San Sebastiano, situated in a fine position on a ridge overlooking two valleys, and here we got our first view of Bajardo, a small cluster of impregnable-looking houses on the crest of the opposite hill. Descending to the level of the vines, the mule path then brought us to a little mountain stream, where it became lost to sight. But we picked up its traces further on and, ever descending, quickly reached the bed of the Bonda torrent, which is crossed by a substantial stone bridge.

Bajardo was now right above our heads, and to reach it looked but an easy walk. Our hardest climb, however, had yet to come, and at a time of day, too, when we could ill-afford to loiter by the way ; for the sun was getting very low, flooding the top of a distant hillside with roseate light. Soon it would disappear altogether and leave the valleys in semi-darkness. The possibility of having to pass the night on the mountain side—for to have attempted in the darkness to ascend the precipitous, and in many places, indistinguishable track, would have been folly—made us hasten forward at the top of our speed. And just as I was beginning to despair of ever reaching the end of our crooked way, the sound of voices came through the chilly air, and, emerging from a pine-wood on to a plateau, we encountered a party of *contadini*, under whose escort we safely entered into Bajardo.

Historically, Bajardo appears to have played no very important part in the story of Liguria. If battles were fought beneath its walls, they cannot have been of vital importance, since my companion had failed to discover any mention of them in its scant records. Perhaps its almost inaccessible

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position dismayed the would-be invader ere he set out on the march ; or did it lie so off the beaten track that its possession by one or the other party weighed but little in the political balance ? And yet Genoa, to whom, presumably, it nominally owed allegiance during the Middle Ages, did not wholly despise it, for we learn that in the year 1282 the Republic drew upon its forests for the wood required in the construction of fifty galleys to be used in the war against Pisa. Few, however, as the historical events connected with Bajardo may be, its name never fails to awaken interest in the minds of those who hear it, and it is probably as well known to the outside world as any of the hill villages of this part of Italy. It is identified with an event which stirred the hearts of people all over Europe, and cast a deep shadow over the homes of thousands all along the Riviera ; I refer to the great earthquake of February 23rd, 1887.<sup>1</sup> The two places to suffer the most were Bajardo and Bussana, and in the case of both villages many of the victims were those who were attending early mass, for the day was Ash

<sup>1</sup> This great earthquake also did much damage at Diana Marina and Oneglia, which were almost completely ruined. Among the other towns along the coast which suffered

Wednesday. The church roof fell in, killing, as a memorial stone at one end of the village records, no fewer than two hundred and two worshippers, besides injuring sixty-two others. Many of the houses, too, around the Chiesa di San Nicolò da Bari were shattered, and a visit to this ruined quarter (for church and houses have never been repaired to this day) is the melancholy yet obligatory duty of every one who comes to Bajardo. So deep is the impression left by a ramble among the deserted streets that one is inclined to ask if this one event of 1887 does not monopolise all a traveller's interest. Perhaps so, if he be merely a passing guest, but emphatically no should he come to have a longer acquaintance with Bajardo. It is noted, in fact, for its particularly pure air and healthy position, and as it is now connected with San Remo by a good carriage road, it bids fair to become a favourite summer resort for well-to-do

were Mentone, Porto Maurizio, Alassio and Noli; whilst in the interior of Liguria, Diano Castello, Bussana, Castellaro, Bajardo, Claus and La Bollène were badly shaken. The large number of deaths in the churches is explained by the fact that these were in very bad structural condition. The death record was as follows: in the district of Porto Maurizio, 258 killed and 269 injured; in that of San Remo, 339 killed and 205 injured; and in that of the province of Genoa, 38 killed and 81 injured.

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people of the coast. There is good shooting, too, in its surrounding woods, whilst for those who love walking and beautiful mountain scenery the excursions are innumerable.

One of the most pleasant walks in the district is that we took to Perinaldo, on our way back to the sea. The distance is eight miles, and for some three-quarters of the way we followed a level light-railway track, used for transporting timber to the coast, and constructed, at points where it crosses miniature valleys, on pine-log piles. There is also a mule-path, which winds up and down the hillside, but, in order to avoid useless exertion, it is better to keep to the railway. It traverses some of the most perfect scenery to be found anywhere, passing around the flanks of mountains whose tall crags tower above your head, and through aromatic and health-giving pine-forests. As you round the corners Bajardo comes into view time after time; deep valleys lie at your feet, with hill rising above hill in the distance, until their rocky peaks touch the clouds; and, when about a quarter of the way, the little village of Apricale, standing on a hill and with the sunlight shining on its church tower, appears within sight. How exhilarating is the air at

these altitudes, and how reposeful are Nature's sounds in these ideal fields for the artist and naturalist!—the call of the rooks among the crags, the flutter of startled birds in the under-wood, the shuffle of dozens of frightened lizards among the sunlit rocks, and the incessant hum of insects. There is almost an entire absence of human life on these mountain sides, and one is sometimes thankful for it. During the whole of our journey we met but three people: a peasant collecting pine-cones and needles in one of the forests, and a woman with a child, picking leaves from a chestnut tree, with which, in all probability, to line her baskets when she carried them full of ripe figs to the nearest market. She was high up among the branches and as she cast down the leaves, she taught her little one, who sat playing below, its Paternoster. "Pater noster, qui es in coelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum . . ." she repeated, word by word, and the child did its best to imitate the sonorous Latin words. For *their* presence, at any rate, we were grateful.

Shortly after seeing this little wayside picture we came to a disused chapel, where the railway track and the mule-path meet. Here it was necessary to follow the latter, as



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the railway branches off to the left on the opposite side of the Vallecrosia valley. And in half an hour or so we were in Perinaldo, which stretches, at a height of eighteen hundred feet, along the crest of the hill.

This wind-swept mountain village, which until recent years was unconnected with the coast save by a narrow, irregular mule-path, is principally known as the birthplace of three celebrated astronomers: Gian Domenico Cassini (1625–1712), Giacomo Filippo Maraldi (1665–1729), and Gian Domenico Maraldi (1709–1788). Cassini was the discoverer of four new satellites of Saturn, and Domenico Maraldi, who, like his nephew Filippo, was a member of the French Academy, was the author of a *Catalogue of Fixed Stars*. The Perinaldo branch of this distinguished family is now extinct, but the house where the astronomers were born and worked is still standing, as recorded by a tablet over the doorway of 17, Via Maraldi; a tablet on which are the admirable words: “Questi tre nomi esprimono una gloria immense come il firmamento da loro discorso.” Moreover, this modest-looking house contains a valuable library of astronomical works formed by Gian Domenico Maraldi; a collection of autograph

letters received by Cassini and the Maraldi from eminent French scientists of the eighteenth century, including Delalande, Lavoisier, Delisle, and Bailly; the astronomer's manuscripts and observations, and, finally, the instruments with which they worked. One of the rarest works in the library is Evelio's *Johannis Hevelii, Selonographia sive lunae descriptio, typis Hunefeldianis*, of which only eight copies are known to exist, almost the entire edition having been destroyed on September 29th, 1679, with the author's house, library, and observatory. At the other end of the village, near the Piazza del Municipio and parish church, where you get an extensive view of the green valley, with a glint of blue sea in the distance, we found another unpretentious-looking house which also claims a place in history. The Casa Allavena, at No. 21 in the street of the same name, was occupied, in 1797, by Napoleon, whilst on his way into Italy. He was entertained by the grandfather of the present owner and occupier, Signora Allavena Embriaco, who courteously allowed us to see the room, the Sala Rossa, in which the great soldier lived.

I imagine that it must have been that

glimpse of the Mediterranean, seen from the parapet of the Piazza of Perinaldo, which set us longing to make a rapid return to the coast. For with one accord, early the next morning, we started down the steep, winding road which leads along the Vallecrosia valley, past many an old mill and mountain village. First came Soldano with its church, containing an altar-piece painted on wood by Brea; then San Biagio della Cima, high above the road; and, finally, a mile from where the river joins the sea, the village after which the valley is named.



*Covered Piazza at Pigna*



*Ancient Gateway at Bordighera*

## CHAPTER II

### ON THE ROAD TO SAN REMO

WHEN the sick people arrive from the cold, bleak North and look for the first time on the rich colouring of this southern shore, how great must be their sense of joy over the wonderful change wrought by a few hours' railway travelling! Gray or leaden skies have changed to blue: such a blue as is only to be seen in sunny countries; leafless,

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snow-covered landscapes have faded away, and are replaced by a vegetation so varied and so green that only in the Tropics is it surpassed. And as the train draws up at Bordighera, or Ospedaletti, or San Remo, the pale invalids, looking out over the turquoise sea, feel that they have already made the first step towards recovery.

All who seek health in these three favoured spots of the Italian Riviera come under the influence of their new surroundings, and especially the influence of colour. No one, indeed, escapes it. The sound in lung and limb experience the exhilarating effects almost if not as much as those whose nerves are more delicately strung. Walking along the Cornice towards Bordighera, we were never more impressed than by the beauty of our palm-bordered way and the exquisite blue of the tideless sea: cerulean near at hand, where it beats on rocky bays and creeks, but an intenser and intenser blue in the distance up to the point where the white foam edges the beach.

Palms, we soon learnt, are the special glory of Bordighera, where, owing to its exceptionally mild climate, they have been cultivated—if reliance is to be placed in the ancient

story of Captain Bresca and Pope Sixtus V—for more than four hundred years. The story is related at length in Giovanni Ruffini's *Doctor Antonio*, but for the benefit of those who are as yet unacquainted with that novel, it will be well once more to give its essential details.

About the year 1584, during the early years of the Pontificate of Sixtus V, this ambitious and enterprising Pope decided to disinter an ancient obelisk which lay half buried in the earth near the vestry of San Pietro, in Rome, and to raise it on the square known as the Vaticano, where it now stands. Placing this difficult work in the hands of an eminent architect named Domenico Fontana, he furnished him with all the necessary means for its successful termination, and, on all the preparations being completed, fixed the day when, in his presence and that of an immense concourse of people, the column should be raised. But the architect was a nervous man, and little relished the idea of a noisy, enthusiastic crowd. The clamour of the people, as he told the Pope, might bewilder his workmen, and should there be the slightest hitch in the proceedings, "he would answer for nothing." So Sixtus promised

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that his nerves should not be shaken, and, in order that there should be no doubt about it, immediately issued an edict declaring that whosoever uttered a sound during the ceremony should suffer death. At last the day for the elevation of the column arrived. Fontana gave the signal, his men bent with a will at the capstans, the pulleys began to revolve and the cables to stretch and creak. All went well until the moment when the huge granite obelisk was almost erect. Then, suddenly, an ominous crack was heard, and the monolith, after remaining motionless for a second, was seen to sink several inches. Fontana entirely lost his head, and it would doubtless have gone ill with him at the hands of the frowning Pope had not assistance come from the very quarter which he had most feared. "Water! Water!" shouted a voice from amidst the respectful crowd, "Wet the ropes!" The advice was too good not to be immediately followed, so water was thrown on the cables, and the slackened hemp having contracted the workmen completed the uprearing of the obelisk in safety. So far so good! But what about the edict? Manifestly the Papal laws must be respected; so the Swiss Guards seized

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the man who had saved the situation and brought him before their master. He turned out to be the captain of a trading vessel, named Bresca, and his experience of the slackening of hempen ropes had doubtless been gained during his seafaring life. However, such was the severity of Sixtus V, there was little chance, people thought, of his life being spared. Fortunately, the Pope, pleased at the success of an undertaking which he had had very much at heart, was disposed to be lenient, and on receiving Bresca, promised to grant him any favour he might ask. The good captain diplomatically began by asking for the Pope's holy blessing, and, secondly, the privilege for him and his descendants of annually supplying the Vatican with palms. This request was immediately granted by a Papal Brief, "which is still," wrote Ruffini, "in the possession of the Bresca family, and the monopoly it bestowed lasts to this day."

According to the same writer—and later authorities support him—Captain Bresca was a native of San Remo, but others make him a native of Bordighera. There is a slight difference of opinion, too, as to the exact date of the raising of the column on the



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Piazza Vaticano, some giving it as September 10th, 1586, others as 1588. However, all seem to agree that Bordighera was where he established himself as a palm-grower. Moreover, though we failed to discover any trace either of the Bresca family or their Brief, we found that Bordighera still holds, in a way, their monopoly, for hundreds of thousands of palm branches are annually sent to Rome for use on Palm Sunday. The much-admired whiteness of the young shoots is obtained by tying together the leaves of the trees at the top, thus protecting the inner ones from the rays of the sun.

These beautiful trees, and, generally speaking, the tropical character of the vegetation of the district, are what stand out most prominently in my recollections of Bordighera. We spent most of our time there in gardens, and the beauties of Nature naturally take precedence over all others. Our visit to the old town, for instance, did not greatly impress us, though we did our best to picture it as it was in 1632, when, with seven other small country places, it formed a little Republic, known as the "Otto Luoghi," and governed by its own laws, under the protection of Genoa.

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Situated on the Capo San Ampeglio, where there is an extensive view of the coast, it is undeniably well placed and picturesque; but when we had strolled through, entering by the Porta del Capo, which faces the Via di Capo and public garden, passing by the Piazza Fontana, with its 1783 fountain, and coming out at another of the old entrances to the town's former circle of walls, the Porta Sottana, we could not help concluding that its picturesqueness was more that of the stage than of a characteristic Ligurian *città*. Many of the walls had been neatly white-washed, the streets were impeccable, and the whole place had the air of having been specially prepared for visitors. The Antiquary insisted that it had come under Anglo-Saxon influence. "Hygiene and picturesqueness are ill bed-fellows," he said, "and you English are notorious worshippers of Hygeia. Behold your handiwork, *caro mio*! Old San Remo, now, has escaped you, and you will soon see how beautiful she is!"

Two of the gardens we visited belong to Herr Winter, a well-known horticulturist of the district; a third was that pleasant spot which Mr. Clarence Bicknell, a resident of Bordighera, has had planted on the sheltered

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western slope (known as *La Marina*) for the benefit of the many English people who, as in the days of George Macdonald,<sup>1</sup> inhabit the hotels and villas that now cover ground which was formerly almost exclusively given up to the cultivation of olives.

The first-named, which are largely devoted to the growing of palms, yuccas, prickly pears, agaves, and the larger tropical plants, are on the road to Ospedaletti: one in the little Sasso valley, the other much further along, near the ancient wayside chapel of the Madonna della Ruota. The garden nearer Ospedaletti slopes down to the sea, and above the rocky shore is a curved pergola, enclosing an ornamental piece of water. Climbing plants grace the slender columns and open-work roof, and enframed by the verdure is an exquisite view of Ospedaletti—a thin line of shining houses and palaces stretched on the opposite curve of the bay. A little closer to

<sup>1</sup> George Macdonald spent the winter of 1877-78 at Nervi, near Genoa, the summer of 1878 and the winter of 1878-79 at Portofino. It was at the latter place that he wrote *Sir Gibbie* and there also that he dedicated *Paul Faber* to W. C. T. (W. Cowper Temple). After that year, and for more than twenty years all the winters were spent in Bordighera, at the Casa Coraggio.—See *George Macdonald at Bordighera* by Frances M. Brookfield, in the *Sunday Magazine*, 1905.

the beach is an old well, known as Rebecca's, and surrounded by some of those towering palms for which the garden is famous. You can see there some splendid specimens of the *Phœnix*, the *Cocos*, and the *Pritchardia*, to mention but three well-known varieties.

Whereas the Sasso and Ruota grounds form a harmony in green, Mr. Bicknell's garden is a variegated blaze of colour, since it is principally dedicated to flowering plants. Adjoining it is a substantial stone building, in which the founder, who is the author of an excellent *Flora of Bordighera and San Remo*, and other works, has brought together a very complete local herbarium and collection of fossils, minerals, and prehistoric objects. It was here that we had an opportunity of seeing a large number of rubbings of the rock drawings of Fontanalba, near Dalmazzo di Tenda, where Mr. Bicknell has spent much time in studying them. What is the exact signification of these rude, deep-cut pictures of men at the plough; these heads of oxen; these irregular parallelograms, enclosing an ever varying number of dots; and these figures which are clearly meant to represent daggers? Manifestly they were not the outcome of the idle moments of prehistoric

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shepherds ; for there are more than two thousand of these drawings between the Lago Verde and Monte Santa Maria, and the cutting of them must have entailed enormous labour. And at what period were they executed ? The people of the district refer to them as "Hannibal's Soldiers," but they clearly date much further back than the days of Carthage : as far back, paleontologists think, as three or four thousand years before Christ.

"Ruota," the name given to the already mentioned chapel, is a corruption of Rodi, and "Cavalieri di Rodi" was the original appellation of the Knights of Malta, who, in the fifteenth century, found a safe anchorage for their ships in the Bay of Ospedaletti, and established on the present site of the little town a hospital (*ospedale*) for lepers. Hence the name. Protected from the north winds, and possessing a very high winter temperature, its aid is still sought by the sick and delicate. But the most picturesque feature of Ospedaletti is its thriving flower industry. It is one of the most important flower-markets on the whole of the Riviera, and there are few sights so interesting as the early morning markets, with their heaps of fresh-cut roses and carnations, and the dark forms of buyers and

sellers moving about in the light of the gas jets. The great market of the year is held on the 19th, 20th, and 21st of December, at the customary hour of 2 a.m. By midnight the workers are busy in the fields, cutting the blooms, and a few hours later large numbers of women are hard at work in a shed near the railway station, packing them in *cestini*, as the reed hampers in which they are sent northwards are called. There are special flower-trains at various times during the day between October and June, but the most important ones are the early morning expresses which, just before Christmas, carry the flowers of Ospedaletti and Coldirodi towards London, Berlin, and St. Petersburg.

Coldirodi is a small village on the hill between Ospedaletti and San Remo, and we more than once caught sight of it whilst on the road. Situated at a point where magnificent views of San Remo, Bordighera, the hills of Ventimiglia and the Mediterranean are to be obtained, its position is such as to tempt any traveller from the main road. But it was not this reason alone which made us bend our steps up the mule-path which leads up the hillside through fields of carnations and roses, with here and there a lemon

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garden full of pale, golden fruit. Coldirodi possesses a good library and picture gallery, and the Antiquary—to whom books and pictures naturally mean so much—was especially anxious that I should see it. Its founder, Stefano Paolo Rambaldi, was, said my friend, as we walked along, a man after his own heart. Born at Coldirodi in 1803, he had early entered the priesthood, had attained considerable reputation in his profession, and in consequence had been appointed to the chair of literature and ecclesiastical history at the Seminary in Florence. A true patriot and a man of broad views, he had been on terms of close friendship with Silvio Pellico, Pellegrino Farini, Gioberti, and other leaders in the Italian struggle for independence; and as a result had had to suffer, though not so keenly as some. Having by then become Rector of the Seminary, the worst blow that his enemies could deal him was to obtain his dismissal. Fortunately, his means and temperament were such as to enable him to support the injustice: he had sought consolation in work and in study, and in the gathering together of that collection of manuscripts, books, and pictures which, at his death in 1865, were found to be bequeathed to his native village.

The Rambaldi library, which, like the picture gallery, is housed in the Municipio buildings, consists of more than six thousand volumes. It is interesting rather to the special than general student, and the large number of works on ecclesiastical history which it contains clearly reflects the tastes of its founder. Book-lovers and collectors will find many things to interest them. The incunabula include Acciacioli and Poggio's *Historiae florentinae*, printed in Florence in 1492; *L'Art de bien muorir*, 1452; Nicolaus de Cusa's *Opera prima edita*, 1480; a *Biblia vulgata*, 1480; and an *Imitatione de Christe*, Florence, 1494. Among the manuscripts is a fourteenth century Italian translation of Plutarch, Triunfus' *Tractatus super Ave Mariae*, on parchment, dated 1283, and *Istories florentines*, collected by Cosimo Vetturi Mazzi in 1669-1700. Rambaldi's connection with the Italian movement naturally resulted in correspondence with its leaders, and autograph letters by Pellico, Alessandro Manzoni, Gioberti, Farini, Giovanni Ruffini, and Garibaldi are included in the library. As to his pictures, which fill two small rooms and number about a hundred, they are such as a cultivated and



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keen collector, unprovided with large means, often manages in course of time to get together. Whether they are all genuine examples of the work of the great masters (Guido Reni, Paul Veronese, Salvator Rosa, Andrea del Sarto, Carlo Dolci, and Velasquez are all represented) is open to doubt. But what gallery, however celebrated, does not contain some pictures of doubtful authenticity? After one has set aside, however, a few works which the expert, for one reason or another, but generally that of poor drawing, would hesitate to attribute to great artists, one is bound to admit that in many cases Paolo Rambaldi's judgment was unerring. The gem of the collection is a small picture of the Holy Family, with two angels and St. John, by Fra Bartholommeo: a picture so admirable in every way that it has rightly been considered worthy of special protection in a case with gilded doors. There are three other pictures of the Madonna and Jesus which are also to be ranked among works of high artistic merit: one by Guido Reni (an oval painting on wood); another by Andrea del Sarto; and a third, the original drawing of which is stated by the catalogue to be in the Uffizi Gallery, in Florence, by Lorenzo

di Credi. A St. Michael, the preliminary sketch of a work which is in Rome ; and a Nazareen, both by Guido Reni ; a St. Mark writing, signed Salvator Rosa ; a portrait of a young man, by Velasquez ; and a St. Sebastian, very fine in its colouring, by an artist of the Ferrara School, are among the remaining pictures which a connoisseur would single out for special attention.

A path leading out at the top end of the village into the mountains took us, before leaving Coldirodi, to the high northern ground from which one of the best views of the village, stretched out along the ridge and standing out against the sea and the sky, can be obtained ; then, returning to its little *piazza*, which faces the church and the Municipio, we turned down a *vicolo* and reached the mule-path which, by way of the Bernardo valley, leads down through olive groves to the Cornice road and San Remo.

On the traveller reaching the main road again, and especially that part of it, between the Foce and Bernardo torrents, on which the Campo Santo and the English Sports Club stand, it is time for him to pause and consider some of the periods of history through which the famous town he has seen spread

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out beneath his feet has passed. For it was on this very spot, according to Professor Rossi, who the Antiquary had no need to remind me is our chief authority on the history of this part of Liguria, that the Roman town from whose ashes San Remo sprang once stood. It bore the name of the goddess of the sea, Matuta, and its destruction, about the middle of the seventh century, was the work of Rothari, King of the Lombards. Rebuilt by its tenacious inhabitants, it was twice again destroyed, this time by the Saracens, in the ninth and tenth centuries, and on each occasion it sprang up afresh. In the eleventh century, after the definite expulsion of the Saracens, it was known by the name of San Romolo, in memory of one of the apostles whom the Bishop of Genoa, several centuries before, had sent to Matuta to preach Christianity. This early connection with the Church led to San Romolo and several other villages in the neighbourhood, including Colla (now Coldirodi), Bussana, and Taggia, being tributary to the Bishop of Genoa, and was the cause of constant disagreement between the Republic and the ecclesiastical authorities. It was not, indeed, until 1297, when Oberto Doria, by consent

of the Pope, purchased the Archbishop of Genoa's feudal rights over San Romolo that the quarrel came to an end. Judging by events, however, this change of ownership displeased the people. There were frequent revolts, and the Dorias, unable or unwilling to enforce their rights, disposed of them, in 1301, to the Republic. San Romolo had now become San Remo, which is probably a corrupted form of the town's full Latin title : "Sanctus Romolus in Eremo." But Genoa and San Remo were never meant to agree, and their history down to as late as the eighteenth century is one almost continuous story of friction. The people of both towns were masterful and ambitious, and the Genoese looked with no kindly eye on the growing maritime importance of the smaller port. For the trade of the San Remese, who possessed no fewer than eighty-four ships, stretched from Corfu to Cadiz. Troubles arose in 1628 when Victor, Duke of Savoy, seized the Riviera, and his claim was disputed by the Republic ; there was a revolt against her authority at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and, a little more than fifty years later, following rapidly on the disturbances which were brought about by the



*San Remo as seen from the Molo*



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question of the Spanish Succession, open war broke out. Little Colla was the one who set a match to the powder magazine, with her appeal to the Republic to be separated from her neighbour. The result of the fight, however, was a foregone conclusion: San Remo could never hope to stand out for long against Genoa the Superb, and in the end she had to undergo all the bitter humiliations which invariably fall to the lot of the conquered. Her trade was destroyed, all her civic rights were taken away, her citizens were fined and imprisoned, her cathedral of San Siro was deprived of its bell and part of its tower, and, what was hardest of all to bear, a Doria was established as Governor in her finest palace, the Palazzo Borea, and a fort, that of Santa Tecla, with all its loopholes pointing towards the town, was erected at the harbour. However, she had not long to wait for her freedom, for the time was rapidly drawing near when the whole of Liguria, fired by the principles of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," was to shatter the power of the autocratic Genoese, and finally come under the liberal rule of the House of Savoy.

Relieved of all further anxiety as far as

political events were concerned, San Remo was now able to look to her social welfare, and as we entered the western end of the town, we were repeatedly reminded of the latest phase in her history, the one in which her inhabitants are still deeply interested. The palatial villas in the high-lying Berigo district, the fine hotels on the sunny hillside, and the well-laid-out palm gardens, overlooking the sea and skirting the Corso dell' Imperatrice, were an eloquent proof of her development into the most fashionable of all the resorts on the Italian Riviera. This development, said the Antiquary, who is particularly well-versed in such little known details of local history, was the result of half a century of combined efforts on the part of the San Remese. But the principal credit was due to Dr. Panizzi, who, in 1857, entered upon a well-conceived plan of campaign to make known to the Anglo-Saxon world the peculiar advantages of the climate of his native district. He began by making the acquaintance of an influential English man of letters, and, through him, publishing a detailed article in *The Times*. A pamphlet, dealing still more fully with San Remo and its climate, was issued in 1860, and translated into English three years later. Dr. Panizzi



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then went to London, where he published numerous articles. Returning home, he continued his work with redoubled energy, and endeavoured to make the Anglo-Italian bond still stronger by translating works from English into his own language. And thus, by the winter of 1874-75, San Remo had become a popular resort.

During the season, which begins in October and ends in May, San Remo presents all the well-known characteristics of an international resort. Everybody's attention is engrossed in social gatherings and the amusements with which society people endeavour to counteract their *ennui*. Each nation follows its own particular tastes. The Englishman spends a good deal of his time on the tennis-court or the golf links; the German drinks his lager at the *caffè* and patronises the operas and classical concerts at the Casino; whilst the Russian loses his money on the gaming-tables of that showy building, which stands, surrounded by a terrace garden, opposite the railway station, and the entrance to the Via Vittoria Emmanuele. The recognised English quarter, with its churches and Sports Club, lies in the Berigo district and, generally speaking, the whole of the western part of the town; the

Germans for the most part reside in the eastern quarter, where stands the Villa Zirio, in which Frederick III of Germany passed his long agony. The Via Vittorio Emmanuele and its prolongation, the Piazza Colombo and the Corso Garibaldi, forms a connecting link between the two quarters, and in this, the main street of the town, all nations congregate. One must be a polyglot to understand all the notices. For an attempt is made by the shopkeepers of San Remo to cater for the requirements of many peoples. French dress-makers and milliners display their wares from Paris, English grocers and libraries supply the bodily and mental wants of the Anglo-Saxon, Viennese *cafés* and German restaurants provide for Teutonic visitors, Russian tea-rooms and book-stores invite the attention of the Slav ; and so in the case of the Italian, the Spanish, and even the Hebrew. As we walked along the Via Vittorio Emmanuele many of the shops were only just being put in order ready for the arrival of their patrons, so on this particular visit to San Remo I saw nothing of its fashionable side. And it was just as well that it was so, for it enabled us, during our week's sojourn there, to devote our exclusive attention to

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what is best worth seeing and studying : the old town and the life of its people (so different from that of the foreign colony), its churches, and its public monuments.

The Antiquary was a true prophet when he predicted that I should find the old town beautiful. It is none too clean, the nose is offended at many a turn, and the death-rate of its inhabitants, deprived of light and air, is high. But it is exceedingly picturesque, and so fascinating does it become that one is attracted there time after time, to explore the innumerable winding ways which lead to the top of the hill on whose sides it is built. Its position has never been better described than by John Addington Symonds, who, referring to his visit prior to 1879, says that "it resembles a huge glacier of houses poured over a wedge of rock, running down the sides and along the ridge, and spreading itself into a fan between two torrents on the shore below." These houses seem to be clinging to each other, seeking mutual aid and protection from some unseen danger, as indeed they are, for all along the centuries, ever since the days of Matuta, earthquakes have shaken San Remo to her base. Here and there are arches, binding them together,

but at times they actually meet, forming a solid block of irregular buildings, and on passing through these parts of the town you find above your head, instead of a peep of deep blue sky, the vaulted roofs of dark and tortuous passages. The cobbled streets wind in and out in apparently aimless confusion, now rising gently up the hill, now ascending abruptly by a flight of steps. They lead you past churches, with the faint odour of incense around their doors—past shrines, placed over archways or at street corners, and piously decked with flowers—on to little piazzas with fountains and small provision shops overflowing with vividly-coloured fruit and vegetables, a sudden joy to the eye; and then, higher up, out into a blaze of dazzling sunshine, through the Porta Candelieri or the Porta San Giuseppe, where a fragment of the original wall which once protected the town from Saracens or Genoese still stands, and an ancient vine climbs skywards to bear its fruit on a sunny terrace.

Many an hour, whilst my friend was searching for his curios—and he confessed that he had a predilection for old San Remo as a place where, outside a general shop, he had once discovered a roll of original drawings



*The Porta San Giuseppe at San Remo*



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by old masters—many an hour have I wandered in these streets watching the people at their daily occupations. There is the blacksmith whose form suddenly appears in the glow of the furnace at the bottom of some dark and narrow smithy; the ever-busy cobbler and the maker of pack-saddles working at their doors; the baker shovelling in his loaves at the open door of his oven. Women are continually passing in and out, balancing long trays of bread upon their heads; and, as you observe them, you begin to understand the reason for the remarkably erect carriage of the women of San Remo. Even the aged ones, who are left at home to mind the children whilst their sons and daughters are away in the pine-woods or vineyards, are as straight as a dart, so that you wonder, when you look into their yellow, wrinkled faces, how old they really are. There is no sign of decrepitude in their carriage as they pass to and fro between their homes and the fountains, bearing huge water-vessels of burnished copper upon their heads. Such are some of the scenes which form an unforgettable picture of these fascinating old streets; a picture, however, which is never complete without the mischievous, dark-eyed children, the

black-robed priests, the white-capped nuns, and the *contadini*, with their mules and asses, loaded with grapes or brushwood, clattering down the stony streets at the end of the day.

Either of the two ancient gateways leads to the top of the hill: the Porta Candelieri on one side and the Porta San Giuseppe, up the Rampe al Santuario, past a succession of painted shrines, on the other. On the summit stands the most prominently situated church of San Remo, the Madonna della Costa, a fifteenth century oratory which was transformed to its present state in 1630, and whose dome is a landmark for mariners. Below is a little semicircular plateau, laid out as a public garden, and almost on the same level, but to the west of the Sanctuary, stands the green-shuttered lazar-house, which was endowed in 1846 by Carlo Alberto for the exclusive treatment of leprosy. Only four or five patients suffering from this disease, a white-robed doctor told me, are now under observation there, so the wards are almost entirely devoted to cases of ordinary sickness. From the garden is to be obtained the finest of the many fine views which can be got of San Remo either from above or below: a view of weather-beaten housetops,



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roof-gardens, convent turrets and campaniles, with the blue sea and the long, projecting arm of the Molo lying beyond.

Of the many churches of San Remo, the one to impress me most was San Siro, principally, perhaps, on account of the extremely picturesque view of its tower, as seen when looking down the Via Palma, but also because of the prominent part which the building and its former bell once played in the political affairs of the town. Many a time did the bell call the people to take up arms against the hated Republic of Genoa, and many a time was the church the meeting-place for crowds of indignant San Remese. Architecturally it is not very noteworthy. For fine architecture you must turn to one of the civic buildings of San Remo: the Palazzo Borea, in the Via Vittorio Emmanuele. It was built at the end of the sixteenth century, and is in the late Renaissance style, and the sculptured nymphs and dolphins around the doors and windows are in a very good state of preservation. As to its interior, one suspects that it must have lost much of its former beauty, for, with the exception of one floor, which is still occupied by members of the Borea family, it has been split up into

tenements and shops. Far away, indeed, are the days when it received beneath its roof such passing guests as King Philip V of Spain and his wife Elizabetta Farnese, King Charles Emanuel of Sardinia and his sons Vittorio Amedeo and Ottone, Pius VII, and Queen Maria Christina of Savoy!

A narrow, ancient street, opposite the entrance to the Palazzo Borea, leads down to the fisher-folks' quarter and the sea. Here are to be seen other aspects of the everyday life of the San Remese. On fête-days and Sundays, on a large piazza, near the house from which Garibaldi "comforted the people" in September, 1848, there are eagerly followed games of *pallone*, or hand-ball; and beneath the shadow of the Fort of Santa Tecla, now used as a prison, less agile players take part in hotly-contested bowling competitions. The work of the people largely takes the form of fishing; and a very unprofitable occupation it often seems to be. The net is carefully let down in a semicircle from a row-boat; the fishermen then make a round of the line of floats, beating the gunwales with their oars, in order to frighten the fish towards the meshes; and, finally, comes the long task of dragging in from the shore the two ends of

the net. As the ever-narrowing loop formed by the floats comes nearer and nearer, spectators stand and watch with an expectation almost as keen as that of the fishermen themselves. Everybody wonders what the bag of the net will contain ; and when, with a final jerk, it is rapidly pulled on to the beach, the people crowd around to inspect the catch. Alas ! it too often contains but a mere handful of fry, and the workers, ill repaid for their labour, turn sorrowfully homewards.



*A shrine in old San Remo*



*Bussana Vecchia*

## CHAPTER III

### BUSSANA : OLD AND NEW

CHATEAUBRIAND, in his *Génie du Christianisme*, gives a very lucid explanation of the reason for the "secret attraction" which ruins exercise over man. It is due, he says, "to the fragility of our nature, to a secret conformity between these shattered monuments and the rapidity of our existence. . . . Ruins, in the midst of the scenes of Nature, point a great moral."

In the case of an essentially contemplative man this feeling certainly rules supreme, and it must surely play a part, too, though a minor one, in the heart of even the least

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reflective. It is something more than mere curiosity which leads our steps towards those places where every stone cries forth the frailty and the transitoriness of man's handiwork. Whether we are visiting the ruins of Pompeii or those of Bussana Vecchia, the feeling is the same. If difference there is, it is one in degree only ; the difference which naturally exists between our emotions when looking on the remains of a great city, buried under the ashes of Vesuvius, and those aroused by the earthquake-shattered walls of a poor little mountain village.

What Pompeii, then, is to the visitor to Naples, Old Bussana is to the winter residents of San Remo. They are all of them acquainted with the fact that they are living within one of the well-known zones that are periodically visited by earthquakes ; some of them, doubtless, have been shaken in their beds and heard the terrified cries of "Terremoto!" in the streets ; and all, having read of the great shock of 1887, they would see with their own eyes some of the effects of that hidden force whose approach scientists are still unable to foretell, and whose nature they have not yet been able wholly to explain. So they follow the road eastward by the sea,

ascend to Bussana Nuova, proceed up the valley on foot or on the backs of mules, wander among the deserted streets of the silent old town, lunch within the shadow of its ruined church, and, after listening to the stories which the *contadini* of the district still tell about that 23rd of February, return home, feeling that they have looked upon a picture which is only a few degrees less vivid than reality. Some, unsatisfied with any save subtle sensations, have even visited Old Bussana by moonlight. But there is no need to seek to heighten the impression by seeing it under unusual aspects; it is sufficiently impressive, in all conscience, in the full light of day.

Bussana Nuova stands on an eminence above the Cornice road, a little more than two miles from the older village, and I can find nothing to say in its favour, save that it enjoys a fine view of sea and mountains. If ever there was an example of how ignorance and superstition can enslave the human mind, here, surely, we see it. When the earthquake came, killing forty-three people and injuring twenty-seven others, Old Bussana was found to be too badly damaged, besides being too full of sorrowful memories, to think of



*Bussana Vecchia and the Arma Valley*





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remaining there ; so the inhabitants wisely decided to rebuild their homes on a less dangerous site, and within nearer reach of civilization. But how did they expend the money which the Government loaned to them for eleven years free of interest ? In a manner which even an American backwoods town would consider as a disgrace. The houses are of the cheapest : ill-built, ugly in design, and so badly kept in repair that they are already falling into decay ; the broad, regularly laid out streets are unpaved, and in many cases without side walks. Here and there they are overgrown with grass, and everywhere there is mud. Poverty and uncleanness stare you in the face or peep through the open doors of the houses. Wherefore this singular squalidness ? The reason is not far to seek. In the midst of the wretched houses rises a massive stone temple, one of the " masterpieces " of modern church architecture and decoration. Dedicated to the Holy Heart of Jesus, everything that money can do has been done to make it what is called a fitting offering. Huge statues adorn the apse, elaborate mural paintings decorate the ceiling and sides, the most precious marbles and metals have been used

to beautify the altar. Carving and gilding obtrude themselves both inside and outside. The size of this incongruous building strikes one, too, as much as its elaborate decoration. Its dimensions are out of all proportion to the requirements of the worshippers of the village, its length from door to choir being forty yards, its breadth twenty-four yards, and its height the same. What a contrast between this gorgeous sanctuary and the shabby dwelling-houses that surround it! It is impossible not to conclude that the one must have grown up at the expense of the other. And such, in fact, was the case. On the people of Old Bussana fleeing down the valley they had but one thought: How were they to appease the Deity who had smitten them hip and thigh? Evidently by building a magnificent church in his honour. So all other considerations: health, the rearing of strong sons and daughters, and the happiness of the home—became subordinate to this one idea. And thus it was that the Sanctuary of Bussana Nuova absorbed, not only the public subscriptions which flowed in from all parts of the Catholic world, but also most of the savings of the inhabitants, that they never repaid the 200,000 lire lent them by

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the Government, and that they are to-day living in a state of sordid poverty !

What a relief to leave the last houses behind and find oneself on the irregular path, now steep, now level, which leads to Bussana Vecchia ! A broad and fairly deep valley, that of the Arma torrent, lies at your feet on the left : a landscape of many greens, but principally those of the vine and the olive. Soon, the little village of Poggio comes into view, a stretch of white houses buried in verdure on the ridge of the opposite hillside, and with a background of distant mountains to throw it still more strongly into relief. Old Bussana, too, now grows into being, and at this distance one would never suspect, if one did not know her story, that she is a body without a soul. The spire of her church rises from amidst the houses, which cluster around this symbol of spiritual life in that familiar, homely way which gives so many of these Ligurian townlets their wealth of character. This impression of vitality, however, is fleeting. The rugged edges of crumbling walls, the frameless windows, gaping like the empty sockets of a skull, tell their tale long before one has entered the narrow alley leading into the deserted village. The main

street, winding up towards the church, and the *vicoli* are scattered with stones; the earthquake arches remain intact, but were unable to prevent the renting of roof and wall; the cottage interiors, open some of them to the sky, are obstructed by heaps of stones and plaster. As though to cover up this picture of desolation, vegetation has sprung up wherever it could gain a foothold. The church and the houses in the upper quarter of the village, where the shocks did most damage, stand in a wilderness of rank weeds and grass, and on the lower fringe, overlooking the valley, what were once living rooms have in some cases become wild gardens, with trailing vine and hard-fruited orange tree. It is in this high-lying part of Old Bussana that memories of the earthquake are most vivid, and whilst visiting the roofless church one tries to realise what the impression on the minds of the worshippers must have been at the moment of the terrible cataclysm.

It was the first day of Lent, the hour 6.25 a.m., and the mark of the holy ashes having been placed on the forehead of the last arrival, Canon Fresia, of the Collegiate Church of Pieve di Teco, was about to ascend into the pulpit to remind his listeners that



*The Ruined Church of Old Bussana*



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they had not only to die, but that the place and hour were uncertain. Suddenly, a slight breeze, which had sprung up only a short time before, changed to a furious and ever-increasing wind. The earth shook and heaved with long undulations, and, amidst the noise of falling walls, the splintering of wood and the twisting of iron, there were heard the cries and shrieks of the injured. All at once, however, these sounds were drowned by a still louder crash—that of the falling of the church roof—and the worshippers, who had fled to the side chapels at the first cry of “*Terremoto ! Terremoto ! Salvatevi !*” were enveloped in a dense cloud of dust. And when the rector, who had succeeded in lighting a candle, stumbled into the midst of the ruins, he beheld, on raising his eyes, the twinkling stars.

A portion of the façade also fell, completely destroying a house, which is ever pointed out to visitors, and killing nearly all its occupants. Three sons were crushed to death there, a fourth was hurled into a corner and escaped, and the father saved his life almost miraculously. But the mother met her death in a particularly tragic manner. Surrounded by ruins, she was unable to escape from her

bed, and saw the roof slowly descending upon her. Those outside could hear her cries of "Farewell" to sons and husband growing ever weaker and weaker, but were powerless to help her.

Wandering among the now lifeless streets of Bussana Vecchia, it seems impossible that they can ever have been the stage of those familiar everyday scenes which make up the life of every Italian village. Yet they were once as full of life as the most animated. Roguish children played at toss-penny down the side alleys, women stood at their doors or lingered at the well gossiping over the latest piece of news that had travelled up the valley, and the men assembled at the *trattoria* to smoke and drink and play bowls. Here, at this corner, beneath a shattered shrine, Giovanni plighted his troth to Lucia, as she was returning from the fountain; here, in this disembowelled interior, with windows looking on to the valley and flooded with sunlight, the betrothal feast was held; and here, in this church, before the now broken altar, they were married.

Few though the victims of the 1887 earthquake may appear to have been in Bussana Vecchia, there was not a family that did not



pay tribute to Death. Everybody lost either a close or distant relative, and the little *camposanto* which lies a short distance off the road between the old and the new village, is still to many an inhabitant of Bussana Nuova, though it is more than twenty years since the catastrophe overwhelmed them, a sad place of pilgrimage.



*The Cemetery, Old Bussana*



*Ruffini's country house at Taggia*

## CHAPTER IV

### ON THE BANKS OF THE ARGENTINA

It would manifestly be incorrect to say that any particular one of the great valleys of Liguria possesses a monopoly of beauty. Each has some special characteristic which distinguishes it from one or other of its neighbours, and places it, in the mind of the traveller, in a clearly defined category. Thus, the names of the Nervia and the Argentina, the Impero and the Arroscia, the Bisagno and the Scrivia, the Taro and the Vara, the Magra and the other intermediary torrents whose banks we followed during our three months' wanderings, recalled a varied series of landscapes, which, each perfect in itself, form that

rare and beautiful picture of the whole province which never fades from the memory. On reaching the Argentina, which was the next valley to which we came on our journey eastward, we were quick to discover its dominating feature. Its rich alluvial land has made it, at its lower portion, the fruit garden of this part of Italy, as is evident—long before one has covered the two miles between the coast villages of Arma and the inland town of Taggia—from the extensive lemon and orange groves, and orchards rich with almost every fruit that stretch on either hand. It might also, too, be called the valley of the violet, since large quantities of this flower are grown in the orchards for scent-making, and perfume the air during the whole of the winter and spring. But it is essentially the land of fruit, and at every season of the year presents a wonderful sight. In the spring the landscape is dotted with bouquets of pink and white blossom, that of the almond and the peach; then follow the fragrant flowers of the orange and lemon; and all through the winter, glowing amidst their dark-green, glossy leaves, like “golden lamps in a green night,” are the ever-enchancing golden spheres. Truly, Boccaccio’s description

of this lovely fruit is none too extravagant. The ripe oranges of the Argentina valley are, indeed, like "fire that burns on boughs of emerald"; whilst the pale lemon may well be likened to a "lover who has passed the night in weeping for his absent darling."

Arma,<sup>1</sup> facing the beach, on the right of the Argentina, gave us no idea that we were upon the threshold of this Arcadia. It is a little village which was formerly actively engaged in the coasting trade, but whose energies are now, in consequence of the railway, concentrated on the prosaic occupation of brick-making. Historically, however, it is not without interest. In the flank of a western hillock, surmounted by an ancient fortress, is a grotto which has been converted into a chapel and dedicated to the Madonna Annunziata. It was in this grotto, which is situated about seven yards above sea-level, and penetrates a distance of seventeen yards into the hillside, that the Saracens, in 900, established one of those military bases from which they

<sup>1</sup> "Arma" is a dialect word signifying grotto. It is frequently met with in Ligurian place-names. Cf. Arma do Rian, or Caverna del Rio; Arma de Martin, or Caverna di Martino; Arma de Faje, or Caverna delle Fate—all names of grottos in the Finalmarina district.

periodically set out to plunder the coast and hill towns of Liguria. Taggia suffered severe losses both in men and money from this particular colony. But at last the Taggians succeeded in defeating these *sporcellissimi Saraceni*, as the chroniclers disdainfully called the ferocious, yet intelligent and cultured inhabitants of Barbary, and out of gratitude to the Virgin erected a chapel on the scene of their victory. Though driven from the grotto, the Saracens, however, continued for some time to make raids on the district, so on January 10th, 1554, the Parliament of Taggia decided to construct a fort on the rocky promontory above the cavern. It was built on the ruins of a very ancient fortress which had been destroyed in 1270 by Baliano Doria in order to punish the Taggians for rebelling against Genoa. Whilst the work was in progress a stone tablet was discovered, bearing a Latin inscription which recorded a memorable feat of arms between the Romans and the Ligurians. Placed over the entrance to the new fortress, this valuable historical document was naturally regarded with great pride by the people of Taggia and Arma, and one can well understand their indignation when, in

comparatively recent years, the Italian Government sold the fort and the hill on which it stands for 1,800 lire, and the stone disappeared. The new owner removed it from its place of honour over the doorway, and no one—not even the Antiquary—could tell me what became of it.

From what has been said it will rightly be judged that Taggia, a town of great antiquity, since one of her historians places her foundation as far back as the days of the Etruscans, has played no mean part in the history of Liguria. She is said to have possessed, at one time, a flourishing port, and tradition makes it the place where, in 1525, after the Battle of Pavia had been fought and the French had, for the time being, lost all hope of possessing Italy, Francis I was embarked for Spain as a prisoner of war. The fact that she had a Parliament of her own shows that she had pretensions to independence, though she may not always have been able to uphold them, and may at times, like many another townlet, have been merely the shuttle-cock in the fierce political game which was ever being played between the greater powers of Genoa and Ventimiglia and San Remo. During these stormy times she was frequently



Taggia





a harbour of refuge for the members of the noble families who had fallen from power ; the birthplace, too, of many men who, in their turn, rose to eminence. The Spinolas owned one of the largest and most majestic of the palaces of Taggia and were glad to make it their home when the political wheel of fortune in Genoa had ceased to turn in their favour. The two most notable families who could call Taggia their home were those of the Lercaris and the Curlos. Both held high positions in Church and State. Cardinal Nicolo Maria Lercari stood forth with especial prominence during the Papacy of Benedict XIII, and there was a Monsignor Gerolamo Curlo, whose ashes were buried in the Dominican Church of Taggia. But the most noteworthy of the Curlos were Jacopo and Roberto. The former attained a high position in the fourteenth century as a naval commander and ambassador under the Republic of Genoa, whilst the latter, in 1335, became Lord High Chancellor of England.

In the fifteenth century Taggia was a place of considerable ecclesiastical importance. Apart from her various old churches, the most striking proof of this is the still existing Dominican Convent and Church, which were

built in 1460 in accordance with plans drawn up by the Milanese architects, Antonio, Ambrogio, and Cristoforo Bunicchi. They stand but a couple of hundred yards to the south of the town, so, by turning up a mule-path on the left of the main road, they were the first of her ancient monuments to which we came. The convent and its garden are now occupied by the *bersaglieri*, but the church, which is classed as a national monument, has been respected, though the scant care which is shown for its precious contents says little for the watchfulness of the authorities whose duty it is to guard them. The convent of Santa Maria della Misericordia was the abode, in the fifteenth century, of a little colony of distinguished painters. Corrado di Alemagna was one of them ; Ludovic Brea, of Nice, was another ; and Emanuele Macari, of Pigna, who learnt the elements of his art from the first-named, was a third. There must certainly have been many others, too, forming a community which can rarely have been equalled in strength and harmony, since it was bound together by the double bonds of religion and art. Walking through the church and looking at the pictures which some of these holy men left behind them as

a record of the thoughts which Christ and His saints had inspired in their hearts during their brief earthly sojourn, we could not help trying to realise what their life must have been within their quiet and studious precincts. Prayer and meditation, an overwhelming belief in their mission and in the uselessness of all human effort unless directed towards the salvation of the soul, a strong love of their art, and the glad consciousness that they exercised it not for lucre, but for the greater glory of God, such were some of the links in the golden chain which bound these white-robed brethren together. Most probably, too, they conversed about their work whilst walking in groups in the shady cloisters, spoke of the vision or inspiration which had come to them from on high, and then, when the time came to interpret it on canvas, appealed to the one whom they regarded as the master craftsman, for his helpful criticism. Great earnestness was the dominating characteristic of the lives of the Dominican painters of Taggia, and it is reflected in every one of the pictures with which they adorned their convent church. They include a "Nativity," by Molosso; an "Adoration of the Magi," by Pierin del Vaga;

a "St. Vincent and St. Catherine," by Piola ; a "Madonna del Rosario," by Brea ; and a work, "The Baptism of the Saviour," hanging in the little chapel to the left of the altar, which is attributed to Perugino. The last-named is, perhaps, the finest of them all. It is divided into a number of panels. Christ is represented on the central ones, St. Sebastian, St. Peter, and other saints on others, and on a bottom panel, the Last Supper. There is also an example of the work of Macari, but, much to our disappointment, we found that it had considerably suffered from the damp, which threatens to spoil this exceptionally good collection of pictures. The roof and the walls of the church are, indeed, in such a state that it is to be feared a few more years of neglect will work havoc with most of these adorable paintings of saints and angels on gold grounds and their ornate gilded frames ; a fate which has already befallen some pictures attributed to Perugino which decorated one of the chapels on the left.

The Salita San Domenico led us down into one of the main streets of Taggia, and, whilst walking along, my friend pointed out one of the little local peculiarities of the town.

On the doorsteps of some of the houses were rows of plates heaped up with fruit or tomatoes, which the inhabitants had placed there on sale before setting out for the fields or the market. The recognised price is a halfpenny a plateful, and as there is no one to receive the money the purchaser places it either on or under the plate. Never has anyone been known to take the fruit without paying for it, nor has any small boy of Taggia ever stolen the halfpence—a fact which says something for the honesty of the Taggians. After filling all the empty spaces in our knapsacks with ripe figs—and there were no fewer than seventeen on one of the plates—we proceeded on our way and soon came to the Palazzo Lercari, with its arch over the end of the street. This, and the Palazzo Spinola, the large quadrilateral building at the corner of the main road, and another of the entrances into the town, are the most stately of the many houses in Taggia which were formerly occupied by the aristocracy. They are now inhabited by the people, and in some cases are put to the most humble of uses ; yet, in spite of this degradation, they still retain a good deal of their former magnificence. Carved lintels, spacious

entrance-halls, marble staircases and balustrades give them an air of refinement which one little expected to find in a small Ligurian town. And wherever you wander in Taggia you are almost certain to meet with indications of her ancient greatness. Numerous are the inscriptions and slate bas-reliefs and effaced coats of arms which are let into the sides of these old mansions.

But let us turn from these aristocratic-looking buildings to a certain plain and unpretentious house in the Via Soleri—the first one on your right as you enter the street. Despite its lack of architectural beauty, it is not without interest to the visitor, and especially if he be an Anglo-Saxon, for it was once the town residence of Giovanni Ruffini, the author of *Doctor Antonio* and many other books which have given pleasure to thousands of English and Italian readers. A severe literary critic would, perhaps, condemn these works as being “too local in their character, too old-fashioned in their style,” and as “smacking somewhat of the foreigner,” but there is no denying the fact that Ruffini still has his admirers, and that nearly every Anglo-Saxon who winters at Bordighera or San Remo reads the story



*A Street in Taggia, with the Palazzo  
Lercari at the end*





of Sir John Davenne, his daughter Lucy, and the good-hearted Sicilian doctor. One cannot afford (at least I cannot) to be over critical whilst on a holiday. Besides, it should not be forgotten that Ruffini chose to write his novels, not in his mother tongue, but in English, and considering how correctly, on the whole, they are written, the performance is a remarkable one.

Ruffini gained his knowledge of English whilst living in exile in London. His intimate acquaintanceship with Giuseppe Mazzini, with whom he became connected during the first year of his university training in Genoa, his intense sympathy for the cause of Italian emancipation, and the part which he and his brothers took in the work of the Carbonari, made flight imperative in the June of 1833, in the twenty-sixth year of his age. After a series of romantic adventures, which are faithfully related in *Lorenzo Benoni*, he succeeded in reaching Marseilles, where he found Mazzini, and was shortly joined by his mother and younger brother, Agostino. The little party of refugees lived for some time in Switzerland, but at the beginning of 1836 Giovanni and Agostino Ruffini proceeded to England. Melancholy and difficult as their

life in London must have been (they earned a scant living by giving lessons in Italian), it had the advantage of enabling Giovanni to learn the language in which he was afterwards to write all his books. It was there, too, that he wrote the early chapters of *Lorenzo Benoni*, but, unsatisfied with the result, he put the manuscript on one side, and did not return to it until many years later; not, in fact, until Italy had gained her independence, and he had returned, burdened with honours, to Taggia and the scenes of his childhood. On the completion of the book, Agostino gave his brother a letter of introduction to Thomas Constable, the Edinburgh publisher, who, on reading the story, immediately decided to publish it. It was brought out in 1853 and was very well received. Two years later, Ruffini was again in London, this time for the publication of *Doctor Antonio*, the main idea of which had come to him one evening whilst sitting on the Taggia bridge admiring a particularly fine sunset. The success of the new story was so great that, on Constable suggesting he should follow it up with something in a humorous vein, Ruffini began work almost immediately on *The Paragreens*, a narrative

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of the comical adventures of an English family at the Paris Exhibition of 1856. The author, who had lived many years in Paris during the period of his exile, and mixed much in English society there, knew his subject well. But the new work, though it went through many editions when translated into French, received only a moderate welcome from English readers, who did not care for the idea of a foreigner presuming to ridicule their countrymen. The illness and death of Ruffini's mother, who had staunchly supported all her sons in their brave fight for the independence of Italy, greatly afflicted Giovanni at this time, and was doubtless the cause, apart from the ill-success of *The Paragreens*, of his temporary abandonment of authorship. He took up his pen again, however, some two years later, and in November, 1859, published *Lavinia*, once more with success. His next story, *Vincenzo*, which was published serially in *Macmillan's Magazine*, was issued in volume form in 1863. Then, after a long silence, came *A Quiet Nook in the Jura*, and finally, during 1869, there appeared in *Good Words* his short narrative entitled *Carlino*, which, with other stories, was published in a volume in 1872.

Of these seven stories the two which will be remembered the longest are, undoubtedly, *Doctor Antonio* and *Lorenzo Benoni*, the former on account of its references to Taggia, Ospedaletti, and Bordighera, and the latter because of its autobiographical interest. *Lorenzo Benoni*, which that clear-minded critic and graceful writer, Edmondo De Amicis, described as the "prima anello d'una catena d'oro," is indeed a valuable picture of the persecution which Italian patriots underwent at the hands of the Sardinian police during the first half of the nineteenth century. The concluding chapters of the romance, as Ruffini himself declared in an unpublished letter to his mother dated May 31st, 1855, are a strictly accurate account of the dramatic incidents of his flight to France in 1833. The "two sure friends" who assisted him to escape on arriving at Ventimiglia, disguised as a sailor, were Andrea Biancheri, an oil merchant of that place, and father of a former president of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and a certain Lucangelo Pignone, a native of Bordighera, named respectively in the story Dr. Palli and Ercole. Biancheri hid Ruffini in an old tower situated in one of his olive

woods on a hillside on the left bank of the Roja, overlooking Ventimiglia—a tower which is still standing—and whilst waiting there for a favourable opportunity to slip through the fingers of the police, who were already on his track, his needs were attended to by a peasant named Giambattista Viale, whom he introduces to his readers as Pietro. Ruffini never forgot the services of these staunch friends, and never, above all, those of “il buon Ercole,” who, though he sought in after years to arrogate to himself the entire credit of having saved the patriot, was financially assisted up to the time of his death. Lucangelo’s widow, moreover, also benefited by the generosity of the Ruffini family.

Giovanni Ruffini had a country house just outside Taggia, and before continuing our journey up the valley we paid it a visit. It is a large white building with a shady loggia (under which its former owner must often have written on summer days), standing under the lee of an olive-clad hill to the north of the town, and possessing a fine view of the curious serpentine bridge which crosses the broad, verdure-covered bed of the Argentina, the little village of Castellaro “shimmering

in the golden light" on the summit of the opposite hill, and, on still higher ground to the left, rising from amidst the olives and flanked by tall cypresses, the delicate ivory-like chapel of Lampedusa.

Castellaro and Lampedusa had also to be visited ere we turned our backs on Taggia, so we crossed the bridge, which is provided with a stone seat from end to end, a shrine with three mediæval sculptured figures, and a memorial testifying to the miraculous intervention of the Madonna during an earthquake, and entered on the long climb up the zig-zagging mule-path which leads to the top of the hill. Whilst on the way we got a very good idea as to the position of Taggia in the Argentina valley: a long, irregular line of houses, on the right bank of the torrent, stretching at the base of the hill, with the ruins of an old castle above. The view became finer and finer the higher we mounted, until, on reaching the rocky promontory on which the church of Castellaro is built, high above the village, we were rewarded by the most perfect panorama it is possible to imagine. The broad, fertile valley from Taggia to Arma lay at our feet; to the left was a neighbouring village, a clump of white,

red-roofed houses, with the tall, square tower of a church rising from a surrounding mass of greenery ; to the right, on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean, was the church of the Madonna della Guardia, surrounded by trees ; beyond was an immense blue expanse of sea, flecked, on that sunny, breezy day, with the white crests of the waves ; and above it was the paler blue of the sky, with a tinge of pink on the horizon. The view on the road from Castellaro to Lampedusa, past a dozen or more shrines, is equally fine, and, on reaching the sanctuary, with its twelve cypresses, we could not help expressing our admiration at its marvellously well-chosen site. Little wonder that its choice is attributed to the Virgin !

We read in *Doctor Antonio* that this road was the result of immense labour on the part of the Castellini, and that they point it out—as well they may—with especial pride.

“ They tell you with infinite complacency,” says Ruffini, “ how every one of the pebbles with which it is paved was brought from the sea-shore, those who had mules using them for that purpose, those who had none bringing up loads on their backs ; how every one, gentleman and peasant, young and old,

women and boys, worked day and night, with no other inducement than the love of the Madonna. The Madonna of Lampedusa is their creed, their occupation, their pride, their *Carroccio*, their fixed idea."

The story of the sanctuary, and the sacred picture it contains is stranger still :—

"All that relates to the miraculous image, and the date and mode of its translation to Castellaro, is given at full length in two inscriptions, one in Latin, the other in bad Italian verses, which are to be seen in the interior of the little chapel of the sanctuary. Andrea Anfosso, a native of Castellaro, being the captain of a privateer, was one day attacked and defeated by the Turks and carried to the Isle of Lampedusa. Here he succeeded in making his escape and hiding himself, until the Turkish vessel which had captured his, left the island. Anfosso, being a man of expedients, set about building a boat, and finding himself in a great dilemma what to do for a sail, ventured on the bold and original step of taking from the altar or chapel of the island a picture of the Madonna to serve as one ; and so well did it answer his purpose that he made an unusually prosperous voyage back to his native shores,





Lampedusa



and in a fit of generosity offered his holy sail to the worship of his fellow-townsmen. The wonder of the affair does not stop here. A place was chosen by universal acclamation, two gunshots in advance of the present sanctuary, and a chapel erected, in which the gift was deposited with all due honour. But the Madonna, as it would seem, had an insurmountable objection to the spot selected, for, every morning that God made, the picture was found at the exact place where the church now stands. Sentinels were posted at the door of the chapel, the entire village remained on foot for nights, mounting guard at the entrance ; no precaution, however, availed. In spite of the strictest watch, the picture, now undeniably a miraculous one, found means to make its way to the spot it preferred. At length the Castellini came to understand that it was the Madonna's express will that her headquarters should be shifted to where her resemblance betook itself every night ; and though it had pleased her to make choice of the most abrupt and the steepest spot on the whole mountain, just where it was requisite to raise arches in order to lay a sure foundation for her sanctuary, the Castellini set themselves *con amore* to the task so clearly revealed to

them, and this widely-renowned chapel was completed. This took place in 1619."

Whatever may be the historical basis on which the story of Lampedusa is founded, of one thing there can be no doubt, that the Castellini firmly believe it, and that they are an extremely religious-minded people. The anti-clerical spirit which has invaded the large cities of Italy and spread even to such small towns as San Remo, as you cannot fail to note from the phrases—"Abbasso gli clericali!" or "Abbasso i sperperotori!"—which are sometimes scrawled or painted on the sides of churches and chapels, has not yet penetrated to Castellaro and similar mountain villages. Far from the beaten track, only stray copies of the journals which preach revolt against the Church ever arrive there, leaving the priest in the position of unchallenged authority which he and his predecessors have enjoyed for centuries. He is the spiritual and intellectual power to which all appeal in time of difficulty; at one and the same time their arbiter, counsellor, and friend. The Church and the Presbytery are much more the Parliament-house of these little rural communes than the village council chamber. In short, the beliefs and teachings

of the Church have almost as strong a sway over men's minds as they had in the Middle Ages. The Madonna and her power to perform miracles, the efficacy of a prayer and an offering to a richly-adorned *santo bambino*, or the medicinal virtue of the holy water which bubbles forth near some noted shrine or sacred grotto still holds many a mind in bondage. Whilst talking of this matter, sitting by the roadside, just before we reached the sanctuary, there came under our notice a curious instance of this—one that fully convinced me the Antiquary was right in what he said. A brown-skinned Italian lad of ten or twelve came along the road, and, espying an ancient fig tree overhanging the precipitous outer edge, climbed into its branches after the fruit. Seeing them sway under his weight, and hearing certain ominous cracks, I feared at every moment that they would break and we should see him fall. So we called him to us, and whilst admonishing him for his recklessness, fed him with the luscious figs of Taggia. "Were you not frightened," I asked, after he had admitted they were better than those which grew by the wayside, "to trust yourself to the branches of so old a tree?" "Nossignore," he replied,

with a sunny smile, "for there was not the slightest danger. The tree may be old, but it grows within the bounds of the Sanctuary of Lampedusa and therefore belongs to the Madonna. And she would not have seen me fall into the valley."

After leaving Taggia the Argentina valley gradually changes in its character. The higher one mounts the torrent the wilder and more picturesque the landscape becomes, making it difficult to find its equal in grandeur. The bed of the stream, narrow at times, broad at others, is strewn with blocks of stone as large, in some cases, as a cottage, and amidst these the water, when it is not collecting in deep, green, refreshing-looking pools, leaps and rushes with impetuous fury. The road follows the sinuosities of the torrent, with high hills on either hand, and as you proceed on your way through the village of Badalucco, on the right bank, and within the shadow of Montalto Ligure, perched three hundred feet above your head on the top of an olive-clad hill at the confluence of the Carpasina torrent, you meet with all those things that give such a subtle charm to Italian landscape: quaint camel-back bridges with shrines built into the parapets, abandoned mills, asses and

mules with loads of fuel or fodder, and accompanied by sturdy peasant women busily knitting as they walk along, and parties of *carbonari* taking their cartloads of sacks of charcoal down to the coast. The scene is ever changing as you push forward towards Molini and Triora. The way is now bordered by centennial chestnuts, and the valley, with its lichen-covered rocks, has become still narrower.

The exquisite picturesqueness of one's surroundings—above all, the colour and lighting of the landscape—prompts the query: How is it that artists do not seek inspiration on the banks of the Argentina? A few, it is true, have from time to time found their way to Triora. But why is there not a colony of them there, as in many a much less picturesque place in England and in France? Believe me, there is the material for thousands of the most varied pictures within but a few miles of Molini and its mountain sister Triora. Marvellous is the play of light in the valleys in the early morning or late evening, whilst one is actually embarrassed in one's choice amongst the numerous ruined bridges and mills and cypress-surrounded churches.

Triora stands at an altitude of two thousand five hundred feet on the southern slope of Monte Fronté, and is one of the most strongly situated hill towns that I have seen in Liguria.

No wonder that in 1625, whilst all the districts along the coast fell into the power of the Franco-Savoyard troops, it alone held out on behalf of the Republic of Genoa! It is not surprising, too, that it withstood the earthquake of 1887 much better than Bajardo and Bussana and Castellaro. For it is so solidly built into the mountain and bound together by arches that only if Monte Fronté itself were destroyed can we imagine the possibility of its destruction. We found it a very fascinating place for a short sojourn, chiefly on account of the unparalleled views which can be obtained when walking on the outskirts of the town. It is encompassed on two sides by high hills, which furnish a number of interesting excursions for the alpinist; and in the course of a short walk you can study, as though on a huge map stretched at your feet, a good deal of the geography of the district, including Molini, of which you have a veritable bird's-eye view. But travellers who contemplate



coming so far afield as Triora should be warned that they will find no Grand Hotel de Paris there. Personally, we were glad of it, for, once this hill-town has become a fashionable mountain resort, it will inevitably lose something of its rustic charm. However, true wayfarers need never sigh for the smart, up-to-date hostelry. As long as there is a clean bed, a plentiful board, and a hearty welcome—and all these are to be had at the primitive inn of Triora—they need never regret their journey up the Argentina valley.



*Triora*



*Camel-back bridge at Pieve di Teco*

## CHAPTER V

### THE IMPERO AND THE ARROSCIA

CONTINUING along the coast—across the Ponte della Fiumara di Taggia—as the Argentina is named at its lower reaches—through vineyards and olive groves, and past the villages of Riva Ligure, San Stefano al Mare, and San Lorenzo al Mare, all three washed by the sea and the first two with ancient defences, we came to Porto Maurizio and Oneglia.

Porto Maurizio, picturesquely situated on an eminence which projects into the sea, and surrounded by fine houses and gardens, is an ancient port and commercial town which of recent years has developed into a winter

resort. It existed as early as the days of Augustus Cæsar, who erected a tower, with an inscription, at one of its highest points, to commemorate his victory over the Ligurians of the mountains, is mentioned in Antonino's ancient itinerary, as follows : " Occurrit oppidum Portus Maurici " ; and is named in the sixth book of Strabo's history among the ports of Liguria. After being in the possession of the Counts of Ventimiglia and the Marquesses of Clavesana, it passed, about the middle of the twelfth century, under the dominion of Genoa, with whose fortunes it was for long closely identified. Reading the chronicles of Giustiniani, Caffero, and others, we find that in 1166 a galley of the Commune of Porto Maurizio joined six galleys of the Republic of Genoa and pursued the Pisans, who were cruising in the seas of Provence ; that in 1295, when the Genoese sent a fleet of one hundred and twenty galleys against the Venetians, six hundred sailors, trained to arms and all of them from Porto Maurizio, formed part of the crew ; and that as late as 1786 the Parliament of Porto Maurizio raised five hundred soldiers at its own expense to reinforce the troops sent by the Republic against the King of Sardinia. Deriving great

wealth, like her neighbour Oneglia, on the opposite side of the bay, from the trade in olive oil, Porto Maurizio was ever the commercial rival of her sister seaport, and as the two were rarely of one and the same mind politically, their rivalry, which more than once led to blows, was all the more intense. And I suspect that even to-day they look at each other somewhat jealously.

Oneglia, which stands at the mouth of the Impero torrent, was founded in the tenth century, after the destruction by the Saracens of Frassineto of a more ancient town, standing on the site of the inland village of Castelvecchio. It possesses a port of the second class, is deeply interested in the exportation of olive oil and in the importation of the woollen rags with which the olive trees are manured,<sup>1</sup> and, industrially and commercially, is a place of considerable importance. But it is a town that holds forth hardly any of those attractions which are usually sought by the traveller. To speak frankly, my notebook is not a testimonial either to the interest of its buildings or to the cleanliness of its

<sup>1</sup> "The cultivation of the olive is expensive, the tree needing, at least every fourth year, plenty of a particular and very dear manure, consisting of woollen rags and the horns and hoofs of cattle."—*Doctor Antonio*.

inhabitants. It recalls the repellent penitentiary near the railway station—an immense quadrilateral building surrounded by a high wall, at the top of which, provided on either side with railings and with here and there a sentry box, armed guards are eternally promenading—the dusty, ill-kept streets leading down to the harbour, and, bitterest memory of all, our hurried departure, after a sleepless night, from an *albergo* whose cleanliness we had found was treacherously superficial. There is a note, too, referring to the dull and unintellectual side of the life of Oneglia. So engrossed is she in making money out of oil that she has no time to think of her mental development. She does not possess even a communal library. Nor did an official at the Municipio, when I asked to be directed to the *Biblioteca Comunale*, ever seem to have heard of such a thing as a library. He looked at me in wonder, and then demanded if I were not looking for the office where mortgages were registered. “Vuol dire, forse,” he said, with the most serious of faces, “*ipoteca, non biblioteca.*”

Yet Oneglia—and it was partly for this reason that we made it another of our

headquarters—was the birthplace of many distinguished men of letters. These include Nicolo Gazzelli, a Latin poet and learned jurisconsult; Carlo Sebastiano Berardi, an ecclesiastical writer; Maria Pellegrina Amoretti, of the University of Pavia; Father Antonio Maria Amoretti, a celebrated bibliographer, whose paternal grandfather, the architect Gaetano Amoretti, drew up the plans for the erection, in 1759, of the collegiate church of St. John the Baptist; and, finally, Edmondo De Amicis, the author of *Il Cuore*, and many other books which are on the shelves of every lover of modern Italian literature.

We made inquiries as to the whereabouts of the house in which De Amicis was born in 1846, and after some difficulty succeeded in finding it. It is a large, bare building, near the harbour, facing the *piazza*, on one side of which the Palazzo di Justicia stands, and the author, who was the son of a government official (connected with the custom-house when at Oneglia, we were told, but later, as De Amicis has recorded in his recollections, a *banchieri regio dei sali e tabacchi* in a small Piedmontese town), first saw the light in an apartment on the second floor. The De

Amicis family left Oneglia when Edmondo was in his early childhood, but he ever retained "a sweet and deep affection" for his native place, where he learnt to chatter in the Genoese dialect and played with his brother on the sands. "My earliest recollection," he writes in *Ricordi d' infanzia*, "is that of a day on which I played on a heap of sand with my little brother, who was my senior by two years, and who died when I was four, leaving me but a vague reminiscence of his face. How it is that I remember him on that occasion, and have not the slightest recollection of what happened at our home on the occasion of his death, which ought to have left a deep impression, is one of those many mysteries of memory which are an eternal puzzle to our minds. And what is no less mysterious to me is the absolute certainty which I have ever had that that mite with whom I was playing that day was my brother, although I had never had any proof of the fact. It appears to me that my existence began at that moment." We were surprised to find that no tablet had been placed on the house to Edmondo De Amicis' memory, and that the municipality had failed to name the square after him. But evidently

Oneglia sets little store on men of literary genius.

We did not think, either, that Oneglia had done full justice to the memory of another of her sons, the famous Andrea Doria, who makes such a valiant figure in the history of Genoa. It is true that in his case the house in which he was born on November 30th, 1466, bears a marble plaque and an adequate inscription, but it was unkind to give his glorious name to an adjoining square of secondary importance and a street which is one of the meanest in the whole town.

It is largely for Andrea's sake, and the memories which his family name recalls, that the traveller along the shore of the Ligurian Sea pauses awhile at Oneglia. Finding a lack of picturesqueness, he is not deeply grieved; he quickly fills the void by using his imagination, and letting his thoughts dwell on the cloudy origin of the Dorias, and on the manner in which they built up the fortune of their great house. They are said to have descended from a certain Ardoino, of the family of the Counts of Narbonne, who married a young Genoese named Oria, and had four sons, commonly known as the "figliuoli di Oria," and one of



whom was that Ansaldo who was Consul of Genoa in 1134. One of the great authorities in matters concerning the Italian nobility has proved, however, that Ansaldo himself was the husband of an Oria, so the question is still full of doubt. One thing we know for certain : that among the various branches of the family two were especially noteworthy and prolific in illustrious men : those who descended from Oberto, the son of Pietro, the first Lord of Loano in 1262, and those who formed the dynasty of the Dorias of Oneglia.

The founders of the Oneglia branch were Nicolo and Federico, the sons of Babilano, and they acquired their rights by purchase from the Bishop of Albenga in 1276. Their father was a man of considerable note. He was an ambassador at the court of Charles, King of Naples, in 1255, and served in the same capacity at the Papal court in 1276 ; was a patron of Church lands in Sardinia, and was buried, with a noble epitaph on his tomb, in the family vault at San Fruttuoso, near Portofino. No sooner had the sale to his sons been concluded than it was contested by the inhabitants of Oneglia, on the ground that neither the bishop nor his predecessors

had ever exercised the least right of lordship over Oneglia. But they seem to have settled the matter pacifically and to have received Nicolo and Federico Doria in a friendly manner, though only as simple protectors, as the Bishops of Albenga had ever been. Subsequent events showed that the Oneglians had been right in suspecting that the strangers wished to trespass on their communal rights. Both the Dorias had a numerous progeniture, and during the struggle between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, in which Oneglia, Porto Maurizio, and other towns along the coast were inevitably involved, the two branches of the family gradually acquired a firm hold over the lands of the district. By the end of the fourteenth century they had assumed the title of Lords of Oneglia, and claimed the feudal right of using the people of the district to defend their private interests. There is no denying the fact that at this period of their history the Dorias grossly abused their power. Frequent were the disputes between the heads of the two branches and the people, and these did not wholly cease until, at the close of the fifteenth century, the interests of the Dorias of Oneglia became centred in Gian Domenico Doria, the descendant of another branch and

a man of great merit, who had purchased his lands and rights from the then few remaining descendants of Nicolo and Federico.

One of the parties in this transaction was Andrea Doria. He was the youngest of the four sons of Ceva and Caracosa Doria, and, being the smallest, he was known to members of the family as Andrietta. Having lost his father in early childhood, "Little Andrea's" education was left entirely in the hands of his mother, who, it would seem, had some difficulty in repressing his buoyant disposition. "His generous and vivacious nature," says one of his biographers, Giuseppe Maria Pira, "soon showed that he was destined to become a soldier. Numerous signs indicated the inclination of his mind. The word 'glory' was often on his lips, and whenever he heard the narration of some striking fact or event he jumped with joy. A Genoese galley having put into the harbour of Oneglia, he went on board, child though he was, and displayed there such delight that, had his widowed mother not gently forced him to return home, he would have remained with the sailors throughout the night." He carried out his studies, at any rate until his fifteenth year, at Porto Maurizio, at the house of Luca

Ballario, an old friend of his father, but presumably—ever itching as he was to instruct himself in the art of war—they were never of a nature wholly to satisfy him, for on the death of his mother we find him quickly making up his mind as to the profession he would follow. In conjunction with his only remaining brother, Davide, he sold his patrimony to Gian Domenico, and in the same year, 1488, set out for Rome to enter the service of Innocent III as a man of arms. His next master was the King of Naples. Then, with the ease of the born soldier of fortune, he passed under the flag of the Duke of Urbino. But love of his native province drew him back, in the end, to Liguria. He was given command of the galleys of Genoa, and entered the service of Francis I, who made him an admiral. Considering, however, that the work he had done for France was ill-paid, he once more changed his master. Francis was replaced by the Emperor Charles V. He captured many French men-of-war, and, fired with a desire to liberate his countrymen from the foreigner, called upon the people, in September, 1528, to take up arms. On the following day the Senate of Genoa declared the rule of France

at an end, hailed Andrea Doria as the "Father of the Country," and to the cry of "St. George and Liberty," the French garrison was driven out. By the end of the year Liguria was freed from the French yoke. Andrea Doria's next exploit was his expedition against the Turks. Carrying terror into Grecian waters, he took Patras and Corone from the Turks in 1532, and defeated them in a great naval engagement. Created Prince of Melfi, in the Kingdom of Naples, and a Knight of the Golden Fleece, he continued to serve Charles V during his Tunisian, Algerian, Italian, and Provençal expeditions, and it is said that not a few of his former townsmen of Oneglia formed part of the crew of his squadron. Ambitious though he was, Andrea, who knew as well as anyone the dangers which menace the heads of States, was a man of great prudence. So when Genoa, as a mark of its gratitude, offered him the sovereignty of the city, he refused it. He wisely judged that it was better to be its protector and to establish the Republic on that solid basis which it retained even until as late as 1796. After a life crowded with brave deeds and fine actions, he retired to a splendid palace which he had had built in

Genoa, where he died, without issue, on November 25th, 1560, at the age of ninety-four.

Such is a brief outline of the life of the Doria who reflects most glory on Oneglia. The reign of the second dynasty of the Dorias lasted less than a century, and does not call for special mention. They sold their rights, in 1576, to Emanuele Filiberto, Duke of Savoy, and the town, with the districts of Prelà and Maro, was then made into a principality.

As it was our plan to make Oneglia the starting-point of a journey up the Impero valley, to descend from the Colla di San Bartolomeo to Pieve di Teco, and then to return to the coast by way of the Arroscia torrent, we made a short excursion to Diano Marina and Diano Castello before leaving the birthplace of Andrea Doria.

Diano—one of those places which attract through the sweetness of their names—is so called because the goddess Diana was worshipped there by the pagan inhabitants of Liguria. The neighbouring village of Cervo, sunning itself on a hillside above the sea, also indicates that the same goddess had a temple there; for did she not change Atteone, the son of Aristius, into a stag (*cervo*), and is she

not frequently represented in company with that animal? We found Diano to be a very pleasant little seaside town, with good, well-paved streets, shady avenues planted with feathery-leaved pepper trees, and modern houses. After the 1887 earthquake, which wrecked most of the buildings, and killed one hundred and ninety-one inhabitants, it was almost entirely rebuilt. The municipality has made a brave attempt to make it a resort for visitors, and it can certainly be recommended to families who seek the benefits of the Riviera at a small cost. There is a public garden, neatly set out with firs and palms, in front of the well-protected bay, a band-stand, and a good bathing establishment.

Half-an-hour's walk inland brings you to Diano Castello, a little town on high ground with an ancient encircling wall and towers. It was formerly part of the dominion of the Marquis of Clavesana, and was sold to the Republic of Genoa in 1228. Apart from its former fortifications, there is proof of its antiquity in an old painting, representing ships and a fortified seaport, on the wall of the town hall, near the church square. On this little square is a quaint three-sided shelter, with slate seats, from which you can get a

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good view of the open valley, Diano Marina, and the sea beyond. Diano Castello is, by the by, noted for its fine outlook, and wherever a view is to be obtained the thoughtful inhabitants have built a seat alongside their ancient enceinte. Some of the houses of the town have the air of dating very far back in history, a peep now and then through doors that had been left ajar revealing broad staircases with marble columns and traces of sculpture. In one of these large entrance halls we obtained a glimpse of some fine old furniture and, hanging on the walls, a number of old pictures in carved wooden frames; and not until my friend the Antiquary had discovered that the house was a *casa privata* was it possible to drag him away.

Pieve di Teco lies in a hollow in the mountains, in the Arroscia valley, some twenty miles from Oneglia, and at an altitude of two hundred and forty-five metres. To get there the road passes over much higher ground, as high, indeed, as 621 metres at the Colla di San Bartolomeo, where it begins to descend with great abruptness through plantations of chestnut trees and olives. Up to this point the views of the Impero valley, with the villages and hamlets scattered on the hillsides,





*Pieve di Teco*



are, therefore, very extensive, and give an excellent idea of the vegetation on either side of the torrent.

Soon after leaving Oneglia you discover the reason why the Impero has been called the Golden Valley. The waters of the stream supply the motive-force for the olive mills which stand upon its banks, and the terraced hillsides are planted with innumerable olive trees of great commercial value. Owing to its fine position, the quality of its earth, and the industry of its inhabitants, there is, perhaps, no place in the whole of Europe which produces such exquisite oil as the Oneglia district. Two centuries ago the annual output was some 30,000 barrels: now it is nearly trebled; and though this increase may not seem to be very great, the progress made is, in reality, considerable, considering the enormous amount of work that has been required to acclimatise the olive in a district which was naturally sterile. The terraced olive groves of the Impero valley represent the work of no fewer than seven centuries. Some think that the olive was brought to Liguria from Palestine by the Crusaders, but it was, as a matter of fact, the gift of the Benedictines who established themselves in

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this part of Italy after the invasion of Frassineto by the Saracens.

On the way to Pieve di Teco, and when we had covered less than a third of our journey, we passed through Pontedassio and Chieusavecchia, villages which were the birthplaces of two noteworthy men, both of them poets. Pontedassio's man of letters was Paolo Ramoino, and he wrote his verses in Latin, in the fifteenth century; Chieusavecchia (which shows by its name that it was once a fortified place) saw the birth of Pellegrino in the seventeenth century, and he also wrote most of his poems in the Latin tongue. Of the two, Pellegrino is best worth reading by the visitor to the Golden Valley, since he sang in *De Classe Gallica Vallis Uneliæ triumphus* (1692)—a poem of 926 lines in heroic verse—of the bravery of his fellow-countrymen, and the beauties of his native district. He ingeniously represents the Impero valley as the abode of nymphs and goddesses, a place dear to Flora and Diana, but especially to Minerva, whom he pictures as coming there, after her victory over Neptune, to plant the olive. The style in which he wrote is Virgilian, and his modes of expression sometimes decidedly original. He

was one of the first to describe the terrible effects of a bursting shell, an engine of warfare which was invented no great time before his day. In short, Pellegrino, who was trained for the priesthood, but never ordained, was a genuine poet.

Pieve di Teco, a long, straggling town with gray roofs, stands on the left bank of the Arroscia. It derives part of its curious name from the ancient castle of Teico, which stood there until about the middle of the thirteenth century. This name, Teico, is a valuable indication as to the religion of the ancient Ligurians, for, as shown by an inscription on an urn which was discovered in the district in 1718, it is derived from Teutates, the name of the chief Deity of the Celtic races. Teutates was Mercury, to whom the ancient Gauls, and probably his worshippers in the Arroscia valley, offered human sacrifices.

A long, narrow street with picturesque arcades on either side forms the central artery of the town, and under these, from morning until night, sit the many shoemakers who give Pieve di Teco its distinguishing mark. There are over sixty masters, employing some two hundred workmen, and they are kept busy at their lasts, thanks

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in a great measure to government orders for military boots and knapsacks. Pieve di Tecò, being on the direct road to the frontier, it is the seat of a small garrison of soldiers, who occupy an ancient convent with towers on the northern outskirts of the town. Another old convent, that in the centre of Pieve, near the Municipio, is now used as a storehouse for the handiwork of the shoemakers of the town. Tailoresses, busily working their sewing-machines, are in close proximity to these Crispins, and as the bakers, hosiers, mercers, and other tradespeople set out their stalls under the arches, great is the commercial activity of the town throughout the day. These groups of workers are often most picturesque. The setting of the picture, too, is such as will delight those who are in search of the things on which Time has placed his beautifying finger. Old religious paintings—as the one of Christ and Mary above the Caffè Patrio, under the arcades, a *café* which also possesses an ancient lantern and bracket, the predecessors of the modern electric lamp, beneath the picture—are to be seen here and there on the sides of the houses; shrines and carved doorways are fairly numerous;

pleasant little squares are encountered with that unexpectedness which lends them part of their charm ; and one's rambles among the narrower streets, such as the Via Madonna della Ripa, which leads to a gray old church with a pointed spire, dedicated to the Madonna of that name, often bring a rich reward in the form of architectural "discoveries." The ecclesiastical buildings of Pieve di Teco, which was formerly the home of several orders of monks, were once very numerous. The finest of those which remain is the large, domed parish church, which was built in accordance with the plans of the eighteenth century Lombardian architect Gaetano Cantoni. The interior, with its painted columns, is very harmonious in its colouring, and it contains a number of good pictures by Giulio Benso, Cambiaso, and Piola Domenico. On the slope of the hill near the hospital is a little Capucine chapel which should also be visited on account of its excellent pictures and reposeful quietness.

During nearly the whole of the eighteen miles journey back to the sea we travelled on the left bank of the Arroscia, which—at times far beneath the road—winds along a narrow, rocky bed, through a landscape ever

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varying in beauty, and past many a village noted either for its position, its buildings, or the part it has played in history. There is Muzio, on whose bridge, in 1672, a bloody fray between the troops of the Republic of Genoa and those of the Duke of Savoy took place, ending in the defeat of the former, and the death of several noble Piedmontese; there is Borghetto di Ranzo, with its little chapel, which contains a good picture with several compartments, representing the Madonna, St. Sebastian, and other subjects, enclosed in an antique gilded frame; there is Bacelega on the hillside; there is Ortovero amidst the orchards; and, when getting very near Albenga, there is Bastia and the fortified house from which it doubtless takes its name. Between Borghetto d'Arroscia and Borghetto di Ranzo, by the side of the road, and at a point where an extensive view of the winding torrent can be obtained, stands a little church dedicated to San Pantaleo. Its porch is covered with fifteenth century frescoes, representing the Madonna and Child, Christ before Pilate, Christ carrying the Cross, the Last Supper, the Raising of Lazarus, and other scenes in the life of the Saviour—a delightful harmony in red, yellow, green, and



blue, especially when seen on such a clear day as that on which we followed the long, white road towards Albenga. These paintings were the work of Franchinus Saiada, and he executed them in the years 1491 and 1493, as shown by the dates which he carved above the sculptured slate doorways. He was a sculptor as well as a painter, and his bas-reliefs of angels are almost as clear cut as when, more than four hundred years ago, he worked (on just such a bright, sunny day as ours, it pleased us to picture him) on the hard, black stone. There is a second beautiful old church, shaded by two enormous cypresses, a short distance along the road after leaving Borghetto di Ranzo. Above the door is another ancient fresco, and inside the building is a noteworthy picture of the Madonna della Rosario.

As we came within sight of the towers of Albenga, the sun was setting behind the circle of deep purple hills which encompass the town, and, on looking backwards, we beheld one of those superb sunsets for which this district is noted. The broad, stony bed of the river Centa, as the waters of the Arroscia and Lerone torrents are called after mingling at Villanova, was flooded with

## 120 Wanderings on the Italian Riviera

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golden light ; dark clouds stretched just above the pointed crests of the mountains ; above were lighter ones, gloriously roseate ; and, higher still, were pure white cirrus cloudlets with deep pink edges. No one could have desired a more fitting spectacle with which to end the day.



*Roadside Chapel with frescoes, Arroscia Valley*



*Albenga Cathedral*

## CHAPTER VI

### ALBENGA

It has well been said that "few Italian towns, and certainly none in Liguria, can boast of such glorious memories, recorded in the pages of Roman history, as those of ancient Albenga." The banks of the river Centa were the scene of that titanic struggle between

the Romans and the tribe of Ligurians known as the Ingauni, which followed on the victory of Zama (201 B.C.), near Carthage, and the close of the second Carthaginian War—a struggle, as shown by the pages of Livy, which was remarkable for the heroic resistance of the vanquished and the ruthless cruelty of the conquerors.

The Romans had a special reason for the vindictiveness with which they conducted their campaign against the capital of the Ingauni, then situated on the slope of the hill which overlooks the Isle of Gallinaria, since these had been the close allies of Magone, the brother of Hannibal, and had on many occasions been of the greatest service to the Carthaginians. Whilst Hannibal was marching into Italy over the Alps, Magone, with the object of invading the valley of the Po by way of the Bormida valley, had disembarked on the Riviera di Ponente, where he knew that the inhabitants, and particularly those of Albenga and Savona, were favourable to his plans. With the aid of his Ligurian mercenaries, he had attacked and destroyed Genoa, a city which had secretly been favourable to Rome. This had never been forgotten by the Romans, so that when the

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time came to establish themselves in Liguria they set about their work of conquest with the thoroughness which marked all their undertakings.

Marcus Sempronius and Appius Claudius were sent to conquer the two Rivieras, and it fell to the latter to begin the difficult task of overcoming the Ingauni. Not until the Ligurians had lost six strongholds and the battlefield was strewn with their dead did they give up the fight. Many thousands of citizens were taken prisoners and transported, and forty-three of the most prominent were beheaded. This victory, however, by no means brought the struggle to an end. In conjunction with the Epanteri, another of the tribes of Liguria and formerly their enemies, the Ingauni endeavoured to throw off the Roman yoke, and once more ancient Albenga was besieged. The result is summed up in Livy's incisive phrase: "*Æmilius Paulus proconsul ex Liguribus Ingaunis triumphavit.*" Thirteen thousand Ligurians were killed and two thousand five hundred were taken prisoners.

Such was the importance attached in Rome to this success that the return of the conqueror was made the occasion for special

rejoicings: three days' public prayers were ordered, and Paulus Æmilius was drawn through the streets of the city in a triumphal car, preceded by the enchained leaders of the Ligurian insurrection and the twenty-five golden crowns which he had captured from the enemy.

Yet even then the conquest of the stubborn inhabitants of Albenga was not final. Aullus Postumius had to take up the work begun by Appius Claudius and continued by Paulus Æmilius, and not until he had unmercifully massacred or transported the Ingauni could it be said that Liguria had come under the sway of Rome.

The story of these concluding years of conquest is one of the blackest in history, and says little for the generosity of the Romans; for we learn from Pliny, who says, "nec situs, neo origines persequi facile est Ingaunis Liguribus, ut costeri omittantur agro *tricies* dato," that the Senate, in order to destroy the domestic affections of the deported Ingauni, changed their place of residence no fewer than thirty times. Even if we regard that word *tricies* as an alteration of *vicies* or *decies*, as it most probably is, what a tale of misery, heroically supported, is

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unfolded in the words of the Roman naturalist !

From what we know of the magnificence of other Roman cities, and with the aid of the remains which have been discovered at Albenga, it is possible to form a very fair idea of the transformation which the capital of the Ingauni underwent at the hands of the conquerors. It became a city of fine houses, inhabited by powerful Roman families—a city with triumphal arches, well-made streets, luxurious places of amusement, and magnificent churches, dedicated to pagan divinities. Many famous people must have been born there, and, among them, in all probability, the Emperor Pertinax, whom Albenga has ever claimed as one of her sons.<sup>1</sup> For, though Gibbon, Giustiniani, and other authorities each give a different town as his native place, Albenga can, by pointing to a certain portrait which was brought to light there, and by appealing to tradition, make out as strong a case as anyone.

Striking evidence of all this magnificence is naturally, nowadays, wanting. In 409, Albenga was destroyed by Aleric, King of the

<sup>1</sup> Albenga is also said to have been the birthplace of another Roman Emperor, Titus Elius Proculus, but the evidence is not as strong in this case as in the other.

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Visigoths ; consequently one must look to the period of her resurrection, in the days of Flavius Costanzius, the general of the Emperor Honorius, who defeated Aleric's successor, Ataulf, to find any remarkable specimens of Roman work. In rebuilding the city, on the plain, Costanzius' first care was to erect a baptistery—that beautiful octagonal building which stands on the left of the cathedral, and which those who desire to trace the history of Albenga in a comprehensive manner would do well to see before any other.

This baptistery is surrounded on six of its sides by a railing and a little moat, the depth of which is a valuable indication as to the age of the building. To reach the interior it is necessary to pass through the shop of a draper and dealer in second-hand odds-and-ends (a singular means of ingress which drew from the Antiquary an indignant "Che vergogna !"), and on entering the baptistery, by an iron door on the right, you descend to its original level by a flight of stone steps. Either these steps or the depth of the moat may be used as a scale to measure the increase which has taken place along the centuries in the height of the land on the banks of the Centa. Owing to innumerable floods, the





*A portion of the Baptistery, Albenga*



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ground has been raised about the depth of a step every century, and as there are thirteen or fourteen steps down into the baptistery, the date of its construction may be fixed approximately as the fifth century. The style in which it is built supports the claim that it dates from the days of Flavius Costanzius : it is similar in character to the most ancient of early Christian buildings, and, although it was built for Christian uses, archæologists have decided that, as was usual in the fifth and sixth centuries, part of the materials with which it was constructed were the remains of some older pagan temple. The granite columns and their carved capitals bear all the characteristics of works of art of the best period. The pierced and sculptured stone plaques, which serve as windows in the semicircular recesses, are also fine examples of early sculpture. But perhaps the most noteworthy specimen of primitive art work is the mosaic, formed with small pieces of coloured glass, which ornaments the arch of one of the recesses, that immediately facing the entrance. The design represents the mystic lamb, surrounded by doves and stars—the symbols, in the early days of the Church, of the mystery of the Holy Spirit.

The special manner in which this recess is decorated shows that the ancient altar of the baptistery was situated there. On each side of the entrance are two stone coffins, which are supposed to have once held the relics of those Bishops of Albenga whom the inhabitants held in special esteem on account of their saintliness. Bunches of grapes form part of the carving in low relief, and these—one of the well-known symbols employed by early Christians—allude to the words of the Saviour: “Ego sum vitis, vos palmites.” The original octagonal font in the centre of the baptistery was removed by Bishop Fieschi, with the idea of modernising the building, so that the remains of the one now seen there date only from 1588. A much later font stands in one of the semicircular alcoves. Marchese, another of the Bishops of Albenga, had already, nearly a century before, begun to restore the edifice; and again, in 1865, it underwent a little judicious restoration. A number of ancient amphoræ, found, presumably, in or near the baptistery, are also on view to the right of the entrance.

Behind the cathedral is a little square, known as the Piazza dei Leoni, and above it

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rises one of the many brick towers of Albenga. May we regard this tower (which is mentioned in a document of 1288) and the three stone lions, standing on pedestals in the corners of the *piazza*, as the remains of a fine monument raised by the inhabitants of ancient Albenga to the memory of the man who rebuilt their city? Possibly so. At any rate, there is still another monument which undoubtedly testifies to the work of Flavius Costanzius. About a third of a mile to the north of the town there stretches along the side of the road, surrounded by fields devoted to the cultivation of tomatoes and maize, the well-preserved remains of a Roman bridge. This is the famous *ponte lungo*—147 metres in length, and three and a half metres broad—which Costanzius, in order to facilitate communications with Albenga, built over the Centa. Water no longer flows under its ten arches, the tops of many of which are reached by the earth; for the river is now half-a-mile away, placidly flowing beneath the remains of the old wall which once completely surrounded the town. When it changed its course no one can say, since there is no record of the event. Some time, however, between the fifth and the tenth centuries, the Lerone

and Arroscia torrents brought down such immense quantities of earth from the mountains that the bed of the ever-rising Centa became blocked, so much so, indeed, that at last it was obliged to seek a free passage to the sea along another channel.<sup>1</sup>

If the *ponte lungo* be taken as representing Roman times, and the baptistery as a relic of the early days of Christianity, the Cathedral of St. Michael and the towers of Albenga may be pointed out as typifying the Middle Ages.

The cathedral, with its square brick tower and pointed spire of coloured tiles, is, owing to the numerous changes which its architecture has undergone, a curious mixture of Gothic and the baroque. The original building out of which it grew was erected by the Commune of Albenga as a parliament-house and church combined, dedicated to the Archangel, whom the people of the town had chosen as their protector, and whose figure they placed on their coat-of-arms. Finding, as the place grew in importance, that their bishop needed

<sup>1</sup> "During the pliocene period, the Albenga district consisted of a deep gulf, which extended for thirteen or fourteen kilometres into the Arroscia valley and a little less into that of the Neva—a gulf which was filled up by deposits from these two rivers, then independent."—Arturo Issel's *Liguria Geologica e Prehistorica*.

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an ampler and more majestic place of worship, the building was gradually converted into a cathedral. In 1419 Pope Martin V granted a three years' indulgence to whosoever, with arm or with money, aided in the work of reconstruction, from which we may conclude that it was then beginning to fall into ruins. The tower was erected in 1453. But more than a century later, in 1585, it was again in a very bad state of repair, and the then reigning bishop, Luca Fieschi, was obliged to restore it at his own expense. He it was who had the original level of the building raised to that of the surrounding streets, the difference being from one to no fewer than three metres! Restoration or addition continued in this way until as late as the eighteenth century. The interior of the building, with its well-painted ceiling and square columns, on which are figures representing Religion, Charity, Hope, Temperance, Fortitude, and other virtues, is almost wholly modern, so that to find examples of early work one has to look on its exterior. There is some interesting carving over the side entrance, facing the baptistery, but the most curious specimens of primitive sculpture are on the principal façade, opposite the Piazza

San Michele, from which the best view of the building is obtainable.

Many are the bishops whose bones repose in this cathedral, and many were the celebrated ecclesiasts who, after officiating there, rose to greater eminence. Sinibaldo Fieschi, Bishop of Albenga in 1235, became Innocent IV ; Giulio de' Medici, who held the same office, was elevated to the papacy in the sixteenth century as Clement VII ; whilst Giorgio Fieschi, Bendinello Sauli, and Girolamo Grimaldi, holders of the Albenga episcopate in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, all of them became cardinals.

If further evidence of the past ecclesiastical importance of Albenga were wanting, it can be found in the magnificent cathedral library, which, thanks to an obliging canon, we were able to visit and examine at our leisure. But the fine volumes of which it is composed are now kept in a room which can hardly be called a library, since it is nothing more than an attic at the top of one of the low buildings adjoining the right of the cathedral. When we entered this room, on a sunny October afternoon, the window was wide open, and, suspended from canes stretching between two pieces of dust-covered furniture, were dozens



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of bunches of grapes, drying for the winter use of some ecclesiast or official connected with the cathedral ! Removing a screen from the front of one of the cupboards with which two of the sides of the chamber are lined, our friend the canon proceeded to unlock it with one of the most ordinary of keys ; and as he drew forth the most precious of the many ancient manuscript volumes, bound in vellum, we could not help thinking how easy it would have been, even for the most inexperienced of burglars, to enter by that open window and, without exciting the least suspicion, to carry off those bibliographical treasures. The cathedral authorities are, of course, well aware of the inadequate way in which their beautiful old books are stored, and it has been proposed that the choicest of these be moved to another room, where, in show-cases, and safely under lock and key, they could be placed on view for the benefit of the connoisseurs who come to Albenga in search of the beautiful. It is much to be hoped that this suggestion will be quickly carried into effect, otherwise it is to be feared that the manuscripts of the cathedral of Albenga are doomed, sooner or later, to deterioration, if not destruction, through damp and bookworms. The choicest of these

manuscript volumes are five in number, all dating from the fifteenth century. The calligraphy on their parchment leaves is as fine and as accurate as any of the printing in our finest examples of typography, and they contain initial letters and miniatures, in blue and gold, which may be said to be as exquisite as any illumination ever produced by monkish scribe. Many of these miniatures, although but a few square inches in area, are complete pictures, with the faces of angels, saints, virgins, and monks, all most tenderly expressive and full of the most delicate detail; and the colours with which they are painted are every bit as fresh as on the day on which they left the brush. One of the volumes is a large folio Bible; another is a breviary, bearing the arms of one of the Bishops of Albenga, who probably ordered it to be produced; a third is a martyrology; a fourth is a missal; and the fifth is a psalter. There are also quite a number of illuminated books of music, but the five manuscript volumes I have mentioned are the pick of the collection, and in the case of these the cathedral authorities have, every two years, to render an account to the Italian government.

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The quarter in which the cathedral stands, that of San Giovanni Battista—and it is a noteworthy fact that it took its name, not from the church, but from the baptistery—was the most important of the four districts, each separated by gates, into which Albenga was divided in the Middle Ages. These gates no longer exist—they were doubtless pulled down when the town wall was rebuilt in 1553—but the names of the quarters remain. The three others are those of San Siro, Santa Eulalia, and Santa Maria—the last taking its name from the ancient collegiate church of Santa Maria in Fontibus which is still standing.

This tenth century church is at no great distance to the right of the cathedral. Originally dedicated wholly to the Virgin, the additional appellation—*in Fontibus*—was given because of a miraculous spring, said to be a sure cure for leprosy, which one day bubbled forth under the choir. It disappeared as mysteriously as it had come, in consequence, it is related, of a woman having polluted its waters by immersing her little dog, which was suffering from the above-named disease. The exterior of Santa Maria in Fontibus, does not need any special mention, but the

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interior deserves a few words. It contains, on the left-hand side, a white carved marble holy-water stoop, dated 1628, and some very good pictures. One of the best represents the Raising of Lazarus. Christ is standing by the bedside, at the foot of the bed is a woman warming a cloth in front of a charcoal brazier, and in the upper left-hand corner is God surrounded by angels.

Helpful as the ecclesiastical buildings of Albenga are in forming a picture of the life of the Middle Ages, the towers of the town, built for civic uses, are what bring it before our mental eye most vividly. There are four of these towers, all of brick, near the cathedral—one to the left of that building; a second behind it; a third above a building on the opposite side of the narrow Via Bernardo Ricci, at the corner of the Piazza San Michele; and the fourth, much lower than the others, surmounting a house which forms another of the angles of the square. The most interesting of these is the first-named. Its elegant windows with pointed arches, supported in the middle by slender, marble columns, indicate that it was once regarded as a building of special importance. It was, in fact, the tower of the parliament-house built by the

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Commune of Albenga when the church of St. Michael was abandoned, and it was doubtless the residence of the Podestas during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. The bell in its campanile certainly called the people together, and we know for certain, also, that they assembled to discuss the business of the town in a large chamber on the ground floor of the building : a room over whose entrance were the words " *Mens omnibus una* " (an imitation of the Virgilian " *Vox omnibus una* "), and around the walls of which were busts, with inscriptions, of the most celebrated of the former citizens of Albenga, including the Emperors Pertinax and Proculus.

When we had pondered over all the prominent monuments of Albenga, we endeavoured to complete the picture which they call up by sauntering through her streets and musing on the days when she was a flourishing town of silversmiths, weavers, tanners, and mercers ; and in spite of the undoubted decadence which has set in in modern times, we succeeded in our object. Though the houses in the narrow streets are often badly in need of repair, and the acrid smell of wine-presses issues from many a one-time noble

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building, the atmosphere around you belongs more to olden than to modern days. There is a stateliness in the architecture of some of the houses which we do not find in those of to-day. Slate bas-reliefs—at times with inscriptions in Latin—adorn the portals, and on looking inside the porches you discover massive marble staircases and painted walls. The love of the Italians for colour is a very marked feature of Albenga. Wherever you wander you see painted façades. There are paintings on the cathedral tower, on most of the fronts of the more important public and private edifices, such as the hospital and the home for aged people, and another of the towers of the town, that rising above the building now used as a technical school, is entirely covered. Besides purely decorative designs, there are religious paintings—some of them mere fragments, it is true, but nevertheless harmonious in colouring, and a distinct addition to the town's beauty. Weather-beaten though they be, they are, perhaps, even more beautiful now than when they were painted, and the colours were fresh. In such cases Time is often a great beautifier.

A good view of the town and a portion of its ancient wall is to be had from the opposite



Albenga





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bank of the Centa, after crossing the new iron bridge leading from the Piazza XX Settembre, but to my mind the best point from which to see it lies further down the stream. Almost at the very mouth of the river, which you can cross by a plank when the water is low, is a good deal of marshy ground, a perfect godsend to the botanist, since its paludal flora is exceedingly rich in specimens of plants which grow in no other part of Liguria. Here you have a foreground of reeds and tall aquatic grasses, then a screen of trees, and above their tops you obtain an admirable view of the ruddy towers and houses of ancient Albenga. The sight of this swampy ground, by the by, made the Antiquary quote the well-known Ligurian proverb :—

“ Albenga piana—se fosse sana  
Se chiameria—stella Diana,”

which he explained to me was a reference to the fetid swamps which surrounded the town in the twelfth century and made the place so unhealthy that many of the inhabitants withdrew to the hillsides.

Walking westward along the beach, we soon came face to face with the Isle of Galinaria, which is separated from the mainland

by a narrow channel of sea. This bare and inhospitable-looking little island, rising abruptly from the sea, somewhat in the form of a truncated cone, played its part in the history of the Church, and reminds the traveller of those early days when Christianity was being introduced into this part of the world. San Calocero, Bishop of Milan, preached the doctrines of the new religion at Albenga in the year 180, and about the middle of the fourth century came St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, not, it is true, with the object of making fresh converts, though his coming undoubtedly led to that result, but in order to flee from his persecutors, the Ariani. He found a place of refuge (tradition says that it was in the year 350) in a cave, six yards in length, and which still bears his name, on the Isle of Gallinaria, and he is said to have lived there for more than a year performing many miracles, not the least strange of which was his consumption of the poisonous plants, which were his sole source of nourishment, since none other would grow there. A few years later St. Ilario is believed to have set foot on the island in search of St. Martin, but the Bishop of Tours had already left for Rome to pay a visit to St.

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Ilario ! The Isle of Gallinaria was ever after regarded with veneration by the Church, and when the Benedictines, who played a great part in the affairs of Albenga and district during the Middle Ages, established themselves there, they raised an altar in St. Martin's cave and built a church and monastery on the topmost part of the island. It was in this church that Pope Alexander III, in 1162, when surprised by a storm and forced to land, celebrated divine service ; and a Bull which he issued several years later, taking the property of the Benedictines under his special protection, shows the great affection he retained for little Gallinaria.

The Benedictines of Albenga possessed the chapel of Santa Croce, the ruins of which stand on the headland which rises high above the sea to the west of the town. It stands by the side of the Roman road which ran along the coast, and which still forms a link between Albenga and Alassio. So we climbed up the ancient way, to be rewarded on reaching its highest point by superb views both east and west. Far below, rising from the deep blue sea, lay Gallinaria ; whilst enframed by the chapel's irregular stone doorway appeared the fine sweep of the Bay of Alassio, with its

stretch of pure white sand and the gleaming façades of its hotels and villas.

It has been claimed that Alassio was founded by Aleramus, that adventurer of the tenth century who married a daughter of the Emperor Ottone I, but the statement is unsupported by even the smallest piece of historical evidence. As a matter of fact, this beautiful little seaside town, now renowned as a winter and summer resort of the first order, was only, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a small group of poor houses, occupied for the most part by fisher-folk, and the ownership of which was a source of constant dispute between the Friars and the Commune of Albenga.

We descended the Roman road, amidst olives and carob-trees, on to its unparalleled beach (at one end of which stands a circular fort that once formed part of the town's defences against the Saracens), and there, tranquilly promenading in the mild October air, we met a man who might have been Robinson Crusoe himself. A more picturesque figure we never saw in our lives. His only clothing consisted of a pair of primitive sandals, a white loin cloth, and a brown canvas bag slung on his back. Long, white,

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silky hair hung down over his shoulders, and so long had he basked and promenaded in the eternal sun of the Riviera that his skin had become the colour of roasted coffee. We found that he was of German nationality ; a total abstainer and fruitarian ; and that, in company with his wife and child and a donkey, he was accustomed to pass all his time in the open air. The soft white beach of Alassio was, winter and summer alike, his dining-room and his bed-chamber, and this primeval mode of life had led to a state of health which he had never enjoyed in the days when he lived in houses.



*The Ruined Castle at Alassio*



*Spanish triumphal arch at Finalmarina*

## CHAPTER VII

### ALONG THE COAST : TO FINALMARINA

KNAPSACK on back and stick in hand, we had once more become wayfarers. For a few miles our road lay inland, past the Ponte Lungo and across the rich alluvial land which the people of Albenga have so profitably converted into market gardens, and we did not touch the coast again until we had reached

Ceriale. The Mediterranean was then once more our *compagno di viaggio* (to use the Antiquary's phrase), and, except whilst on a short excursion up the Varatella torrent to Toirano, a blue expanse of sea and the ever-welcome sound of breakers were ours as far as Finalmarina, where, for the fourth time, our joint interests made us direct our steps far into the hills and dales of Liguria.

How deceptive is the tranquillity of the little coast towns of the Ligurian Sea! So calm nowadays is the life of their inhabitants, so occupied are they with the peaceful arts of fishing and husbandry that the traveller has sometimes a difficulty in conceiving that it was once disturbed by war's alarms. Yet not one of the villages through which we passed managed to escape the turmoil into which the greed of man has time after time thrown this maritime province; and a little search generally reveals the ancient scars of these unwilling warriors of the past. The crumbling round towers of Ceriale are an example, and may be regarded as symbolical at one and the same time of her desire to live a life of peace and the shattering of that most laudable hope; for on the night of July 2nd, 1637, they failed to save her from the band

of Algerian and Tunisian pirates which landed on the beach and besieged the village. Three hundred of the inhabitants were taken prisoners and led into captivity on the African coast, and not until the commune had paid a ransom of more than 16,000 lire—thus contracting a debt of which it was not relieved until as late as 1800—were they allowed to return to their homes.

The neighbouring villages of Borghetto, San Spirito, Toirano, and Loano (which, by the way, was the birthplace, on January 22nd, 1776, of Rosa Raimondi, the mother of Giuseppe Garibaldi) were hardly less fortunate at the close of the eighteenth century. They were the scene of the struggle between the troops of the French Republic and those of the allied Austrians and Sardinians, and as regards the ferocity with which the inhabitants were plundered and ill-treated there was little to choose, as the records show, between the conquerors and the conquered. Above Borghetto and Toirano is the chain of mountains which the French converted into a strong line of fortifications (known under the name of San Spirito) and held against the Austrians for two years; whilst at the latter village, on December 24th and 25th, 1795, was fought



an important battle in which the Austrians and Sardinians were defeated.

Our visit to Toirano (a village of some five hundred souls, at the confluence of the Varatella and Barassone torrents ; a charming little place, memorable for its cleanliness, its picturesqueness, and its good fare) was occasioned, however, not by a desire to revive recollections of the Napoleonic Wars, but by a wish to see the Sanctuary and Grotto of Santa Lucia.<sup>1</sup> They are situated in the rocky flank of one of the mountains which rise above Toirano, and though visible from below, and seemingly near at hand, the walk up the zig-zagging path which the faithful have made and bordered with olives, is a long and tiring one. But on reaching the platform, planted with cypresses, which has been built in front of the painted entrance to

<sup>1</sup> Though these are the chief attractions of the district, Toirano, as one of the oldest places in Liguria, is interesting in itself. It was founded at the time of the Roman domination, and was an *oppidum*—that is, a walled town. Its origin has been proved by the traces of Roman architecture and the coins, bearing the effigies of Nero, Domitian, and Marcus Aurelius, which have been discovered there.

The parish church, dedicated to St. Martin, as the mural painting over the doorway shows, is not unworthy of a visit. It contains some rather good modern paintings, those on the ceiling representing scenes in the life of St. Martin, and a fine inlaid marble pulpit—all of them really remarkable works for a small village church.

the Sanctuary, one's labour is amply rewarded. It is not the Sanctuary, however, so much as the Grotto, which is interesting, though its antiquity as a place of pilgrimage is undoubted, since it is mentioned in Leo X's Bull, "*Pastoralis officii*," under the date of September 22nd, 1519. There is no such picturesque story as that of Lampedusa connected with it. The shadowy legend of the Saint having come to Toirano and spent many days in the grotto, making herself worthy of admission to Heaven by fasting and prayer, has no such hold over the imagination as the tradition concerning Andrea Anfossi. Nor is the position of the Sanctuary of Santa Lucia to be compared to that of the Madonna of Lampedusa. It is true that there is a "holy" spring, reputed to be a certain cure for eye diseases, but its waters are conducted from the interior to the exterior of the grotto by means of pipes, so that the poetic fancies with which one might have clothed it, had it been a crystal stream pouring from the rock, are lacking. The grotto, then, takes precedence—as, indeed, a work of Nature should—over Man's handiwork, and whilst exploring it by the dim light of candles one would be inclined to forget Santa Lucia were



*The way to the Sanctuary of Santa Lucia, Toirano*



it not for the guide's persistence in introducing her name into his explanations. The forms which certain rocks have taken under the action of water are such that they bear a slight resemblance to those of articles used in domestic life, and to believers in the legend these are a clear proof of the Virgin's presence in Toirano. This was her arm-chair ; that was her washing-tub ; and here, clearly, was her bed-chamber ! The cavern, which owes its origin principally to the erosive action of water, is some three hundred and fifty yards in length, and its exploration is instructive to those who are not already acquainted with the manner in which stalactites and stalagmites are formed and the often beautiful shapes assumed by calcium carbonate.

The large number of grottos which are to be found between Toirano and Finalmarina may well permit of this district being called the Cavern Country, and the splendid opportunity for study which nearly all of them offer is one that should not be missed. There are two other caverns in the same precipitous wall of rock as that in which the Grotto of Santa Lucia is situated : one a little higher up, on the left, and the other, called the Caverna Inferiore, on a lower level, to the

right. An extremely rare batracia, *Pelodytes punctatus*, was found in the latter. Not far from Toirano, there is also the Grotto Lubea, in which numerous remains of extinct animals, including *Ursus Ligusticus* and *Felis antiqua*, have been discovered; and near the neighbouring mountain village of Balestrino is the Grotto della Taragnina. Further along the coast, about a mile to the north of Pietra Ligure, and on the left bank of the Paremola torrent, you will find the small but interesting Cavern of Ponte Vara, which is supposed, owing to the extraordinary accumulation of human bones and fragments of Roman amphoræ found there, to have been an ancient Celto-Ligurian cemetery. We decided, however, that it was better not to visit this, but to push forward on our journey along the coast road. We knew that we should soon come, within a stone's throw of the sea, to one of the most important of the caverns of Liguria, the celebrated Caverna delle Arene Candide, between Borgo and Finalmarina, and that whilst in our new district we should have an opportunity of visiting no fewer than eight others.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These are the Caverna di Pollera, situated near the source of a little torrent called La Valle, an affluent of the

There is no mistaking the place called the White Arenas. It is the natural curiosity which first strikes the eye of the traveller as he comes within sight of the Caprazoppa, that high, rocky promontory which encloses the western side of the Bay of Finalmarina, and through which the Cornice road, by means of a long gallery, passes. The steep slope of the hill is covered, up to a fairly high level, with fine white sand, which, blown there by southern winds from the neighbouring beach, has accumulated in the manner of drifted snow and formed a sort of huge white

Aquila ; the Caverna del Rio, on the right bank of La Valle, near Montesordo ; the Caverna di Martino, near the preceding grotto ; the Caverna del Sanguinetto, on the right bank of the Aquila, in the district of Perti, above Finalborgo ; the Caverna della Rocca di Perti, in the same region ; the Caverna dei Zerbi, on the left bank of the Aquila, opposite Sanguinetto ; the Caverna delle Fate, on the left bank of the Rio de Ponci, opposite the Roman bridge of Verzi ; and the Caverna di Verezzi, a few hundred yards to the east of the Borgo-Verezzi railway station.

The discoveries that have been made in these caverns consist of human bones, and in some cases entire skeletons ; the bones of animals, such as bears, wild boars, and wolves ; flint and bronze implements ; fragments of pottery ; pierced shells and other ornaments ; and a large number of other articles used by prehistoric man. Specimens of these are to be seen in the Geological Museum, 1, Via S. Agnese, at Genoa, and readers who would obtain further particulars about them may be referred to the exhaustive studies of Professor A. Issel, Don N. Morelli, and Bensa.

amphitheatre. A little above these Arene Candide, at a height of eighty-nine metres above sea-level, is the cave which has taken their name. Its shape is irregular : seventy metres at its greatest length, fifteen metres in breadth, and a little less than five metres in height—and it has three openings, by one of which entrance is easy. Here, as in another of the caves of Finalmarina, the Caverna di Pollera, a large number of tombs, containing human bones, and in some cases entire skeletons, were found ; consequently it may be regarded as an admirable type of the burying-places of the ancient Ligurians. But other discoveries show that it was something more than this : it was one of their places of habitation, though probably during only certain periods of the year. A passage in the writings of Diodorus Siculus, referring to the Ligurians of his day (the 1st century B.C.), shows that the practice of living in caves survived in this part of Italy until comparatively recent times. “ At night they sleep in the country,” he writes, “ and rarely in their wretched hovels or small huts, but generally in those caverns, formed by Nature, which offer a convenient shelter.” In the Caverna delle Arene Candide, then, prehistoric man found



protection against both the inclemency of the weather and his enemies. There—and the things he left behind him prove it—he slept and ate ; there he decorated his body with red or yellow ochre, or prepared the teeth of wild boars and wolves to serve as ornaments ; there he made ready his stone, and later his bronze, weapons for war on man or animal ; and there he died—if he did not die on the battlefield or in the forest— and was buried. The story of almost his entire life can be read in the discoveries of those who have searched the caverns of Finalmarina. As regards his physique, the picture which the skeletons of the Arene Candide and Pollera caves reveal is a particularly clear one. In stature, he was a little below the average, but well proportioned and extremely muscular. His feet and legs were those of one accustomed to much walking and climbing. His skull presented the well-known characteristics of primitive man : the low forehead, the long jaw-bones, the prominent chin and deep-sunk eyes. He was, in fact, the sum total of strength and savage energy ; and it requires no great effort of the imagination to place him once more—with his long hair falling over his shoulders, his muscular body

painted and clothed with skins, and his hand ever armed and ready to strike—among his native hills.

Notwithstanding the defects of Finalmarina from the point of view of those who seek a sheltered winter resort (it is not very well protected from the north winds, and there is a saying that it is always either blowing or raining at Finalmarina), it is one of the places to which I look back with the keenest pleasure. It is a happy combination of the picturesque and the romantic ; a spot full of charm to the artist, and a great quickener of the imagination in the case of the lover of history.

Down on the beach, facing the long line of houses which form the little *città*, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, the views and scenes that are worthy of being depicted are numerous. The fishing-boats are drawn up high on to the sands ; nets are stretched out in the sun to dry ; and the fisher-folk are ever occupied with the work of the day : the mending or dyeing of the nets, or else the pulling of them in from the shore. What a picture they form, these sturdy men, women, and girls, as they toil like beasts of burden at the two long ropes attached to the bag-net far out at sea ! In

the light of the setting sun, their bronzed faces and naked legs are the colour of gold. And how fine, too, is the colour of the women's gowns : their faded reds and blues, and that of the men's primitive garments, which, through long exposure to salt water and the sun, display every shade of brown ! To see these honest workers digging their heels into the sand and straining at the wet ropes—to perceive the look of hope in their faces as the net gets ever nearer and nearer—to look on whilst the glittering catch is landed and sorted, is one of the sights of Finalmarina. Then there are the sunsets—glorious pageants of colour—almost every evening, over the Camprazoppa, and the dark, distant hills of the coast line, jutting out into the sea ; and merely to be able to sit on the sands of Finalmarina and watch these ever-changing sky-effects is worth a visit there.

Historically, the district is as full of stirring memories as any in Liguria. In the Middle Ages it was under the rule of the powerful Del Carretto family ; in the fifteenth century the scene of a sanguinary contest between the Del Carrettos and the Republic of Genoa ; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the possession of Spain ; and in the eighteenth

century alternately under the dominion of Genoa and Austria. Many ancient monuments are still standing to aid you in your dreaming over the romance of these various periods. Facing the beach is a fine Spanish triumphal arch; to the east of the town, high above the road, is the picturesque Fort of Castelfranco (now a prison) which the Commune of Genoa built in 1365 to secure the possession of a portion of territory wrested from one of the Del Carrettos; and a mile to the north lies Finalborgo, which, older than either Finalmarina<sup>1</sup> or Finalpia, the other components of the ancient Finaro district, has retained a portion of its old wall and two of its gates, dating from 1452. Mediævalism is stamped very plainly on the walls and streets of Finalborgo, and this is

<sup>1</sup> The most noteworthy of the other buildings of Finalmarina is the Church of San Giovanni Battista, erected in accordance with the plans of the great Florentine architect Lorenzo Bernini. Its façade is, perhaps, a little too ornate to suit all tastes, but there is no denying the majesty of its interior, with its massive square marble columns, inlaid with reddish marble, and its round pillars arranged in pairs. The fine painted dome, with stained-glass windows, the inlaid marble work of the pulpit, which is further ornamented with delicately carved figures in marble, and that of the altars of the chapels at the upper part of the building also call for special attention. The paintings on the ceilings and walls, and the white and red marbles form a very harmonious combination of colour.

still further emphasised by the presence on a neighbouring hill commanding the town and the valley, of the twelfth century Castel Gavone, that magnificent structure with a tower of faceted stone which has been well compared to "a vulture, perched on a lofty crag, in the act of searching the surrounding country and meditating in which direction to fly and dart upon its prey."

A visit to Castel Gavone and meditation among its ruins is indispensable if you would thoroughly enter into the spirit of the Middle Ages, and rightly understand the story of the ancient Marquisate of Finaro. You reach the castle by way of a broad mule-path, known as the Strada Beretta, which zig-zags up the mountain side towards the seventeenth century Fort of San Giovanni, and passes, just before you arrive at that building, now used as a prison, under an arched gateway dated 1666. The road mounts to the crest of a rocky hill, covered with stunted trees and bushes, where the bird-catchers of Finalborgo place their cages, containing decoy-birds, and, having limed the surrounding twigs, lie in wait to pounce upon their feathered victims. Many a morning and afternoon, whilst the Antiquary was away on

his professional expeditions, have I, too, sat there, looking down on Finalborgo and thinking of that other more vital war, in which for three long months the troops of the Republic of Genoa fought against the defenders of Castel Gavone and waited for their opportunity to enter the castle, which they only succeeded in doing thanks to the treason of the Marquis Galeotto Del Carretto's favourite Giacomo Pico. On those occasions, in lieu of my old friend, my companion was Anton Giulio Barrili's<sup>1</sup> *Castel Gavone*, a story in which history and romance have been very nicely blended, and which should be read by every one who goes to Finalmarina.

Up to the year 1100 the district which formed the Marquisate of Finaro was included in that of Savona, and was a portion of the patrimony of Aleramus, that soldier of fortune of obscure birth (or was he the son of Count Guillaume of France, as is claimed by history?)

<sup>1</sup> This excellent writer was born at Savona on December 14th, 1836. He was educated in his native town and in Genoa; entered journalism in the latter city, and took an active part, in his early manhood, in the struggle for the independence of Italy. His experiences during the Mentana Campaign are related in a volume entitled *Con Garibaldi alle porte di Roma*. On returning to journalism, he wrote for *Il Movimento* for sixteen years and then, in 1876, founded the Genoa newspaper *Il Caffaro*. Meanwhile he had written his first novels, *Capitan Dodèro*, *Santa*



Castel Gavone





who married Adelasia, the daughter of the Emperor Ottone I. Two powerful families sprang from Aleramus' descendants: the Marquisses of Montferrato, who belonged to the elder branch, and the Del Carrettos, who became the Marquisses of Savona and other places, including Finaro.

Castel Gavone was built about 1181 by Enrico Del Carretto II and was strengthened in 1292 by the Marquis Antonio. It was at once a stronghold and a residence—one of a number of defences which the Del Carrettos raised against their many enemies and the seat of their Court. A stronger position than that of a buttress of the Rocca di Perti, on which it is placed, could not have been found in the entire district. "From the considerable height at which it stood," says Barrili, "the feudal rampart of the Del Carrettos commanded a view of the town and the entire course of the Porra as far as the sea shore.

*Cecilia, I Rossi e Neri, Le Confessioni di Fra Gualberto, and Val d'Olivi.* His romances, which became very popular and some of which are still much read, number no fewer than sixty. An extremely prolific writer, he also published a large number of works of history and literary criticism, several volumes of speeches, and three plays. He was for many years a Professor of Literature at the University of Genoa, its Dean for five years and its Rettor Magnifico for two. He died on August 15th, 1908.

In addition, it looked out, on either side, on to the two valleys of the Calice and the Aquila, the former leading to Rialto and the latter to San Giacomo. It was, for those days, very strongly fortified. Its corners were provided with four embattled towers. Along the walls were broad windows, divided by small columns, an indication of the luxury of the interior; but above these windows ran a heavy stone cornice, and a little higher than this a long balcony with embrasures, whence, on occasion, a shower of stones could be hurled down on the enemy who had been daring enough to approach the base of the walls." It was further protected—in the front and to the rear—by two deep moats, one of which was crossed by a draw-bridge, leading to the main entrance, above which were the sculptured arms of the Del Carrettos—a shield, divided diagonally, surmounted by a helmet and drawn on a symbolical chariot by two yoked lions.

During the Middle Ages Castle Gavone was, in fact, regarded as impregnable. Yet the ambitious Republic of Genoa decided to attempt to take it, and in 1448, in the days of the Marquis Biagio Galeotto Del Carretto, sent an army of more than fifteen thousand

men, mostly arbalesters, to lay siege to the castle.

The quarrel between Genoa and the Del Carrettos was of long standing. The latter were the sole remaining representatives on the western Riviera of feudalism, and the Republic, which was constantly aiming at the sovereignty of the whole of Liguria, naturally looked on them with no kindly eye. The Marquisses of Finaro, on the other hand, showed no disposition to be friendly towards Genoa ; and whenever it was in difficulties, did everything in their power to increase them. A secret attempt was made to bring about peace by a marriage between one of the Doges of Genoa and Galeotto's beautiful daughter Nicolosina, but the offer was disdainfully refused by the Marquis Del Carretto, and open war quickly broke out. The Genoese troops were under the command of Pietro Fregoso, a soldier of great experience, and the advance guard came within sight of Finaro on the 5th of December, 1448. Besieging Finalborgo, they set to work to bombard the town, and for many weeks the air resounded with the battle cries of " St. George and Fregoso ! " and " St. George and Carretto ! " It soon became evident, however,

that, as regards Castel Gavone, there was no hope of taking it except by a night surprise, and only then by the aid of a traitor. Pietro Fregoso found the man he wanted in a certain Giacomo Pico, the Marquis Galeotto's favourite, who had been taken prisoner, and who, probably for money, though Barrili makes him betray his master owing to a desire to be revenged for the loss of Nicolosino whom he had secretly sought in marriage, consented to indicate the pathway by which the enemy might reach the castle without being detected. The attack was made by Giovanni di Trezzo and three hundred soldiers, divided into ten detachments and accompanied by Giacomo Pico, on a dark, windy night in February, 1449. It was successful except in one particular—Galeotto Del Carretto escaped down the castle walls and, though wounded, succeeded in reaching Millesimo, whence he proceeded into France. Finalborgo was not subdued until the 8th of March, and on the 20th of the same month, according to the chronicler Mario Filelfo, the town was consigned to the flames and the castle dismantled; a statement which Barrili rightly warns us against accepting literally, since the beautiful

tower of San Biagio,<sup>1</sup> the church of Santa Catterina, with the Dominican Convent, and other buildings of the Middle Ages, are still standing.

Galeotto Del Carretto—whom Barrili describes as a man of about fifty years of age, with a fresh complexion, light hair and beard, and blue, sparkling eyes, a man pleasing in appearance and courteous in manner—took part in the wars of France, and during a naval engagement off the coast of Brittany, received a wound from which he died.<sup>2</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> This church contains a very beautiful white marble pulpit, inlaid, at its upper part, with red. The design is extremely charming. The pulpit is supported by a single, irregular block of marble, carved to represent the heads of cherubs and clouds, which are being blown upwards by the mouths of these cupids. Above are larger masses of clouds and the figure of a cherub with outstretched arms resting on wheels, which are supported on the left by a winged lion, and on the right by a winged ox. An eagle with extended wings is represented on the right. Clouds and cupids' heads also enter into the design of the front panel of the pulpit, whilst the panels on the right and left are inlaid with red marble.

The white marble altar-rails are also noteworthy. Figures of angels on the right and left are supporting what at first sight appears to be a lace-edged communion-cloth, but which, on approaching, turns out to be marble.

<sup>2</sup> Galeotto Del Carretto was buried in the Dominican Church at Finalborgo, and his tomb, erected in 1449, bears an epitaph in Latin describing the manner of his death. This church and convent, dedicated to Santa Caterina, were founded in 1330 by Giorgio Del Carretto.

was succeeded by his brother Giovanni, who, smarting under the recollection of the victory of the Genoese and his imprisonment in Genoa, devoted himself to the work of regaining the family possessions. Aided by French troops, he attained his object. The Genoese were driven out of Finaro, the Borgo was rebuilt, and Castel Gavone was once more made into a splendid residence and stronghold. This was in 1452. Genoa being then too disturbed by factions to think of other matters, the Del Carrettos were left to enjoy their rights until 1568, when the last of the Marquisses, Alfonso II, whose libertinism became proverbial, was driven from his States by the incensed inhabitants.

Three years later Finaro passed into the hands of Spain, which, being in the possession of the State of Milan, had particular need of a port such as Finalmarina, for the disembarkment of her troops, and of a convenient road for their passage northwards. The Spanish domination lasted for more than a century and a half, and was one of the most prosperous periods in the history of Finaro. Large sums of money were spent in the building of new fortifications and in the strengthening of old ones, the Finalese were

granted the privilege of free navigation in the ports of Spain and India, commerce and industry flourished, and the district became one of the most prosperous in Liguria.

But in 1713 this period of prosperity came to an end. Charles VI sold the Marquisate of Finaro to the Republic of Genoa for six million lire, and La Superba at once began her work of destruction. Once more was Castel Gavone dismantled, and of the seven castles of the district, only two were left intact: Castelfranco at Finalmarina, and the Fort of San Giovanni above Finalborgo.

Some very fine scenery is to be found in the valleys north of Finalborgo. A good idea of its character will be obtained whilst on excursions to some of the caves, but to appreciate it fully you must go further afield and make a journey to Calizzano over the Colle di Melogno. Seventeen kilometres separate Finalmarina from the Colle, and after leaving Finalborgo you are mounting every foot of the way until you reach an altitude of over a thousand metres. When you have passed out of sight of Castel Gavone, proudly perched on the opposite hillside, and have traversed the little village of Gorra, which stands on a hill between the Borgio

and Finaro valleys, the road winds along the western slope of the mountain, amidst chestnut and hazel-nut trees, and with green pastures and heath-covered expanses both above and below. Small brown mountain cattle and goats, tended by young shepherds and shepherdesses, feed here and there on the slopes ; but with the exception of these and an occasional bullock-wagon, leisurely travelling along the steep, white road, there is nothing to disturb the glorious silence which reigns over Nature. Northwards the landscape is wild and mountainous. The long, rocky back of Monte Settepani, which has an altitude of 1391 metres, comes within sight ; in colour a rich purple, and with the shadows of clouds intersecting its craggy, beech-tree covered sides. Looking southwards you see the valleys running down to the coast, hamlets and isolated houses nestling in the ridges and dimples of the earth, hills that separate one valley from another ; and between them, far in the distance, the sea, with the Isle of Gallinaria faintly visible to the right. At the Colle di Melogno stand the military fortifications known as the Forte Centrale. The fort, a strong quadrilateral building of stone, covered with grass-grown



earth and surrounded by a dry moat, is constructed over the road, and both on entering and on leaving it you pass over drawbridges. Once you are over the Colle, the road begins to descend with great rapidity towards Calizzano, which lies eight kilometres away, on the left bank of the Bormida, at a height of 637 metres above sea level. The change in the character of the landscape now becomes very marked. The valley, along one side of which the road twists and turns, is narrow and precipitous, and is thickly covered with beech trees, oaks, and chestnuts. Ferns grow in great profusion on the grassy slopes under the trees, and among the rocks on the right ; and their varied greens add greatly to the magnificent harmony of colour which seemed to us to be one of the most noticeable features of this mountain road. At the time we followed the course of the little babbling torrent, merrily turning many a saw-mill on its way down to Calizzano, the leaves of the trees had taken on their autumn tints ; the white road was strewn with them ; and through a screen of foliage of the richest and most varied browns, russets, and orange could be seen a background of purple hills, rising into a blue sky flecked with the most

delicate of white clouds. Though this stretch of road is not a long one, it takes you through unforgettable scenery. After a few miles the valley widens out, and then, reaching the plain of the Bormida torrent, you come to little Calizzano, surrounded by its fertile pastures, which were purple, when we first saw them, with Meadow Saffron.

Calizzano—known in ancient days as Calitianum, Calixanum, or Castrum Calixani—is a very old town. But, apart from the ruins of its castle, which stand on a chestnut-covered hill above the houses, there is little to prove its antiquity. It was formerly surrounded by a wall, provided with strong gates, and the castle, which was almost entirely destroyed by the French in 1500, was supplied with towers of great height and strength. The town and district were in the possession, in 1142, of Enrico, the son of Bonifacio, Marquis of Savona and Vasto; and they then passed to the Del Carrettos, whose reign came to an end in the sixteenth century, as in the case of Finaro, with the arrogant and licentious Alfonso II. Calizzano was added, in 1613, to the possessions of Genoa, and the part which it played in the turbulent days of the history of Liguria may



*A Wayside Church, in the Arroscia Valley*



then be said to have ended. One more item from its chronicles is, however, worthy of being recorded. It was the birthplace, in 1815, of Monsignor Andrea Ighina, domestic prelate to His Holiness the Pope, and a friend of Silvio Pellico.



*Church and part of the old wall, Finalborgo*



*The Arcades of Noli*

## CHAPTER VIII

### ALONG THE COAST : TO GENOA

To save time and avoid useless fatigue, we returned to Finalmarina by the shaky, rumbling *diligenza*, which daily makes the journey to and from Calizzano. It was the first occasion, since setting out from Ventimiglia, that we had broken our resolution to travel without the aid of vehicles of whatsoever kind they might be. But our excuse was a valid one, and, as it turned out, we profited by the change.

For one thing, there were signs that the district intended to keep up its bad

reputation. The sky was no longer so serenely fine as when we travelled up the valley ; black clouds overhung the mountains ; and after we had once more passed over the Colle di Melogno, the coming of a storm was announced by big drops of rain. We were glad, therefore, to have an assured shelter up to the very door of our *albergo* ; and to be able to enjoy it, moreover, in company that accorded fairly well with the mental attitude into which we had fallen—the mental attitude of the true wayfarer, who is interested in all men and in all things. Our companions were a Capuchin monk and a peasant sportsman : the former travelling on I know not what mission, the latter returning to Gorra after a day's shooting in the neighbourhood of the Osteria di Melogno.

There is nothing to equal an Italian *diligenza*, with its scant accommodation and its trick of throwing its passengers into each other's arms, in the rapid formation of friendships. The most reserved of men would be forced by its rolling and pitching to unbend. But in our case there was never need of any such aids as these ; and so, no sooner were we together than conversation began. The Capuchin produced his silver snuff-box from

a pocket inside the ample sleeve of his gown—a pocket in which he also kept his breviary—smilingly and courteously presented it, with open lid, to each of the company, and, having taken a pinch himself, entered into converse with the Antiquary on matters relating to church history and ecclesiastical art. The sportsman and I naturally talked on the subject of sport, and I soon learnt that he considered he had had an excellent day's shooting. But judge of my surprise—though I did not show it—when he told me that his bag consisted of a jay and two linnets, which he proudly drew from the pocket of his brown canvas shooting-coat! He assured me that his wife and the *piccini* would be very well satisfied—as he was—and, at this point, thinking of the huge dish of rice and oil in which his birds would be cooked, he smacked his lips.

An Italian peasant's idea of a good day's sport is decidedly rudimentary. He will expend a cartridge on the smallest of the feathered beasts of the field, and this is undoubtedly one of the causes of that marked and deplorable absence of bird life which one notices in so many parts of the country. In Italy bird catchers are allowed a very free



hand in satisfying the barbarous tastes of those who eat larks and other small songsters ; while such "sportsmen" as my travelling companion are at liberty to spend their Sundays helping in the extermination of those lovely coloured birds whose flight from tree to tree is witnessed with so much delight by the naturalist and rambler. One has only to walk through any Italian market, where long strings of larks and linnets are invariably hanging up for sale, to be convinced of the ruthless war which is waged on the birds of Italy.

The storm being only a passing one, and principally confined to the mountains, we were able, the next morning, to continue on our journey along the coast without any fear of an unpleasant soaking.

Just after leaving Finalmarina, we came to Finalpia, the smallest of the three districts of which the Marquisate of Finaro was composed. The village is noted for its ancient church. A Pope, an Emperor, Empresses, Queens, and Princes have worshipped there, and the memorable visits of the first two are recorded by rather good modern paintings on each side of the altar. That on the left represents the visit of Clement VII ; the

one on the right that of Charles V. Another picture, but a mental one, came before our eyes as we entered this Church of Santa Maria, a vision of the dissolute Alfonso II, Marquis of Finaro, riding in on horseback, accompanied by his courtiers, and, loudly laughing and disdainful of all religious laws, slaking his horse's thirst at the holy water font. This was one of the acts in his irregular life which most revolted his religious-minded subjects: the one, it may be, which made them determined to have done with him for ever.

A little beyond this church the road crosses the railway line and then passes, by means of a short tunnel, similar to the one which traverses the Caprazoppa, through a promontory on which formerly stood the Castle of Pia, now transformed into a comfortable villa. Between a sandy beach and high crags, in which white-throated martins build their nests, it continues towards Capo di San Donato, winds round this rocky headland, on whose summit stand the ruins of an ancient tower, and proceeds along the shore in the direction of Varigotti, Capo Noli, and Noli.

The picturesque white walls and the small, square, unglazed windows of the flat-topped

houses of Varigotti, strangely resembling those of a Barbary village, tempted us to leave the road and climb the wooded heights on which this former " Pirates' Nest "—as it has been called—is situated. We found, on reaching its stony, tortuous streets, that it was almost deserted. Half-a-dozen inhabitants, at the most, make up its population, and nearly all of these are old people. One of them, a woman with short-cropped hair, sat motionless on the doorstep of a ruined house, and made no reply, nor gave any sign of possessing human intelligence, when we asked to be directed along the crumbling galleries which wind beneath or alongside the cluster of deserted cottages. She might have been a figure in stone, so fixed was her attitude, and the expression in her eyes—a statue symbolical of this *città morta*. Only one human being could we find with whom to talk : an ancient man with bowed back and long, gray beard, who mumbled a tale of how all his sons had left him for America, and how all " the old familiar faces " had departed. Surrounded on almost all sides by precipitous rocks, overgrown with trees and shrubs, Varigotti's position is a very strong one, the evident reason why, in former days, it was a

beloved haunt of evil-doers. And I could not help thinking, as we hastened on to beautiful Noli, that they were responsible for the curse which would seem to have descended upon it.

Many ancient records claim that Noli is one of the oldest towns in the world. A manuscript of 1582 states that, founded by a colony of Genoese, it dates back to the days of Moses or Samson: "more than seven hundred years before the foundation of Rome!" Fra Giacomo d'Aque claims that its founders were the nephews of Noah, who, about three hundred years after the Flood, emigrated westward and settled down on the shores of Liguria. Other writers contend that it is of Grecian origin; and so on. Varied though the opinions are, all the authorities agree, however, as regards the essential fact that Noli is a place of very great antiquity, and, in proving this, there is no need to appeal to the vague traditions set down by early chroniclers. Traces have been found of three distinct periods in the primitive history of the town and district. Those of the first period are to be seen on the southern side of Monte Orsini, above the town, where there are numerous remains of buildings, similar

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to small fortalices, which are much anterior to the Roman epoch ; those of the second have been brought to light in the neighbourhood of the ancient church of San Paragorio, and date from the time when the founders of Noli descended from their mountain homes to the sea shore ; whilst those of the third indicate the presence of the Romans in these parts.

Noli is believed to have been destroyed by the Carthaginians in 317 B.C., and it was rebuilt by the Romans of Genoa, who, after surrounding it with a strong wall and erecting a castle on Monte Orsini, on the ruins of previous defences, established a colony there. Owing to its particularly sheltered position, within an amphitheatre of hills, its bay became famous as a harbour and arsenal, and it appears on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, or map of the roads of the Roman Empire, under the name *Ad Navaliam*. The interests of Noli, as in the case of Genoa, having become those of Rome, the inhabitants cast in their lot with the conquerors. After being classed among the confederate towns, it was raised to the position of a municipality, and during the Roman domination of Liguria enjoyed full administrative liberty. As a reward for its

loyalty, it was granted the further privilege of exemption from the payment of tribute. In the accomplishment of that other essential duty of the municipalities of Italy towards Rome—the furnishing of soldiers—Noli had ever showed great zeal, and in the early years of the Christian era it continued to distinguish itself by sending many brave warriors to assist in fighting the battles of the Empire. Among these were the four glorious soldier-saints—Paragorio, Parteo, Partenopio, and Severino—who, rather than renounce their faith, gave up their lives in the name of Christ and the new religion.

The story of these four sons of Noli, and especially the part which San Paragorio played in it, forms so important a feature in the history of this little Mediterranean town that, well known though it may be to many of my readers, I may be excused for repeating it. Paragorio, Parteo, Partenopio, and Severino were born in Noli about the year 278, in the days of the Emperors Diocletian and Maximinus Herculeus. The first of our four soldiers was of noble blood, and as a youth was distinguished for his manly grace and virtues. He and his companions left their native place for Rome when they were

between eighteen and twenty years of age, and the offer of their services having been accepted, they were drafted into the Tebana Legion, then on duty in Africa. This Legion, which at first consisted of four thousand two hundred picked soldiers, but which was afterwards raised to the strength of eleven thousand, was composed almost entirely of Christians, who showed particular bravery in fighting against those Asiatic kings and princes who were then among the most relentless enemies of Rome. In the midst of the victory which crowned the efforts of the Roman army, dissension broke out over the question of religion, and the Tebana Legion suffered the first of the many acts of persecution which were to be crowded into its long, and heroically-supported martyrdom. A large number of Christian soldiers, who had refused to worship pagan gods, were massacred; the army became divided into two sharply-defined parties; and the pagan element having separated from Paragorio and his companions, the Tebana Legion became wholly Christian. At this point the army was recalled by Diocletian and ordered into Gaul, under the supreme command of Maximinus, who at once began

to display the most savage cruelty against the Tebana Legion. Enraged at the conspicuous bravery with which it fought, as compared with other legions composed of pagan soldiers ; enraged at its refusal to take part in the profane rites with which each victory was celebrated, he determined on its extermination. An order was given that one in every ten of the Christians should be drawn by lot and killed in the presence of his comrades, in the hope that this public sacrifice would force the others to renounce their belief. But the sight of those brave men dying with the name of Christ upon their lips did no more than strengthen the faith of the survivors, and Maximinus was faced by the fact that he had uselessly sacrificed some of his most heroic and illustrious men. However, he had made up his mind to be master, whatever it might cost. Once more he attempted to undermine the belief of Paragorio and his fellow-Christians—this time by offering them honours. But the bribe was refused, and so the terrible sentence of death against the entire Legion went forth. Laying down their arms, the soldiers of the Tebana Legion renewed their fervid declarations of belief in the divinity of Christ and, commending their



spirits into the hands of their Father, met their death with true Roman fortitude. The few who survived the massacre took refuge in the Haute Savoie and in Switzerland, whilst the most distinguished members of the Legion, including Paragorio and his three fellow-citizens, were transported to various parts of the Roman Empire, with orders that a further attempt was to be made to make them return to paganism. Paragorio, Parteo, Partenopio, and Severino were exiled to Corsica. Honours and high positions were once more held before their eyes. But in vain! Nor did imprisonment, hunger and thirst, and torments of all kinds succeed where fair words had failed; and thus, on the 7th of September—some say in the year 303, others in the year 310—came the day of torture and death.

The people of Noli are rightly proud of their four saints, and every year, on the anniversary of their martyrdom, they celebrate their memory. In the eighth and ninth centuries they built a church in honour of San Paragorio and his companions, and this beautiful early Christian building can still be seen on the southern side of the town, near the beach. According to the historian Pizzarelli, it was begun in the

year 760 and completed about 820. "Constructed with singular magnificence above a more ancient subterranean church, which, moreover, still exists," writes another learned authority,<sup>1</sup> "it presents as a whole, and in each of its parts, the characteristics of a Latin basilica. . . . It is conspicuous for its size and grandeur, and also on account of the fact that, with the exception of its portico, or vestibule, traces of which are to be seen on the old façade, it retains its primitive form. . . . In the fifteenth century, and probably immediately after the falling into ruins of this portico, the decorative ornamentation of which must certainly have been very fine, a second vestibule was built on the eastern side of the church." This beautiful portico is constructed on two octagonal pillars of black chiselled stone, with elegantly carved marble corbels; its arches are formed of black stone and white marble; and it is

<sup>1</sup> Canon Luigi Descalzi, the author of a *Storia di Noli dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, and to whom I am indebted for some of the facts connected with the history of Noli. The Church of San Paragorio, which since 1890 has been classed as a national monument, is under the care of this distinguished ecclesiast, to whom the credit of many archæological discoveries relating to the building, and some of which are to be seen in the little museum which he shows to visitors, is due.

faced with brick-work, completed by a fine cornice. Among other decorative features of the exterior of the church are three thirteenth century tombs and the remains of some early mural paintings. The interior, which presents a beautiful and well-ordered ensemble, contains several works of art of much interest, including a wooden crucifix, known as that of the *Volto Santo*, bearing a curious picture of Christ in a long tunic—a work attributed to the eighth or ninth century, and which was probably brought from the East by some of those inhabitants of Noli who trafficked there during the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> There is also an interesting pontifical chair, a carefully executed copy of the ancient cathedra of the Bishops of Noli;<sup>2</sup> and the crypt, which is more than two yards and a half below the present level of the ground, contains details of sculpture and remains of mural paintings that should not be missed by those who have a taste for art and archæology.

<sup>1</sup> This “*Volto Santo*” is highly venerated by the people of Noli, and many believe that, as in the case of the Crucifix in the Cathedral of Lucca, which is said to have been carved by Nicodemus and finished by Angels, and which Dante mentions in the *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno XXI*, 48), it is of miraculous origin.

<sup>2</sup> Noli became the seat of a bishop in 1239; it was merged into the bishopric of Savona in 1819.

In 1887, the church was much damaged by the earthquake, and threatened to fall into ruins, but in the following year its restoration was begun by Commendatore Alfredo d'Andrada, and it is now a splendid example of early ecclesiastical architecture.

From the year 335 to the year 641, Noli was one of a number of small Republics which had sprung up in various parts of Liguria under the influence of the Roman Empire. It was then destroyed by Rothari, King of the Lombards, but quickly reconstructed and more strongly defended than ever. Fired with a desire, like Genoa, Savona, and Albenga, to be modelled on the lines of the Power which had done so much for its development, and determined to be ready to ward off any future blows which might be dealt by the barbarian, it strengthened the great castle on Monte Orsini and built a number of high and solid towers. These numbered no fewer than seventy-two, a proof of how important the town became during the Middle Ages, since no one, unless he were a noble or an extremely rich man, owning at least one ship of commerce or of war, was allowed to raise or possess one of these embattled outlooks. From the summit of

these towers the inhabitants of the *città delle settantadue torre*, as ancient Noli was called, kept a sharp look-out on the horizon, and on the approach of the sails of the dreaded Saracens, lit the fires which were the agreed-upon signal to Genoa, its great protector, that help was needed.

A great number of the seventy-two towers of Noli have, unfortunately, been pulled down, but one can form a very good idea of the former appearance of the town from those which are still standing, though even these have been considerably reduced in their height. Seen from the slopes of the encircling hills, these red brick watch-towers, rising here and there from amidst the old houses, give the town just that air of mediævalism which accords so well with its history.

We viewed them from a path which we christened the Golden Way: an ancient, winding, stony mule-track, leading to the heights on which the ruined castle stands. The day was drawing to a close, and the sun, about to disappear behind a hill, was pouring a flood of golden light on to the town's ruddy towers and our mountain pathway. It was not this sunset alone, however, which suggested the appellation: the Antiquary

reminded me that we were now treading in the footsteps of Dante, and what better word than "golden" could be applied to a foot-path which, as it pleased us to fancy, had been followed by an immortal poet? Many places to which we were coming in Liguria were visited by this great wayfarer during the years of exile that followed his banishment and flight from Florence in 1302, and some of them, with the most acute observation of the beauty of the landscapes of the province—a faculty which only a few great natures of the Renaissance displayed—are mentioned in the *Divine Comedy*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In addition to his numerous references to places, persons, and events connected with the history of Liguria, Dante drew upon the Genoese dialect for some of his words,—such as *cà* (*casa*), *co* (*capo*), *fi* (*figlio*), *barba* (*zio*), *chiappa* (*ardesia*), and *leure* (*lepre*), thus making them a recognised part of the national language. He is said by Filelfo to have been an ambassador in Genoa, but this is denied by some authorities. However, the *Divine Comedy* shows a remarkable knowledge of the dialect of the city, and he was clearly well-acquainted with its political events—as, for example, the murder of Branca Doria, in 1290, which prompted the scathing words:—

" Ah Genoese ! men perverse in every way,  
With every foulness stain'd, why from the earth  
Are ye not cancel'd ? "

(Inferno XXXIII, 151-153.)

But Dante's anathemas must not be taken too seriously. He was given to using hard names, and many are the cities



*The "Golden Way," above Noli*





“ Vassi in Sanleo, e discendesi in Noli ;  
 Montasi su Bismantova in cacume  
 Con esso i pie : ma qui convien ch'uom voli,”<sup>1</sup>  
 (Purg. IV, 30.)

sings Dante, describing his ascent, with Virgil, of the mountain of Purgatory, by a “ steep and narrow path pent in on each side by rock.” Hard and rough indeed must have been the coast roads of Liguria when, meditating on his great poem—in which, as Edmund G. Gardner has well said, “ all the noblest thought and work of the ages that passed between the fall of the Roman Empire and the closing years of the thirteenth century, finds supreme artistic expression ”—he wandered from city to city throughout Italy. The wild and precipitous character of a good deal of the littoral, especially in the neighbourhood of Noli, Rapallo, and Sestri Levante, is still a safe indication of the scenery upon which received the lash every whit as severely as La Superba. Florence was the “ plant of him that on his Maker turn'd the back,”—that is, Safan ; Pistoja was likened to a den of wild beasts ; and Lucca, the city of Santa Zita, was peopled with *barattieri*, those guilty of corrupt practices and speculation—a sin to which great importance was attached in the days of Dante.

<sup>1</sup> “ On Sanleo's road  
 Who journeys, or to Noli low descends,  
 Or mounts Bismantua's height, must use his feet ;  
 But here a man had need to fly . . . ”  
 (Cary's translation.)

which the divine singer gazed in the fourteenth century ; and, indeed, I am much inclined to the opinion that a visit to the shores of the Ligurian Sea is an essential part of the education of every student of Dante. At any rate, the power of some of the descriptions in the *Divine Comedy* is certainly made clearer by personal inspection of these rugged, pine-clad cliffs, along whose sides, high above the sea, wind the narrow, steep paths of the *contadini* and their mules. Can we for a moment doubt that the following lines were inspired by the surroundings of Noli ?—

“ Noi salivam per entro il sasso rotto,  
 E d’ogni lato ne stringea lo stremo,  
 E piedi e man voleva il suol di sotto.  
 Poi che noi fummo in su l’orlo supremo  
 Dell’alta ripa, alla scoperta spiaggia ;  
 ‘ Maestro mio,’ diss’io, ‘ che via faremo ? ’  
 Ed egli a me : ‘ Nessun tuo passo caggia :  
 Pur su al monte dietro a me acquista,  
 Fin che n’appaia alcuna scorta saggia.’  
 Lo sommo er’alto che vincea la vista,  
 E la costa superba piu assai  
 Che da mezzo quadrante a centro lista.  
 Io era lasso, quando cominciai :  
 ‘ O dolce padre, volgiti e rimira  
 Com’io rimango solo, se non ristai.’  
 ‘ Figliuol mio,’ disse, ‘ infin quivi ti tira,’  
 Additandomi un balzo poco in sue,  
 Che da quel lato il poggio tutto gira.  
 Si mi spronaron le parole sue,

Ch'io mi sforzai, carpando appresso lui,  
 Tanto che il cinghio sotto i pie mi fue.  
 A seder ci ponemmo ivi ambedui  
 Volti a levante, ond' eravam saliti ;  
 Che suole, a riguardar, giovare altrui."<sup>1</sup>  
 (Purg. IV, 31-54.)

As a perpetual reminder of Dante's visit to Noli, the municipality has recorded it on a memorial stone under the town's picturesque arcades. Here there are also tablets to the memory of two other great men, whose

<sup>1</sup> We through the broken rock ascended, close  
 Pent on each side, while underneath the ground  
 Ask'd aid of hands and feet. When we arrived  
 Near on the highest ridge of the steep bank,  
 Where the plain level open'd, I exclaim'd,  
 "O Master! say, which way can we proceed."  
 He answer'd, "Let no step of thine recede.  
 Behind me gain the mountain, till to us  
 Some practised guide appear." That eminence  
 Was lofty, that no eye might reach its point ;  
 And the side proudly rising, more than line  
 From the mid quadrant to the centre drawn.  
 I, wearied, thus began : "Parent beloved !  
 Turn and behold how I remain alone,  
 If thou stay not."—"My son!" he straight replied,  
 "Thus far put forth thy strength"; and to a track  
 Pointed, that, on this side projecting, round  
 Circles the hill. His words so spurr'd me on,  
 That I, behind him, clambering, forced myself,  
 Till my feet press'd the circuit plain beneath.  
 There both together seated, turn'd we round  
 To eastward, whence was our ascent : and oft  
 Many beside have with delight look'd back.  
 (Cary's translation.)

names are invariably connected with the history of Noli : Antonio da Noli, the daring navigator who discovered the Cape Verde Islands in 1462, and Fra Giordano Bruno, who began life in a convent and died, on February 17th, 1600, a confirmed materialist. The wisdom of putting up a plaque to this antichristian writer, whose connection with the town was merely that of a teacher of grammar and cosmography during a period of four or five months, has, perhaps, been doubted by some of the devout Nolese, but no one has ever raised a protest against the celebration of the memory of the man who upheld the reputation of the sons of Noli for bravery and experience in sea-craft. Antonio left his native town to offer his services to Portugal about the middle of the fifteenth century, when he was between twenty-five and thirty years of age. He was accompanied by his brother Bartholomeo and his nephew Raffaele, and he had three ships, all his own property. Received with open arms at the Portuguese Court, he was entrusted by Prince Henry, whose great desire was to discover a way to the Indies, with an expedition, and whilst it was *en route* the Cape Verde Islands were discovered and added to the possessions

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of Portugal. Antonio made other discoveries, but in company with the Venetian navigator, Alvise Cadamosto, whom he met between the mouth of the Senegal and Cape Verde. After sailing down the River Gambia, they met with so many difficulties that they had to abandon the idea of reaching the Indies, and were forced, with greatly reduced crews, to return to Portugal. When and where Antonio died no one knows ; but he is believed to have breathed his last in 1466.

The road from Noli to the Porto di Vado passes through ten kilometres of very picturesque scenery ; it follows the sinuosities of the rocky coast, and on winding round a little cape opposite the Isle of Bergeggi (and above a sea-washed cavern of the same name), enables you to obtain a fine view of distant Savona. But from this point it falls off in interest, since, for the greater part of the remaining nine kilometres to Savona, it runs slightly inland, across the fertile plains of the banks of the Quiliano and Segno torrents.

The Isle of Bergeggi, which during the Middle Ages was called the Isola di Liguria, is interesting on account of the remains of Roman and Mediæval buildings which crown

its summit. According to Commendatore d'Andrada, who carefully studied and described them in 1899, the ruins attributable to the Romans—a round tower within a triangular enclosure—are those of a lighthouse, erected to guide navigators into the harbour of Vado. At the time of the construction of this tower, the Romans were in complete possession of Liguria, so that the idea that it may have been a fort can be rejected. The other remains are those of the church and monastery which were built at the end of the tenth century in honour of Sant' Eugenio, who died and was buried on the island in 505. They were inhabited by a small colony of Benedictine monks from the year 992 to 1252, when the sacred ashes of Sant' Eugenio were transported by Monsignor Filippo, Bishop of Noli, to the church of San Paragorio. The relics of the saint were removed in 1602 to the new cathedral of San Pietro, where they are still venerated.

The Grotta di Bergeggi is some thirty metres long, twenty-five broad, and fifteen high, and though it can be entered by a difficult passage from above, it is more easily explored by means of a boat. A number of skeletons, with flint and bronze implements,

were discovered some years ago in one of its galleries ; but it contains nothing of interest now save fossil remains, and is hardly worth while visiting unless you are particularly interested in geology. Most travellers will prefer—as we did—to take its history for granted and push along the road towards their next great centre, Savona, passing, *en route*, Vado and Fornaci, which deserve brief mention. The former is the *Vada Sebastia* of the Roman epoch, was an important station on the Via Julia, and claims to have been the birthplace, in 193, of the Emperor Pertinax. The latter, as its name indicates, is engaged in the manufacture of earthenware, which, before being fired in its kilns (*forni*), is placed in the sun, along the roadside, to dry.

Modern Savona, an enterprising and well-ordered seaport, with fine, broad streets and stately arcades, may be said to be quickly swallowing up the old town ; or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that the old is being enveloped and hidden by the new. One's first impression, on seeing its large squares and gardens, and on walking under its many *portici*, which are every bit as magnificent as those in the Rue de Rivoli, in

Paris, is that the Savona of the Middle Ages, when it was under the dominion of Genoa, much against its will;<sup>1</sup> the Savona of the epoch of Columbus and those other great navigators (many of them Ligurians) who made geographical discoveries of the utmost importance, is a thing of the past. But this is not really so. Portions of old Savona still exist, and a very little search in the narrow streets of the quarter near the port will result in you finding them. The most ancient monument of the town is the Brandale tower, which formed part of the old defences, and a mention of which is to be found in a document of 1178. The fifteenth century is represented by another tower—that bearing the name of Leone Pancaldo, opposite the square at the end of the Via Paleocapa; the sixteenth century by the fort which the Genoese built on the western side of the town: a fort which is now used as a prison, and in which Giuseppe Mazzini was imprisoned; and the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries by the cathedral.

The Torre Pancaldo is the ancient tower

<sup>1</sup> "The people of Savona," wrote Giustiniani, "possess great understanding and ill-support servitude."



of the wet-dock, and there is little to be said about it save that it was built in the century of Columbus as a nocturnal guard of the port ; that it has many times been restored ; and that in 1664 the Commune of Savona ornamented it with a clock and a statue of the Madonna, the latter facing the sea and bearing underneath these lines, in Latinised Italian, by the sixteenth century Savona poet, Gabriello Chiabrera :—

In mare irato in subito procella  
Invoco te nostra benigna stella.

But slight though its history may be, how vividly this tower and the name it bears call up one's recollections of the splendid pages which are devoted to the mariners of Liguria in the great story of the early explorers of the ocean ! In the management of ships and a knowledge of the moods of the sea, the Ligurians were acknowledged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to be without equal. Naval skill and bravery were part of their birthright, inherited from those fierce ancestors who stood out so stoutly against the Romans, and who drew a cry of admiration even from the conqueror. "They are strong and brave, not only in war," wrote Diodorus Siculus, "but also in confronting

the tempests of the ocean, on which they set out in their slender boats to sail even as far as the seas of Sardinia and Lybia." The reputation of the navigators of Liguria became, then, world-wide, and, as in the case of Columbus and Antonio da Noli and Pancaldo, their services were eagerly sought by those kings and princes who were ambitious of adding to their possessions. The part which Columbus, the greatest of all Ligurian navigators, played in the century of great territorial discoveries is known to every one.<sup>1</sup> I have already written of the work of Antonio. But few have heard of Leone Pancaldo. He

<sup>1</sup> Without entering into the complicated controversy regarding the birthplace of Columbus, let me point out that only two of the many towns and cities which claim him as a son are considered by modern critics to have made out a good case, and that up to the present the balance dips in favour, not of Genoa, but of Savona. Numerous facts support Savona's claim, but the most conclusive are those contained in the documents discovered in 1892 by Professor R. D. Uhagon in the National Archives in Madrid, and which refer to Cristoforo Colombo, a Genoese, being an "hera naturel de la Saona, ques una villa cerca de Genova." I may add, for the benefit of those who have a taste for making pilgrimages to old houses, that, facing the Piazza Colombo, near the port, is a house in which the discoverer of America is said to have lived for many years, "meditating," as a tablet records, "over his future discoveries," which included an island in the Atlantic to which, in memory of Savona, he gave the name of Savoia.

was a poor cooper of Savona who, having taken to a seafaring life, made a number of voyages at the beginning of the sixteenth century which brought him considerable fame. There is no need to exaggerate his abilities, as some writers have done ; he was certainly far from possessing either the spirit or the gift of divination shown by his great fellow-townsmen, Columbus. But there is no doubt as to his bravery and skill as a pilot, and his reputation for these qualities having come to the ears of Ferdinando Magellan, the Portuguese navigator and admiral of Charles V, he was offered the post of head pilot of an expedition which was being sent out to settle the question of the delimitation of the possessions of Spain and Portugal, which were then under dispute. Three other Savonese were engaged with him : Francesco Scivra, Gianni, and Agostino da Savona. Magellan's fleet, which consisted of five caravels, the *Trinidad*, the *Sant' Antonio*, the *Conception*, the *Victoria*, and the *Sant' Iago*, ships of one hundred to one hundred and fifty tons burden, left Seville on August 10th, 1519, with a crew of two hundred and thirty-seven men. Descending the Guadalquivir (we read in the account of the voyage, written by Antonio Pigafetta

Vicentin Cavagliere Gerosolimitano), the fleet stopped at San Lucar to complete its preparations, and then set sail on a south-western route. Having passed Cape Verde, the expedition reached Brazil, and, following the coast, in the direction of the antarctic pole, Patagonia, where it was delayed about five months. The captains of four of the vessels plotted at this time against Magellan, but the conspiracy was discovered and two of them were put to death. The others were landed in Patagonia. But more serious troubles were in store for Magellan and his Savonese pilots. Whilst exploring the coast, the *Sant' Iago* was shipwrecked. The crew, however, was saved. The other ships also ran great dangers, but finally they reached a narrow strip of sea, into which the *Sant' Antonio* and the *Conception* advanced. But they turned back after two days, and the former vessel secretly set sail for Spain. Magellan was determined, however, not to abandon the undertaking, so he pushed forward with his remaining vessels and, at the end of three days, during which he and his men were alternately racked with despair and buoyed up with hope, sighted the last cape of the straits to which his name was given. For

the next three months and twenty days the only land they saw were two small islands which, since they could find nothing upon them save birds and trees, they named the Unfortunate Isles. Having crossed the equator, the expedition sailed in a west-north-western direction, and on March 6th, 1521, discovered a few islands. Then, continuing towards the west, it met with other islands, which were christened with the name of San Lazzaro, but which were afterwards, in honour of Philip of Austria, the son of Charles V, named the Philippines. On April 27th, 1521, the Island of Matan was discovered, and it was there, in a fight with the natives, that Magellan was killed. The command of the fleet was assumed by Giovanni Sebastiano del Cano, and after numerous adventures the Molucca Isles were sighted. The return voyage was then made, but the only vessel to reach home, on September 8th, 1522, after an absence of more than three years, was the *Victoria*, and out of the crew of two hundred and twenty-seven who set out only eighteen remained. One of the survivors was Leone Pancaldo, who, welcomed with great joy by the King of Spain, received a recompense of 2,000 gold ducats. Charles

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made the condition, however, that he should say nothing about the discoveries in which he had assisted, and should pilot no one else to the new lands—a condition which Pancaldo kept for thirteen years. But in 1535 he broke his agreement by undertaking a fresh voyage ; and was drowned near Rio de la Plata.

As in the days of Pancaldo, Savona still prides itself on its maritime importance. Its port, truly, is a very busy one : a miniature Genoa, with its harbour full of ships from Glasgow, Castellamare, Viareggio, and Sicily, laden with coal and wine and oil and sulphur. Especially is one struck by the fact that the long arm of England is stretched out towards it ; that the influence of Great Britain is felt and appreciated. But for the occasional mistakes which are made in writing the King's English, one might imagine from the innumerable signs in this language which meet the eye in the quarter near the docks that one was in an English port. Notices remind you that this or that firm makes a "speciality in the fitting of marine engine pipes" ; that here or there "stamps and money are changed" ; that this *parrucchiere* is a Hair Dresser, and that he speaks "English" ; and that a certain public-house, "The



*Savona*





Queen Alexander," should be "remembered for orders and wines of all kinds." The number of inns and bars which have been christened with familiar English names is bewildering, and one asks oneself if all these "Cardiff Arms," "Queen's Heads," and "Liverpool Coffee Houses" depend wholly on the custom of English captains and sailors. For if so, important indeed must be the trade relations between Great Britain and Savona.

In the century of Columbus, Savona was the home of the celebrated Della Rovere family, from which sprang two popes, Sixtus IV and Julius II, numerous cardinals, and at least two princes. The great Sixtus was born at Celle Ligure, a few miles from Savona, on July 21st, 1414, and he was the son of Leonardo Della Rovere and Luchina Monleone. Never had man so highly developed a love of his family as Francesco Della Rovere. He created five of his nephews cardinals: Pier Riario, Giuliano Della Rovere, Raffaele Riario Sansone, Marco Vigerio, and Girolamo Basso Della Rovere; and raised two others—Leonardo Della Rovere and Girolamo Riario—to the position of princes. Guiliano Della Rovere, the future Julius II, was the son of Raffaele Della Rovere and Teodora Manerola, and he

was born at Albissola, near Savona, on June 22nd, 1443. Great was the rejoicing in Savona when he was elected Pope.

Julius II had a great affection for his native town and district, and as a patron of art he did much towards making Savona a notable place. The Palazzo Della Rovere, opposite the cathedral, was built for him in accordance with the plans of Sangallo, and he is said to have intended the building to be the seat of a sort of university. But it is to the Duomo that one turns to find the most precious of the works of art which he commissioned. This cathedral, which was planned by the Savonese architect, Orazio Grassi, was begun in 1589 and completed in 1602, and it contains a large number of works which were in an older Duomo. The most noteworthy of these are the magnificently carved choir stalls, arranged in two semicircular rows, the upper row consisting of thirty-two and the lower of twenty-four stalls. The backs of the upper row are ornamented with pictures of Christ and the Saints, beautifully carried out with the sole aid of various coloured woods. The carving and the marquetry of these stalls is the work of Anselmo De Fornarigs, a native of Castelnuovo di Scrivia, who worked there,

in 1500, in collaboration with Elia De Rocchi, under the patronage of Julius II. Anselmo's work is to be seen in many parts of Italy, principally in the Cathedral of Genoa. A reading-desk and a bishop's chair, also in the Savona Cathedral, are likewise his. All these works were carefully restored in the nineteenth century by Tommaso and Vincenzo Garassini, two noted Savonese workers in inlaid wood.<sup>1</sup> Among other artistic treasures which were removed from the old to the new cathedral are a fifteenth century marble pulpit, ornamented with bas-reliefs, and a baptismal font, the former of which is the work of Giovanni Battista Molinari ; a splendidly carved marble crucifix of 1530 which stands at the bottom of the church ; a number of early examples of Italian painting, including a picture by Brea, in the chapel on the right on entering the building ; and numerous valuable

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by the work of Anselmo, one of these skilled artists executed a series of similar panels for the choir-stalls of the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Misericordia. This famous church, which is reached from Savona by following the picturesque road that winds along the banks of the Letimbro torrent for a distance of seven kilometres, was built in 1600 on the spot where the Virgin is said to have appeared to a peasant named Botta in 1536. It is renowned throughout Liguria as a place of pilgrimage, and nine chapels, containing religious paintings, have been built alongside the route.

ecclesiastical ornaments, such as jewelled crosses, and the crosier which belonged to Giuliano Della Rovere.

One has somewhat a feeling of regret, on looking at some of these works, and especially the pictures, that when the old Duomo was abandoned they were not removed to a place better adapted for displaying their high artistic qualities. Like all churches, the Savona Cathedral is extremely ill-lit; so that the connoisseur is prevented from enjoying to the full the exquisite beauty of these examples of the art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, he has the means whilst at Savona of alleviating his disappointment. In the Municipal Art Gallery, in well-lit rooms, are a number of pictures and other works of art which make an earnest claim on his attention. One of the finest is an "Annunziatazione," by Giovanni Masone d'Alessandrio, an artist of the Piedmontese School of the fifteenth century: a picture composed of several compartments in its old carved gilded frame. The top compartment represents the Crucifixion; the middle one, the principal subject, the Annunciation; whilst on the side and bottom panels are pictures of four saints and Christ with His

Apostles. A picture of the Crucifixion, with the Madonna and St. John, attributed to Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), also in its original gilded frame ; and a San Sebastian, attributed to Guido Reni, should likewise be mentioned. Finally, collectors of china should not miss seeing the three fine eighteenth century vases of Savona ware, decorated with blue, green, and yellow paintings by Guidobono.

Savona still retains its old reputation for the production of artistic pottery. There are several manufactories in the town and district, and whilst on our way towards Genoa we passed one of the most important, that of Albissola Marina, to which the coast-road rapidly descends after steeply ascending inland from Savona.

On reaching Albissola Marina we made a slight deviation from our route to see the Palazzo Della Rovere and its gardens at Albissola Superiore, but with this exception we kept our feet well on the main road all the way to Genoa. Truth to tell, we were eager to cover the remaining twenty-seven miles and reach the capital of Liguria, where, before continuing our journey along the Riviera di Levante to Spezzia, we hoped to obtain a little repose and spend a few days in quiet study

in the University and Municipal Libraries. Some travellers may accuse us of having passed over the ground too rapidly, but I do not think that we missed much of what is historically interesting. We stopped a while to gaze on the ancient ruins of Varazze ; we saw the house at Cogoleto which the inhabitants of that village claim was the birthplace of Columbus ;<sup>1</sup> we paused on the bridge at Voltri to look on the Leira torrent, which supplies the motive-force for some of those paper-mills which once made the paper used for the registers of the Archives of London ; and, before entering by the western gate of La Superba, we likewise tarried to look up at the Lanterna and recall its history, which dates back as far as 1129.<sup>2</sup> The commercial influence of Genoa is very noticeable as soon as one reaches Voltri, and a good deal of the

<sup>1</sup> In addition to Savona and Genoa and Cogoleto, the following towns all claim to have been the birthplace of Columbus : Albissola, Nervi, Finale, Oneglia, Quinto, Chiavari, Milan, Modena, Pradello, Cuccaro, Cosseria, Calvi di Corsica, Novara, and Bogliasco.

<sup>2</sup> This quadrilateral lighthouse, which is classed as a national monument, was destroyed in 1512, and rebuilt in its present form in 1543. It is a little over 69 metres in height, and its 500 candle-power light, situated 114 metres above sea level, is visible at a distance of twenty-seven miles. An extensive view of the city and the two Rivas can be obtained from its summit.

picturesqueness of the coast has been spoilt by manufactories. There are many iron and steel works at Sestri Ponente, Cornigliano Ligure, and San Pier d'Arena, which has been well called the Manchester of Italy, and this is a portion of the Riviera which most wayfarers will prefer to pass over as quickly as possible.



*The Pancaldo Tower at Savona*



*The Banco di San Giorgio, Genoa*

## CHAPTER IX

### RAMBLES IN ANCIENT GENOA

THE gods willed it that our quarters whilst in Genoa should be just those which best accorded with the errand upon which we were bent. The old city was what we had in view ; and there we were, thrown into the very midst of it, enveloped by the very atmosphere we most desired. Our rooms were in an eighteenth century palace near the port : one of those many palaces of Genoa which have fallen from their high estate, but which, nevertheless, still retain that fine air which the architects of the past



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managed so well to impart to the houses of the aristocracy. Everything had been executed on a grand plan in this beautiful old palace. Its marble staircase, ornamented with columns and a groined ceiling, was sufficiently broad to allow at least half-a-dozen people to ascend it abreast; its landings, looking on to a little central courtyard, were spacious, and as though made for pleasant converse on hot summer days; whilst its apartments, with those beautiful painted ceilings which are a feature of Italian houses, were lofty and majestic. Two antique marble busts, standing on pedestals within niches, adorned the first landing: one representing Vanity, the other Modesty; and the first to be seen on entering was the former, in order that you might be warned against falling into this particular sin and turn on to the safer path indicated by *Modestia*. On leaving, as on entering, the house, you were reminded of your duty in life by a little statuette of the Virgin, with outstretched open arms, placed in a niche above an archway, and noticeable only to those descending the staircase.

The surroundings of this palace were no less charming than its interior. The principal façade faced a little *piazza*, enclosed by other

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ancient houses and the rear of the very old church of San Pietro a Banchi, built over a block of small shops, occupied, owing to their proximity to the Stock Exchange, principally by stockbrokers and money-changers ; and the windows of the other fronts, including those of our own rooms, looked on to the famous Palazzo San Giorgio, its embattlements, ornamented with red painted crosses, and its double-belled campanile, a portion of the harbour, ever crowded with vessels, and one side of the semicircle of hills which enclose the city.

Surroundings were never better adapted for putting a person of antiquarian tastes into tune. So, filled with the right spirit, we daily set forth on our rambles, wandering among the narrow *vicoli* of the old quarters of the city, tarrying now and then to look up at shrines or bas-reliefs, or else to admire the beauty of the carving of a Renaissance doorway, straying on to quiet *piazze*, visiting churches and palaces, exploring the courtyards and cloisters of venerable buildings once devoted to ecclesiastical purposes, but now split up into tenements, and, whilst intent on these delightful relics of the past, endeavouring to realise some of the principal epochs in the history of Genoa.



Renaissance Doorway, Old Genoa



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Our plan of campaign is summed up in a phrase which was used by the Antiquary when we were talking over this subject of excursions—"Let the stones of Genoa tell her story"—and as far as it was possible to read the history of the city in her existing buildings we kept to this excellent programme.

We studied, too, not only the buildings but their inhabitants; and it is difficult to say which we found the more fascinating object of inquiry. The character of the Genoese was long ago summed up by Froissart, and my sojourn among them has been sufficiently long to enable me to discover that to a great extent his judgment still holds good. "The people of Genoa," he said, "are generous-hearted and prompt in action. Nobody is capable of going so far as they, nor is ready to accept so many risks as they do. In all maritime matters they are more powerful than the Venetians, and the Mussulman fears and respects them more than any other people of the sea."

If you were to ask any true Genoese—that is to say, one who has not only been bred and born in Genoa, but is able to trace his family in that city at least a generation—to name the finest of the many monuments which his

ancestors have raised to the glory of the capital of Liguria, he would, unless I am greatly mistaken, unhesitatingly reply, "Il porto." No one who has read the history of Genoa would be surprised at this answer, or, considering the enormous sacrifices which have been made for the port, would doubt its correctness. Judging the works of man not merely from the point of view of æsthetics (as we are sometimes so apt to do), but from the broader standpoint of the extent to which they represent his ideals, the port of Genoa—the largest in Italy—undoubtedly far surpasses in grandeur any of those other monuments of human industry for which this fine city is celebrated. Whereas its churches and palaces are the result of the work of merely a few individuals, its port is the outcome of centuries of continuous effort on the part of an entire population : the one thing on which the collective mind has never ceased to be bent ever since the foundation of the city.

Looking at this great port from any of the many points of vantage offered by the semi-circle of hills at whose base the city stands, one can well understand the pride with which all classes of Genoese society regard it. Most eloquent and impressive is the sight

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of the extensive harbour, with its many moles running out into the sea, its huge warehouses stretching along the docks, and its multitude of vessels of all sizes, from the transatlantic to the row-boat. But it is when you see it nearer at hand, or, better still, when you inspect it in detail, that you fully comprehend the commercial importance of the port of Genoa. It is then that you fully realise the truth of Froissart's words, and can understand the reason for the activity of the Genoese of to-day ; their grim determination to retain the benefits resulting from centuries of work.

Although Genoa, owing to its geographical advantages, manifested a desire to be a naval and commercial power long before the tenth century, the origin of her present maritime greatness may be said to date back to the days when the Norman and Saracen pirates began to make their predatory descents on the coast towns of Liguria. These attacks had so important an effect from the point of view of her development that it will be well to enumerate them. They started in 860 with the capture and destruction of Luni, and were followed up in 918 and 934 by invasions nearer Genoa. But the Saracens on the latter occasion, partly through rough weather, partly

owing to the stout resistance of the Genoese, who captured seventeen of their vessels, were obliged to abandon the expedition and return to their quarters in Sicily. Two years later, however, they returned, and a great engagement was fought in which two thousand Saracens were killed. Undaunted and strengthened by fresh vessels, the survivors renewed their efforts, and this time they were successful. Genoa was sacked and a large number of citizens were carried off. The Saracens, however, had yet to face the Genoese fleet, which was away from home at the time of the attack. On returning and learning the news, the Genoese set off in pursuit of the enemy, met them off the coast of Sardinia and severely defeated them.

Such were the preliminary skirmishes which preceded the long efforts made by Genoa and her allies to rid the Mediterranean of these dreaded pirates. The Saracens had strongly established themselves in Spain and Southern Italy, and after their descent on Sardinia, in 1015, under the leadership of Mogehid, the finding of a means of putting an end to their incursions became more and more imperative. The initiative was taken by Benedict VIII, who, in the year following the occupation of



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Sardinia, sent his legate to Genoa and Pisa with an offer of the sovereignty of the island to whosoever would liberate it from the Saracens. The naval forces of the allied Republics immediately sailed for Sardinia and defeated Mogeid ; then, in 1034, they attacked and occupied Bona on the African coast ; and it is probable, too, that at this time the Genoese, partly for love of their faith, but more, I suspect, on account of a desire to crush a commercial rival, began their attacks—the prelude of the Crusades—on the Mussulmans. In answer to a further appeal which was made by Pope Victor III, the Genoese, Pisans, Amalfians, and other Italian confederacies entered, in 1087, on a fresh expedition, occupied Zawila and the Peninsula of Mehdia, between the Gulfs of Hammamet and Cables, killed one hundred thousand Saracens, and forced the Kings of Tripoli and Tunis to pay tribute to the Holy Father. Prince Temin was forced to pay an indemnity of half a million lire, to liberate all the Italians who had been taken prisoner, and, in addition to other privileges, to grant the Genoese and Pisans freedom from customs duties.

The crushing of the power of the Saracens was but the first step, however, in the march

of the Genoese towards commercial supremacy in the Mediterranean; for these expeditions against the barbarian were partly responsible for the long fratricidal wars which took place between Genoa, Pisa, and Venice, each of whom had risen to maritime greatness on the ruins of other powers. The jealousy between Genoa and Pisa dated back to the days of Charlemagne, when the port of the former began to gain ground over that of the latter, but the pretext for the first of the wars between the two Republics was the Island of Corsica, which was claimed by the Church as part of the dominion of St. Peter. Under the instigation of the Pope and Countess Matilda of Corsica, the Pisans took possession of the island, but were defeated by the Genoese. Peace was made in 1133, but the war again broke out and was continued, at intervals, until as late as 1290, when the power of the Pisans was definitely destroyed by Corrado Doria. The growing commercial importance of Genoa in the East, the result of the prominent part she had taken in the Crusades, was likewise the cause of trouble with Venice.

But war is ever a costly luxury, and the building up of the commercial greatness of

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the port of Genoa caused a serious drain on the financial resources of the Republic. The issuing of various loans, guaranteed by the customs and other profits of the State, greatly increased the public debt. The internal troubles of the Republic, which began about the middle of the twelfth century, made the burden still heavier. Each of the great families of the city was anxious to hold the reins of office. The Fieschis and the Grimaldis, the leaders of the Guelf party, were in constant conflict with the Spinolas and the Dorias, the heads of the Ghibelline faction. First one and then the other was in power. Fighting in the streets and on the *piazze* of the city, and treachery in all its forms were common incidents; and these disturbances, costly not only in money but in human life, lasted until the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the Republic at last entered on a spell of peace and prosperity.

War and internal strife had, then, led to financial difficulties, and at the opening of the fifteenth century, when the Republic, unable to manage its own affairs, had had recourse to the foreigner, the Banco di San Giorgio began to play its very important part in the history of Genoa. This extremely

interesting building, which was built in 1260 by a monk named Oliviero to serve as a residence for Guglielmo Boccanegra, the captain of the Republic, and his successors, became the headquarters of the representatives of the holders of Government bonds, who had been grouped by Marshal Boucicault, the French Governor, assisted by a council of shareholders, into a body known as the *Compere di San Giorgio*. The rate of interest was fixed at seven per cent., and to a board of administration appointed by the creditors the Government conceded for a given number of years the collection of certain indirect customs. Up to 1539 the Republic's debt to the Bank was redeemable, but in that year, by means of an operation known as the *Magno contratto di consolidazione*, it became perpetual, with the result that the value of the shares in the Banco di San Giorgio increased enormously. As shown by Machiavelli, who refers in his *Istorie Fiorentine*<sup>1</sup> to the foundation and work of this institution, the bank was at one and the same time a banking establishment, a bank of deposit, and a farmer of a portion of the revenues of the State. At the same time it was also a

<sup>1</sup> Libro ottavo, XXIX.

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political body, since the Republic had at various times conceded territories to it; and thus it was that the Banco di San Giorgio held the sovereignty of Sarzana, Castelnuovo, Ventimiglia, and other places along the Riviera, of the Genoese colonies in the Black Sea, and of the Island of Corsica. The different branches of this bank were admirably administered: infinitely better so than the departments of the Republic, which had more than once to appeal for its help. The Banco di San Giorgio was, indeed, a model establishment, and in visiting it you should not forget that its methods as a bank were universally adopted, and that it laid down the principles which are at the base of all our modern joint-stock companies. It continued its work until the Revolution of 1797, when all its rights and privileges were revoked. The Palazzo di San Giorgio and its adjoining buildings then returned to the State. They are now the headquarters of a new administration, the Consorzio Autonomo del Porto, which has been in operation since 1903, and the object of which is to carry out various work connected with the extension and improvement of the port.

A number of statues, busts, and

commemorative tablets are to be seen in the corridor, Sala di Festa, and other rooms of the Palazzo. These, which date from 1453 to the middle of the eighteenth century, are in memory of those citizens of Genoa who abandoned their shares in the Banco di San Giorgio in favour of the Republic. A legacy of 25,000 lire gave the donator the right to a tablet, one of 50,000 lire to a bust, and one of 100,000 lire to a statue: surely very reasonable charges to those who desired to be immortalized!

The first of the churches of Genoa which we visited was San Siro, since it was there that the people of the city used to assemble in the Middle Ages and appoint their representatives. Guglielmo Boccanegra was elected Captain of the People there in 1257, after the resignation and flight of Filippo Della Torre, whose period of office as Podesta had been marked by gross corruption; and Simone Boccanegra, in 1339, Doge. But a more picturesque event than either of these took place in this church, originally the Cathedral of Genoa and the first residence of her Archbishops—the enrolling of those wealthy citizens who set out in July, 1097, on the first Crusade. Genoa played a very

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important part in the expeditions to the East, and whether out of pure love of the Faith is to be doubted. One of the first in the field, she took good care to secure an ample reward for the use of her ships, men, and money, and whilst others had to be satisfied with honour and glory, secured concessions and privileges which gave her a foremost place in the commerce of the East. Between 1100 and 1500—the most brilliant period in her history—her colonial expansion was extraordinary. She obtained dominion either entirely or partly over Antioch, Malmistra, Solino, Laodicea, Tortosa, Tripoli, Jaffa, Cæsarea, Beirut, Ascalon, Acri, and a district in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

On their way home after the First Crusade, the Genoese took the town of Mirrea, in Asia Minor, and finding the ashes of John the Baptist there, brought them back to Genoa, where, in the Cathedral of San Lorenzo, they are still venerated. The reliquary in which they are enclosed is of silver, and it is said that fifteen years were employed by Teramo di Daniello, a goldsmith of Porto Maurizio, and Simone Caldera in fashioning it: a statement which one can well believe when we examine the intricate and delicate work

of this masterpiece of the fifteenth century. The ecclesiastical treasures of the Cathedral of Genoa are particularly numerous and valuable. From the historical point of view one of the most interesting is a hexagonal basin, with two handles, which was also part of the booty brought home from Cæsarea and other places by Guglielmo Embriaco. This *catino* is said to have been given to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, and to have been used by Christ when He ate the paschal lamb. It was for a long time thought to be made of emerald, but Napoleon, by sending it to Paris to be examined by members of the Institute of France, proved that it was merely coloured glass. He, therefore, returned it, shattered into fragments ; naturally much to the disgust of the Genoese, who were not only given the trouble of putting it together again, but were also obliged to confess that one of their pet beliefs had been undermined.

The architecture of San Lorenzo, which is believed to have been built on the ruins of the house in which St. Lawrence lived when he arrived in Genoa on his way from Spain to Rome, displays, owing to the various alterations which the building has undergone,



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three distinct styles: the Romanesque, the French Gothic, and the Renaissance. The façade and tower are constructed of alternate courses of black and white marble, and the portal, which, with all the lower part of the principal front, dates from the thirteenth century, is adorned with a mass of beautiful sculpture. San Lorenzo is, from all points of view, the finest of the thirty-seven churches of Genoa, yet, curious to say, it was not the one which moved me most. Its interest was too exclusively artistic to suit the mood of a searcher after the stirring, living incidents of history.

But in the case of San Matteo it was different. Here was a church and a little *piazza* bearing its name, which told us a definite story. Every one of its stones and those of the houses forming the other three sides of the square, might be said to cry the name of Doria. The church was built by one of the members of this great family, Martino Doria, in 1125, and its façade is covered with inscriptions recalling some of the great deeds of the Dorias: a history of Genoa in little, as it were, so prominent is their position in the annals of the city. The great Andrea Doria was responsible for

much of the decoration of San Matteo. About 1534 he summoned Montorsoli, one of the pupils of Michael Angelo, to Genoa, and entrusted him with many commissions for statues and tombs and altars. In fact, almost the whole of the sculpture in this church is the work of Montorsoli and the assistants whom he brought with him from Florence. In addition to Andrea, whose sword hangs above the high altar, many of the Dorias were buried here, notably Giannettino Doria, who was assassinated on January 2nd, 1547, by the partisans of Gian Luigi Fieschi; Filippo Doria; and Giovanni Andrea Doria I.

To the left of the church are the ancient cloisters of San Matteo, one of those delightful old-world spots where, cut off from the noise and bustle of the city, it is so pleasant to stroll and meditate. Slender columns in pairs support the roof of this graceful quadrilateral, which dates from the beginning of the fourteenth century; here and there, let into the walls, are ancient inscriptions relating to the Dorias; near one of the corners is an ancient sculptured niche, in which there once stood a statue—or was a fountain placed there?—and on the walls, too, are traces of one-time beautiful sculpture. . . . But what

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are these two huge mutilated statues, the glint of whose white marble we saw when looking between the columns on to the little central garden planted with orange and lemon trees? What story do *they* tell? Still that of the Dorias? . . . Yes; and its sequel. They are all that remain of the two fine statues of Andrea Doria and Gian Andrea Doria—one the work of Montorsoli and the other that of Taddeo Carlone—which stood on either side of the staircase of the Palazzo Ducale. In 1797, under the influence of the French Revolution, the Genoese were seized with a desire to overthrow their old *régime* and to obliterate whatever reminded them of their great aristocratic families: those very things in which they now take the most pride. Genoa became, on a small scale, what Paris was during the fanatical period of the Revolution. Trees of Liberty were planted, tawdry and extravagant symbolical processions promenaded through the streets, angry crowds rushed along calling for vengeance on the aristocracy, and bands of masons, employed by the provisional democratic government, went from place to place destroying the coats of arms or any other aristocratic badges which they could find. One of these

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gangs of vandals attacked the Archives and, carrying off the *libro d'oro* containing the names of the leading Genoese families, burnt it, together with the Doge's sedan-chair, on the Piazza dell' Acquaverde, then christened the Piazza della Libertà; another stormed the Palazzo Ducale and shattered the statues of the Dorias.

Many of the Dorias occupied the palaces facing the Piazza San Matteo, and one of these houses, faced with alternate courses of black and yellow marble (a sign, whenever you see it, that the dwelling is one which belonged to an aristocratic family), bears the following inscription of 1528: "Senat. Cons. Andreae de Oria, patriae liberatori munus publicum." The Renaissance doorways of the houses of this square are also especially noteworthy.

It is one's bounden duty, after seeing San Matteo and its cloisters, to visit the Palazzo Doria-Pamphily on the Piazza Principe. Architecturally, there are many better preserved palaces than this in Genoa, and some contain much finer works of art,<sup>1</sup> but,

<sup>1</sup> The palaces of Genoa are so numerous, and from an architectural point of view so important, that I cannot hope to do more than give the names of the principal ones,



*Doria Palace, Genoa*



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historically, the *palazzo* which the Republic presented to Andrea Doria in 1522, takes precedence over them all. A great part of this fine palace, which, before it came into the hands of the Dorias, was occupied by the Fregosos, is now taken up by apartments and offices, but the principal portion, containing what is historically and artistically of value, has been preserved by the elder branch of the Doria family, making it quite possible, with the aid of the beautiful old garden

the periods at which they were built, the names of their architects or those of the families who had them built, and their chief features of interest. There are no fewer than twenty-five of these great buildings, and all might well be visited by a person of leisure. But a visit to the following nine is indispensable: Palazzo Ducale, facing the Piazza Umberto I, begun about the end of the thirteenth century, in accordance with the plans of Marino Boccanegra, and completed in the sixteenth century, noted for its statues and pictures, including one of Andrea Doria refusing the sovereignty of Genoa; Palazzo Cataldi, 4 Via Garibaldi, built about 1560 by Bernardo Castello for Tobia Pallavicini and containing a number of rather remarkable frescoes; Palazzo Spinola, 6 Via Garibaldi, built about the end of the sixteenth century and decorated with paintings by Bernardo Castello; Palazzo Rosso, 18, Via Garibaldi, built in 1616 by Bartholomeo Bianco and Carradi, presented to the City of Genoa in 1874 by the Marchese Maria Brignole-Sale, and containing works of the highest order by Vandyke, Guido Reni, Veronese, Van Ostade, Tintoretto, and many other great masters; Palazzo Bianco, 13 Via Garibaldi, built in 1565 by Giovanni and Domenico Ponzelli for Nicolo Grimaldi, and bequeathed to the City by the Duchess

which stretches towards the port, in front of the courtyard and its terrace, to throw oneself back to the days of the great admiral. Whatever may be one's opinion of Andrea Doria's ability as a statesman—and there are many who blame him for having brought Genoa under the domination of Spain, no one denies his bravery and skill as a soldier, his genuine love of the Republic, his keen appreciation of the arts, and his gift (by no means a common quality) of making himself beloved and respected of the people. He is

Deferrari-Galliera with its contents, which include a large number of pictures by the great masters, statues and autograph letters of Andrea Doria, Columbus, Garibaldi, Mazzini and others ; Palazzo Civico or Doria-Tursi, 9 Via Garibaldi, built in 1560 for the Grimaldi family by Rocco Lurago, and noted for its many finely decorated rooms and their contents, including Paganini's violin and bow, this celebrated violinist being a Ligurian, and trained by the Genoese violinist Costa ; Palazzo dell' Università, 5 Via Balbi, built in 1623 by Bartholomeo Bianco for the Jesuit Paolo Balbi, and now used as the headquarters of the University of Genoa ; Palazzo Balbi-Senarega, 4 Via Balbi, built about the beginning of the seventeenth century also in accordance with the plans of Bianco, but enlarged and perfected some time later by Pier Antonio Corradi, and containing works by Michael Angelo, Reni, Titian, Vandyke, Guercino, Tintoretto, Holbein, and other masters ; and the Palazzo Durazzo, 1 Via Balbi, built during the seventeenth century by Bianco for the Pallavicini family, and remarkable for its works by Vandyke, Reni, Rubens, Veronese, Ruysdael, and others.



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certainly by far the most picturesque figure of sixteenth-century Genoa, and the Palazzo Doria-Pamphily enables one to picture him in the prime of his life. He was under forty when the Palazzo Fregoso was given to him, as a reward for his services to the Republic, and barely half his years had run out. In the year following that in which he rid Liguria of the French and transferred his services to Charles V of Spain (1528), he had the building remodelled by Montorsoli and employed Perino del Vaga, a pupil of Raphael who had been exiled from Rome in 1527 and had sought the protection of the Dorias, to decorate the ceilings and corridors with paintings. The frescoes on the ceiling of the vestibule, representing scenes from Roman history, are his work, as well as those on the ceiling of the marble staircase which leads to a corridor on the first floor of the palace. It is this gallery, however, which contains the most interesting of Perino del Vaga's much admired works: a series of portraits of the Doges of the Doria family, including one of Andrea himself, who in all his likenesses appears with a beard. There is a portrait of him in one of the rooms on the first floor which is even more interesting than Vaga's work,

since it represents the great man, not in allegorical trappings, but in the character of an old man fond of his home and his cat. From the point of view of technique this picture of Andrea Doria seated in a long-backed chair facing his pet is far inferior to the other portrait, but to us it was by far the more interesting of the two, since it revealed the domestic and less known side of the sitter's character. Andrea was a great lover of animals, and his affection for a certain large white dog which was presented to him by Charles V is a matter of history. There is a picture of this dog, the "Gran Roedano" as he was called, in the same room as that in which the one of Andrea and his cat hangs; and such was the love which his master bore him that when he died he was granted the honour of burial in the palace gardens at the base of a statue of Jupiter. The monument which marks the resting-place of the "Gran Roedano" stands in a portion of the grounds of the Palazzo Doria-Pamphily, which is now cut off from the house by the street and the railway. Many other works of art are to be seen in the rooms of the former residence of Andrea Doria, such as the carved mantelpiece in black stone, a

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table inlaid with marble of various colours, a bronze door-knocker chiselled by Benvenuto Cellini, several fine mirrors with carved, gilded frames, a picture representing the marriage of Arduino di Beuland with a member of the Doria family, two exquisite statuettes of sleeping children in white marble by Montorsoli, and a crucifix by the wood-carver Maragliano. In the centre of the gardens, facing the port, is a fountain with a figure of Andrea Doria in the rôle of Neptune. These gardens, though not as well kept as they might be, are very charming, with their shady walks and pieces of sculpture placed here and there amongst the greenery, and from a raised terrace a pleasant view of the port can be obtained—a view upon which the great Doge of Genoa, with his love of ships and the sea, must often have gazed in his old age with feelings of mingled regret and admiration.

“ The way lay through the main streets, but not through the Strada Nuova,<sup>1</sup> or the Strada Balbi, which are the famous streets of palaces. I never, in my life, was so

<sup>1</sup> Now the Via Garibaldi.

dismayed ! The wonderful novelty of everything, the unusual smells, the unaccountable filth (though it is reckoned the cleanest of Italian towns), the disorderly jumbling of dirty houses, one upon the roof of another ; the passages more squalid and more close than any in Saint Giles's, or old Paris : in and out of which, not vagabonds, but well-dressed women, with white veils and great fans, were passing and repassing ; the perfect absence of resemblance in any dwelling-house, or shop, or wall, or post, or pillar, to anything one had ever seen before ; and the disheartening dirt, discomfort, and decay ; perfectly confounded me. I fell into a dismal reverie. I am conscious of a feverish and bewildering vision of saints and virgins' shrines at the street corners—of great numbers of friars, monks, and soldiers—of vast red curtains, waving in the doorways of the churches—of always going up hill, and yet seeing every other street and passage going higher up—of fruit-stalls, with fresh lemons and oranges hanging in garlands made of vine-leaves—of a guard-house and a drawbridge—of some gateways—and vendors of iced water, sitting with little trays upon the margin of the kennel—and this is all the consciousness I had, until I

was set down in a rank, dull, weedy courtyard, attached to a kind of pink jail ; and was told I lived there." Such were Charles Dickens's first impressions of Genoa<sup>1</sup> when, in 1844, he was being driven from the wharf to Albaro, the suburb where, bent on a year's residence in the city, he had engaged a house. What a change has taken place in Genoa since then ! The streets are no longer conspicuous for their filth, to which Dickens is ever referring ; nor is the city any more squalid, or uncomfortable, or decayed than London or Paris. Even in the days when Alphonse Karr lived in Genoa the transformation had taken place, for he writes in his delightful *Promenades hors de mon Jardin* of the unusual cleanliness of the thoroughfares. So clean were they kept by the men employed by the city to keep a constant eye on the *pulizia pubblica* that ladies could allow their silken skirts to trail along the ground without fear of them being soiled. Ah ! yes, I would that the streets of London and Paris were kept in as good order as the *strade* of Genoa (paved with heavy blocks of stone, as though they were intended, like the Roman roads, to last for centuries) are to-day.

<sup>1</sup> *Pictures from Italy.*

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Since the days of Dickens, Italy has entered on a new lease of life, and her great cities have now all the advantages which were formerly principally confined to the great European capitals. Magnificent houses, provided with everything that the most exacting person, accustomed to the comforts of English and American homes, could demand, are to be found in the centre of Genoa or on the delightful succession of promenades of the *circonvallazione a monte*, on the hillside, overlooking the gray house-tops of the city, the towers of its many churches, and the harbour. The Genoese women no longer go about with great fans, and in the old-fashioned dress which we used to associate with backward Italian towns, but wear the smartest of Parisian dresses and the largest of Parisian hats. On your way to Albaro to see the Villa Bagnerello in which the author of *David Copperfield* lived for three months (it is to be found in the Via San Nazaro, and on the walls of the house is a tablet bearing the following inscription: "In questa villa dal prisco rosso delle sue mura Pink Jail ebbe gradita dimora Carlo Dickens geniale e profondo rivelatore del sentimento moderno—1844-1894") you no longer pass through



Dickens's "Pink Jail" at Genoa





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streets of squalid houses, but down the broad Via XX Settembre, past the majestic new Stock Exchange, built of red granite, in front of the Piazza Deferrari, past spacious arcades with marble and granite columns, unequalled in architectural beauty by those of any other city I have seen, and under a monumental bridge which would do honour even to such a city of fine structures as Paris. Albaro, too, is no longer what it was. Dickens found it "mournful and disappointing," and, judging by his amusing description of the fleas and the flies and the scorpions with which he was surrounded, the Villa Bagnerello can have been anything but "a pleasant abode." Albaro is now a very agreeable suburb. It possesses many well-built villas, with fine gardens; and the Lido d'Albaro, where a large place of amusement has been erected, at the edge of the sea, is a favourite resort of the Genoese during the carnival and at all holiday times.

On further acquaintance, Dickens found that Genoa was a city that "grows upon you." He confesses that "in the course of two months, the flitting shapes and shadows of my dismal entering reverie gradually resolved themselves into familiar forms and

substances ; and I already began to think that when the time should come, a year hence, for closing the long holiday and turning back to England, I might part from Genoa with anything but a glad heart." As soon as his tenancy of the Pink Jail at Albaro had ceased, he removed to a house in the Via Peschiera, near the Via Assarotti, on high ground above the Acquasola Gardens, a house known as the Palazzo Peschiere, which, he says, was then one of the loveliest residences in Italy. "It stands on a height within the walls of Genoa," he writes, "but aloof from the town, surrounded by beautiful gardens of its own, adorned with statues, vases, fountains, marble basins, terraces, walks of orange trees and lemon trees, groves of roses and carnations. All its apartments are beautiful in their proportions and decorations ; but the great hall, some fifty feet in height, with three large windows at the end, overlooking the whole town of Genoa, the harbour, and the neighbouring sea, affords one of the most fascinating and delightful prospects in the world. Any house more cheerful and habitable than the great rooms are, within, it would be difficult to conceive ; and certainly nothing more delicious than the scene without,

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in sunshine or in moonlight, could be imagined. It is more like an enchanted palace in an Eastern story than a grave and sober dwelling. How you may wander on, from room to room, and never tire of the wild fancies on the walls and ceilings, as bright in their fresh colouring as if they had been painted yesterday ; or how one floor, or even the great hall which opens on eight other rooms, is a spacious promenade ; or how there are corridors and bed-chambers above, which we never use and rarely visit, and scarcely know the way through ; or how there is a view of a perfectly different character on each of the four sides of the building ; matters little. But that prospect from the hall is like a vision to me. I go back to it, in fancy, as I have done in calm reality a hundred times a day ; and stand there, looking out, with the sweet scents of the garden rising up about me, in a perfect dream of happiness." When, lovers of Dickens, you go on your pilgrimage to the *palazzo* where the great writer lived during nine of the happiest months of his life, you will find that the Palace of the Fish-ponds has not quite as much breathing-space as it once had, and that it has necessarily somewhat changed in other ways since 1844. But you

will understand the enthusiasm with which he wrote of his home and the old city stretched out at his feet. Genoa had begun to exercise her power of fascination over him. Every one succumbs to her after the first few weeks. By the time he left Albaro, Dickens was an avowed lover of the city's narrow *vicoli*, in which "you can lose your way (what a comfort that is, when you are idle!) twenty times a day, if you like; and turn up again under the most unexpected and surprising difficulties"; he was a confirmed worshipper of these winding alleys, in which, at night time, sedan-chairs (let out for hire in divers places) were "trotted to and fro in all directions, preceded by bearers of great lanthorns, made of linen stretched upon a frame!" What a novelty it would be to see a sedan-chair in the *vicoli* of Genoa to-day! Yet you almost expect to find one waiting for you outside the door of your *palazzo* when you descend its marble staircase to go forth and explore the ancient city. The atmosphere is of the eighteenth century until the very moment you have put your nose out at the door. Nowadays, alas! when the aristocrat of Genoa deigns to leave the Via Balbi or the Via Garibaldi, where there is

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space for his carriage and pair, and enter the narrow lanes in the neighbourhood of San Matteo or San Siro he has to go upon *il cavallo di San Francesco*. The only vehicles you ever see there now are handcarts. Who would not prefer, now and then, to meet a sedan-chair with a pretty Genoese inside ?

There is no lack of picturesqueness about the old streets of Genoa to-day, but, with the decay of ancient institutions, I suppose one can hardly account them quite as quaint in their appearance as they were in the days of Dickens. But if there are no sedan-chairs and lanthorn-bearers, the Jesuits who mustered strong in the streets and went "slinking about, in pairs, like black cats," are also absent ; so one can count upon at least one improvement. Priests and monks seem to have made up the greater part of the population sixty years ago, and the repulsive countenances of these gentry is a point upon which Dickens insists with a certain amount of warmth. I am glad that we saw none of them during *our* sojourn in Genoa. Only kindly faces stand out in my recollections of the four pleasant months I lived there : those of the patient, humble Cappuccini, who go from shop to shop and from restaurant

to restaurant begging for the poor, and those of the richly-dressed ecclesiasts who, just before Easter, go from house to house blessing the apartments and their inhabitants. He who came to our *palazzo*, preceded by an aged sacristan, carrying the silver vessel which holds the holy water, and into which you drop your offering, made a particularly fine figure with his rich purple silk vestment, worn under a white linen and lace surplice, his black silk stockings and his old-fashioned patent-leather shoes, with their large silver buckles.



*Fountain in the Gardens of the Doria Palace, Genoa*



*Valley of the Bisagno, Genoa*

## CHAPTER X

### A VISIT TO TORRIGLIA

WHEN the heat of summer is at its height, the great problem with the Genoese, in spite of their shady *vicoli* and the thick walls of their palaces, is how to keep cool, and the moneyed classes do their best to solve it by fleeing to the hills. One of their favourite mountain resorts is Torrighia, a little town full of ancient memories and situated in a very picturesque position, at an altitude of over two thousand feet, near the source of the Scrivia torrent. Lying at a distance of but twenty-three miles on the main road to

Piacenza, it is easily reached from Genoa, and no one who comes to this part of Liguria should think of leaving the district without visiting it. Though seen at its best when the Italian sun is shining with its full strength, Torriglia is at all times of the year, save in the dead of winter, a most charming place : one of those nature spots which, since they are not merely beautiful, but have a story to tell, long remain in one's memory.

Nature had by no means assumed her brightest colours when I ascended the Bisagno valley towards Torriglia ; it was still the month of March and the slopes of the hills above the port—daily scrutinised from the window of my room, in the hope that they would bear the signs of the return of summer, were as yet but faintly green. But what a relief it was to leave the city and once more find myself in the country ! Fascinating though ancient streets may be, they must ever be regarded, when compared with hills and dales, in the light in which De Quincey, with his pathetic cry of “ stony-hearted stepmother ! ” looked upon London. Notwithstanding the fact that the Bisagno valley is sadly marred by industrialism, it was, then, a welcome change after my long



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acquaintanceship with the streets of Genoa. Closing my eyes as much as possible to the manufactories and works which disfigure the banks of the torrent—fleeing from Staglieno, that town where the Genoese have built a cemetery, and where the very streets, bordered with the workshops and makers of grave stones, remind you of Death—hurrying on past dusty Doria and Prato, I welcomed the sight of Presa (which takes its name from the fact that it is the point on the course of the Bisagno where the aqueduct of Genoa receives its principal supply of water ; an aqueduct, by the by, which one cannot fail to notice as it winds in and out along the hillsides on its way towards the city) with almost a sigh of relief. For here the valley and the stream begin to assume a more natural aspect, and the nearer you approach the Colle della Scoffera, between the valley of the Bisagno and that of the Scrivia, the more you realise that, at last, you have passed beyond the area of the city's influence. The banks of the stream were here and there purple with heather, whilst all along the roadside and in the chestnut groves, where the wood-cutters were busily at work, were millions upon millions of primroses. And

almost all the way to Torriglia, after descending towards the Scrivia, was the route made pleasant by these flowers, interspersed, now and then, by patches of odorous violets.

The position of Torriglia and its ruined feudal castle has been very admirably described by Davide Bertolotti, a traveller who visited it in 1834, long before the construction of the fine national road which put it in touch with civilization. "North of the Scoffera," he writes, "the waters flow towards the Adriatic. The aspect of the country changes. The land begins to show signs of the heavy plough, whilst on the slopes looking seawards the only utilisable implement is the spade or the mattock. Extensive chestnut groves cover the sides of the mountain, but more thickly planted at the bottom of the valley where we pass the principal confluent of the Scrivia. Passing another wood and over another mountain, there appears before one's eyes the natural amphitheatre in the midst of which the rays of the setting sun give a final salute to Torriglia. The village lies in the midst of the greenest of meadows, gladdened by many rivulets. The ground is a pleasantly alternating succession of little hills and dales.

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The district is enclosed, except on one side, by a circle of mountains. The beautiful woods which clothe the mountains on the east and south form a striking contrast to the bare crags which frown on the west. Above Torriglia rise the ruined but proud remains of the castle which was possessed by the Fieschis and then by the Dorias. The bastions surrounding the rock are still standing. Its construction was strong and rude, like the men of the days when it was built. But detached from these bastions there rises, like the figure of a Roman centurion, a strongly-cemented brick tower, faced with laboriously-squared stones. The hands which ruined the feudal castle of Torriglia respected this tower, which dates, perhaps, from the consular period.”<sup>1</sup>

Though Torriglia is to-day undoubtedly less primitive than it was when Bertolotti visited it, it still in many respects retains its antique appearance. Viewed from the slopes of its amphitheatre of hills, one can easily distinguish the older part of the little town. The irregular, dark gray roofs of the houses and the painted campanile of the church—the music of whose peal of eight

<sup>1</sup> *Viaggio nella Liguria Marittima.*

bells is ever echoing down the valley—stand out in striking contrast to the newer buildings which have sprung up around them. There is an outer circle of still more modern dwellings, for the most part the villas of well-to-do Genoese, who have chosen many of the most delightful spots on the hillsides, overlooking the valley and the distant purple hills, for their summer homes and gardens. Three periods in the development of Torrighia can thus be read as one stands on the high-lying ground above the town. But one's eyes ever return to its nucleus of picturesque cottages, the green hill which dominates them, and, perched upon it, above a precipitous rock, the shattered walls and tower of the fine old castle, shaped in front like the prow of a ship.

The Castle of Torrighia forms an effective picture from almost every point of view, but it is, perhaps, seen at its best from a pathway, near a little mountain stream, beneath a small cluster of houses, known as Torrighia Vecchia, at the head of the valley. You should go there when the sun is about to disappear behind the hills, when the shadows have already begun to creep over the houses in the hollow, when the eastern side of the



*Feudal Castle, Torriglia*



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*castello* is a rich, deep purple, and when the last rays of sunlight are illuminating the western bastions and transforming the grassy slopes to a beautiful tender golden green, ere they and all things are enveloped in the gray of twilight.

Sitting there one evening, with the Roman tower standing out against the purple valley, it seemed to me that neither time nor place could have been better for recalling the story of Torrighia and its castle. So let me advise all wayfarers in the valley of the Scrivia to choose the close of the day for following the steep mule-path which leads to Old Torrighia, and to read this history in little on some grassy bank of the intermediary slopes of the mountain.

The earliest known reference to Torrighia is to be found in a document of 972, in which the Emperor Ottone II confirmed the grant of certain lands and castles, including the *curtem de Turrigio*, to the celebrated Monastery of San Colombano of Bobbio; and the first of its feudal lords who are mentioned in history are the Malaspinas, who exercised their rights in the Scrivia and other valleys in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Among the members of this powerful family

were several noteworthy men. Alberto Malaspina, surnamed Il Moro, was one of the oldest *trovatori* of Italy, and Moroello, the lord of the valley of the Magra, was the friend and host of Dante, who refers to him in the *Divine Comedy* as follows :—

“ Reft of the Neri first Pistoia pines ;  
 Then Florence changeth citizens and laws ;  
 From Valdimagra, drawn by wrathful Mars,  
 A vapour rises, wrapt in turbid mists,  
 And sharp and eager driveth on the storm  
 With arrowy hurtling o'er Piceno's field,  
 Whence suddenly the cloud shall burst, and strike  
 Each helpless Bianco prostrate to the ground.”<sup>1</sup>

This reference to Moroello's victories over the White faction is put in the mouth of Vanni Fucci, in the form of a prophecy, but whether Dante refers to his friend's taking of Serravalle in 1302, or to the final reduction of Pistoia, which was the last rallying point of the Bianchi in Tuscany, is a point which commentators of *La Divina Commedia* have not yet decided. However, the matter

<sup>1</sup> Pistoia in pria di Neri si dimagra,  
 Poi Firenze rinnova genti e modi.  
 Tragge Marte vapor di Val di Magra  
 Ch'è di torbidi nuvoli involuto,  
 E con tempesta impetuosa ed agra  
 Sopra Campo Picen fia combattuto ;  
 Ond'ei repente spezzerà la nebbia,  
 Si ch'ogni Bianco ne sarà feruto.

(Inf. XXIV, 143-150.)



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is one that does not directly concern Torrighia, since the lordship of the Scrivia valley, and probably that of the neighbouring Trebbia, over which Moroello held jurisdiction, passed, about the middle of the thirteenth century, doubtless in 1252, when Nicolo Fieschi, Count of Lavagna, acquired (as the family records show) "many properties" in Liguria from Guglielmo Malaspina, into the hands of the Fieschis. The Counts of Lavagna, who held Torrighia for two hundred and fifty years, claimed descent from the Dukes of Bavaria, and were one of the most powerful families of Northern Italy. Many were the celebrated ecclesiasts and statesmen who sprang from their house. Two Popes, seventy Cardinals, more than three hundred Archbishops and Bishops, and a Marshal of France, in the time of St. Louis, bore the name of Fieschi.

The Malaspinas and the Fieschis were united both by marriage and their political views. Alagia Fieschi, the niece of Ottobuono Fieschi, who was elected Pope on July 11th, 1276, under the title of Adrian V, was the wife of Moroello Malaspina; and the two families belonged to the Guelf party. The conflict between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, which broke out afresh in 1335

and once more threw Genoa into a state of disorder, brought Torriglia into considerable prominence, and for many years to come its castle played no mean part in the history of the Republic. Considering that the power of the Ghibellines had become too strong to hope of overthrowing it, Giovanni Fieschi, the son of Carlo, withdrew, in the above-mentioned year, to his family's mountain stronghold, where he anxiously waited for an opportunity to descend upon the city at the head of his followers. But he did not live to see a sufficiently favourable moment ; and it was not, indeed, until 1392, that his descendant, Antonio, decided upon a decisive step. Gathering three hundred mountaineers around him, Antonio, on May 17th of that year, took up a position on Monte Fascia and made an attempt to rouse the people of Genoa against the reigning Duke, Antoniotto Adorno. It was, however, unsuccessful. Raffaello Adorno marched up the valley of the Bisagno at the head of a strong force of Ghibellines, invaded the valley of the Scrivia, and attacked the Castle of Torriglia ; and though he did not succeed in taking it, Antonio Fieschi was forced to make peace. Comparative calm then reigned until 1430,

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but in this year Guelf and Ghibelline were once more up in arms, and this time the *castello* was captured by Nicolo Piccinino, a captain of the troops of Duke Filippo Maria Visconti, in whose name Genoa was then governed. Reoccupied shortly afterwards by the Fieschis, it was again taken in 1432 by the Republic of Genoa ; and thus, ever the stake in the sanguinary game which the rival factions played for more than two centuries, it many times passed from one to the other. From 1478 to 1547 the Fieschis held the lordship of Torriglia and the valley of the Scrivia without interruption, but in the latter year, with the death of Gian Luigi Fieschi di Sinibaldo, who, according to the annals of Bonfadio, was born in the castle, their reign came to an end.

The circumstances under which the Fieschis lost their feudal rights form one of the principal pages in the history of Torriglia. Gian Luigi Fieschi, who was undoubtedly one of the greatest members of his family, is said by his biographers to have been a true lover of liberty, and much better disposed than his rivals, the Dorias, were to protect the interests of the Genoese. Whether he was right or wrong in thinking that the Republic

needed a liberator, there can be no doubt of this: that he was a man who commanded respect on all sides, and of whom even his opponents could say much good. He possessed, says one of them, "a great mind, an acute understanding," and was "one of the most noteworthy men in Italy, after sovereign princes," whilst he had been led by the advice and example of the best teachers and gravest men "to the study of virtue and honest actions." Convinced that the Republic was being ill-governed by the Dorias, Gian Luigi Fieschi placed himself, in January, 1547, at the head of the conspiracy to overthrow them. Andrea Doria's cousin, Giannettino—a weak, presumptuous man, of whom the great admiral is said to have been anything but proud—was assassinated, some of the principal gates of the city were seized by the conspirators, and they were about to succeed in their object when an event occurred which completely ruined their plans. Whilst passing from one ship to another in the port, Gian Luigi Fieschi fell into the sea and was drowned. The plot having failed, and its head having lost his life, the Senate of Genoa was disposed to be lenient towards the conspirators, so a general amnesty was

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granted to the Fieschis and their followers. But—some say through the influence of Andrea—the promise was broken, several members of the family were executed, others were banished and their possessions were seized.<sup>1</sup>

A company of Spanish infantry, under the command of Captain Oriola, proceeded towards the Colle della Scoffera and, swooping down upon Torriglia, took possession of the castle in the name of Charles V. The Emperor was, however, only a nominal holder; the real owner of the lordship of the valley of the Scrivia, with that of Carrega, Garbagna, Grondona, and ten other castles, was the great Andrea, who promptly raised Torriglia to the status of a marquisate. On his death, in 1560, his possessions passed into the hands of Giovanni Andrea Doria, the son of the murdered Giannettino. The new Marquis of Torriglia was evidently much disliked, for we read in the annals of Roccatagliata that “he was noted for his arrogance and ill-behaviour both towards the public and private acquaintances, and was hated and blamed by his fellow-citizens for his ambition.” The Dorias held Torriglia and its castle until 1797,

<sup>1</sup> Schiller founded a historical drama on this conspiracy.

when the revolutionary party got the upper hand and destroyed their property. More fortunate than the Fieschis, the blow, however, was in no way a serious one, since they afterwards received full compensation for the loss of their possessions.

When, in 1797, the Republic of Liguria was proclaimed in Genoa, and all the neighbouring feudal lords were called upon to adhere to it, Torriglia was divided into two parties: the Democratic and the Aristocratic. Though the little town had certainly no need to complain of its masters, the revolutionaries gained the upper hand and carried everything before them. A tree of liberty was planted on the square in front of the parish church, the inhabitants danced around it with shouts of joy, and a band of young men rushed up the steep paths towards the castle. On hearing of the revolutionary rising in Genoa, the occupants of the *castello* had fled, leaving their agent in sole charge. Seized and brutally ill-treated, the man was driven from his post. The revolutionaries then shattered all the locks, unhinged the doors, and, throwing them down the slopes of the hill, withdrew without doing further damage. But when night-time came, bands of thieves

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—of whom there were plenty in those turbulent days—entered and carried off everything of value, though not before they had completed the work of destruction begun on that sunny June afternoon.

Reading the chronicles of Torrighia one judges that it must have been rather a lawless little place before the opening of the road from Genoa to Piacenza. Early in the nineteenth century the neighbouring mountains were infested with bands of robbers, and it was no uncommon thing to hear of peasant-farmers, whilst returning from the weekly village market with their earnings, being made to stand and deliver. Even in the days when Bertolotti visited the valley of the Scrivia, its inhabitants were not particularly noted either for their love of order or intelligence.

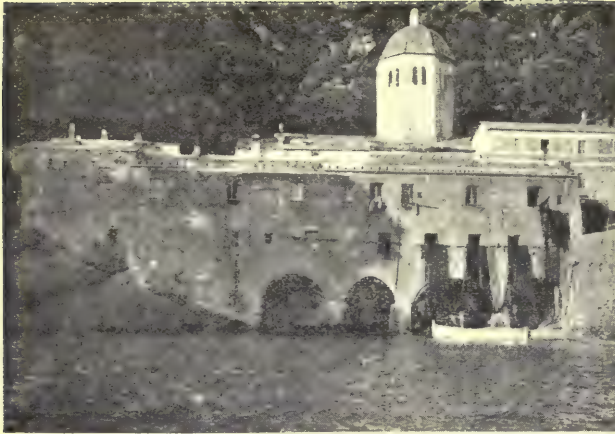
But Torrighia has made enormous strides since 1834. She has been made to understand the benefits of civilization, has become one of the pleasantest little mountain resorts in the whole world, and is ever ready to give a hearty welcome to anyone who comes to admire the natural beauties with which she is surrounded. Even so early in the year as when I visited Torrighia, the valley of the Scrivia

and that of the Trebbia, which was covered with millions of purple and white crocuses, formed pictures of great loveliness. The clear, exhilarating mountain air impelled me to cover mile after mile for the sheer love of action, and more than once sorely tempted me to start the long climb to Monte Antola, where, at an altitude of nearly five thousand feet, there is a particularly rich flora of medicinal and other plants.



*Torriglia*





*San Fruttuoso from the Sea*

## CHAPTER XI

### ALONG THE COAST: TO MONTE PORTOFINO

“THERE is nothing in Italy more beautiful to me than the coast road between Genoa and Spezzia,” wrote Dickens in his *Pictures from Italy*; and no sooner had we turned our backs on the great seaport, but not without a tinge of regret, than it became evident that his appreciation of the Riviera di Levante still holds good. San Martino d’Albaro, Sturla, and Quarto al Mare, the first localities to which the traveller along the Cornice comes, and the last-named famous as the place where Garibaldi, on

May 5th, 1860, embarked for Sicily with the Thousand of Marseilles, are a little too near the city not to have felt its influence, but once you have passed beyond Quinto al Mare and reached Nervi, the coast scenery is every bit as fresh as in the days when this fine road was the sole means of travelling along the Ligurian littoral.

The fact that our German cousins are in complete possession of Nervi is itself a high recommendation. Wherever they hibernate, there you may be certain to find the most perfect of natural conditions. Sheltered from the north winds by Monti Moro and Giugo, Nervi is a second San Remo. The mildness of its temperature, its luxurious gardens, and the beauty of its orange and lemon groves make it one of the most desirable spots of the eastern Riviera. It would be difficult to find a place better suited for passing a quiet, healthful holiday. Appreciating its advantages to the full, the Germans gather there in large numbers every winter, and find, ready to their hand, everything which the most exacting invalid or tourist could demand. The innumerable hotels and *pensions* which have sprung up on the sunny slopes of the hills are all modelled

to meet the requirements of German visitors, and the shops, with their notices in German, give one the same impression. Both the Antiquary and I were quick to observe this striking feature of Nervi, and the singular fewness of my countrymen and countrywomen. It appears, from what my friend tells me, that we English do not care to congregate in any large numbers where the Germans pitch their tents, and that—as though the sight of a Teutonic face prevented us from appreciating the beauties of Nature and the sound of a Teutonic tongue marred the music of the sea—we are apt to flee at the very approach of our enterprising cousins. And as we are often the first to discover these Italian and other resorts, we are thus, owing to our unconquerable prejudices, relinquishing our hold on some of the most delectable places in the world.

Nervi and its neighbouring suburb, Capolungo, have no sooner been passed than the true character of the country through which you are to travel is suddenly revealed. For a considerable part of the way to the Peninsula of Portofino, whose mighty wooded mass projects far into the sea in the distance, the

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road winds high above the rocky coast, enabling you, every now and then, to obtain some of the most exquisite views that the Mediterranean has to offer. The ceaseless fretting of the waves far below your feet, the white sails of feluccas slowly moving hither and thither over the blue expanse of water, the rugged coast line gradually fading into the distance, so that you rather divine than see its fine sweep at the base of the great peninsula, the dim patches of white and red which indicate where the fishing villages are situated ; the olive groves and pine woods which border the white route ; and especially the rich colouring which everything assumes in the morning sunlight—all these are things which make your journey to Monte Portofino a constant joy.

The portion of the littoral which lies between Nervi and the Peninsula of Portofino is celebrated for its mariners. For time out of mind, all the villages and little towns which are to be seen scattered along the coast—Bogliasco, Pieve di Sori, Sori, Recco, and Camogli—have produced men whose bravery and experience in sea-craft have carried the renown of the land of Columbus to the four corners of the world. The name of Biagio

Assereto, a celebrated admiral of the fifteenth century who was born at Recco, may be new to some readers ; but who has not heard of Nicoloso da Recco, who, on behalf of the King of Portugal, discovered and described the Canaries in 1341 ? Who has not heard, too, of the captains of Camogli ?

Camogli is a town which never fails to fascinate the traveller. Dickens, whilst on his way to Spezzia, made a point of leaving the main road and descending the long slope of the hill into its narrow, ancient streets, and the description he gives shows how much the place delighted him. "It is a perfect miniature of a primitive seafaring town," he says ; "the saltiest, roughest, most piratical little place that ever was seen. Great rusty iron rings and mooring-chains, capstans, and fragments of old masts and spars, choke up the way ; hard, rough-weather boats, and seamen's clothing, flutter in the little harbour or are drawn out on the sunny stones to dry ; on the parapet of the rude pier, a few amphibious-looking fellows lie asleep, with their legs dangling over the wall, as though earth or water were all one to them, and if they slipped in, they would float away, dozing comfortably among the fishes."

Camogli struck us as being a little brisker than these words would seem to indicate, as though competition, resulting from steam navigation, had awakened it from its former easy-going ways. We saw no one asleep on the pier, but several groups of bearded, bronze-faced sea-captains, talking with great animation. I wondered whether the topic of their conversation was the respective merits of steamship and sailing vessel ; for it appears that the coming into general use of the former has struck the shipowners of Camogli a terrible blow. Some decided to move with the times, but others remained faithful to the old-fashioned methods, and even as late as 1886 Camogli possessed three hundred and forty-eight sailing vessels, representing a tonnage of 165,217. Her captains still number, according to a recent census, nearly eight hundred.

The little harbour of Camogli is certainly one of the most picturesque I have ever seen. One of its sides is formed by a tongue of land which projects into the sea and on the rocky point of which the church is built : a church, in the construction of which, thanks to the financial aid of the devout mariners of Camogli, there has been an unsparing use of



*The Harbour, Camogli*





marble and gilding, and whose interior, as in the days when the author of *David Copperfield* stepped within, is still "bright with trophies of the sea, and votive offerings, in commemoration of escape from storm and shipwreck." The *molo* runs almost at right angles to this miniature peninsula, and from its extreme point one can get a delightful view of the *porto*, crowded with boats and old-fashioned fishing-smacks, and with a background of tall, weather-beaten houses and green hillside. Owing to the very small building space at the base of the Peninsula of Portofino, all the houses of Camogli are unusually high, many of them being seven and eight storeys, and a few of them even ten. The faded reds and browns and yellows of the fronts of these buildings, from whose windows the many-coloured garments of seamen are ever suspended to dry, form a delightful piece of colouring; and if some artist, in search of a new sketching-ground, were to ask me to recommend one to him, I do not know whether I should not advise him to go to Camogli.

We spent the best part of a day at Camogli, and stayed there overnight, and both my friend and I felt that, had time permitted,

we could very profitably have made a much longer sojourn there. It was impossible, however, to linger in all the agreeable spots to which we came ; at that rate we should not have finished our journey under at least a year. All the time, too, we were conscious that Monte Portofino, the topmost point (1,830 feet) of the grand peninsula, which seems to rise almost perpendicularly from the sea, was beckoning to us. So, early one morning, we climbed back to the main road, passed through a gallery which traverses the hill, scrambled on to a mule-path which branches off to the left immediately on leaving it, and began our long ascent of the hill. The narrow way, whose stones are worn smooth and hollow by the feet of generations of passengers, winds along the upper ridge of the peninsula, and, as it gradually rises, amidst sparsely-wooded slopes, strewn with rocks, you begin to be able to form an idea of the wonderful views which are to reward your climb. The tall houses of Camogli and the tower of its church rise majestically from the edge of the sea below : a confused mass of subdued colours, like those of a water-colour by Turner, hemmed in between the green of the olive-groves and the

slightly ruffled blue expanse of the Mediterranean ; beyond and far into the distance, almost as far as Genoa, you can distinguish many of the little places through which you have passed ; with the green counterforts of the Appenines rising above them and the gray peaks of those far-away mountains dimly visible against the sky. As you continue to rise, this panoramic view becomes still more imposing ; and at last you reach a point where, on turning your face to the left, you see the long stretch of coast on the other side of the peninsula. Down there on the shore is S. Margherita Ligure, a little beyond is Rapallo and its beautiful gulf, and stretching away into the distance towards Spezzia, until sea and land and sky melt into one, are the innumerable little bays and creeks of the rocky littoral. They say—and I can well believe them—that there are no finer views in the whole of Europe than those which are to be obtained from the Peninsula of Portofino. From the summit of the mountain you can see, on the one hand, as far as Capo Berta, near Diano Marina, and, on the other, to the Isola del Tino, in the Gulf of Spezzia, and, on looking seawards, if the atmosphere be exceptionally clear, it is possible to

distinguish the dim forms of Corsica and other islands of the Tuscan archipelago.

For the first time since we had climbed the mountains of Liguria together, the Antiquary's local knowledge failed him : we lost our way on Monte Portofino, and for fully an hour and a half wandered aimlessly about amidst its maritime pines and arbutus trees. But with so many paths to choose from, there is little wonder that we went astray. At last, after descending into I know not how many deep clefts in the rocky peninsula, we decided, as the day was still young, to retrace our footsteps to the point where we had first seen the double view of the Riviera, and to proceed to our next destination—San Fruttuoso—by an easier and better-known route.

This level mountain pathway skirts the eastern side of the peninsula, and soon divides into two branches : the one to the left leading to Portofino and the other, on the right, down the deep cleft in the peninsula at the base of which stands San Fruttuoso and the celebrated Monastery of Capo di Monte. The latter way descends with great abruptness, crossing and recrossing the bed of the torrent, amidst the pines and the arbutus bushes, and it was not long ere



*View of the Riviera from Monte Portofino*



we came to the region of the olives and within sight of the little group of buildings which form the remote fishing village of San Fruttuoso.

This foot-wide pathway, zig-zagging down the gorge, is the sole means of communication with the outside world—apart from the broad but not always safe highway of the sea—which the inhabitants of San Fruttuoso possess. But their needs are small ; they can afford to remain cut off from civilization, have no necessity to make more than occasional visits to the markets where they dispose of the result of their work. Fishing and the making of ropes and cables are the only occupations of the people of Capo di Monte. Fish they find in great abundance at their very doors, and the material for their ropes they find growing in large quantities on the slopes of the peninsula. As we stumbled into San Fruttuoso on that sunny afternoon, we found an old man and a woman, assisted by some boys, busily occupied on a primitive rope-walk, making cables with the tough fibres of the grass which they call *lisca*, but whose scientific name is *Ampelodesmus tenax*.

San Fruttuoso, its monastery and church,

and a tall tower which was built as a protection against the Saracens (all, save the tower, tightly wedged within a narrow, rocky space at the very edge of the sea) are of great antiquity. The abbey is mentioned in a document of 904, when Adelagia, wife of the Emperor Ottone II and daughter of Rodolfo, King of Burgundy, presented the district of Portofino and the greater part of the mountain of Capo di Monte, to the occupants of the monastery, then under the rule of the Abbot Madalberto. After being for long years in the hands of the Benedictines, the patronage passed, in the thirteenth century, to the Dorias. The tower, which rises high above the abbey and its adjoining buildings, was built to the order of Andrea Doria (as is shown by a bull of Julius III, dated 1550, approving of his project) to protect the monastery and the tombs of his ancestors, whose bones had for centuries rested in a small crypt near its miniature cloister. In this charming crypt, which is built of black and white stone, with a triple row of little columns, in pairs, supporting its gothic arches, are many inscriptions to the Dorias, including one to the memory of Egidio Doria, who fought against the Pisans in 1284, and

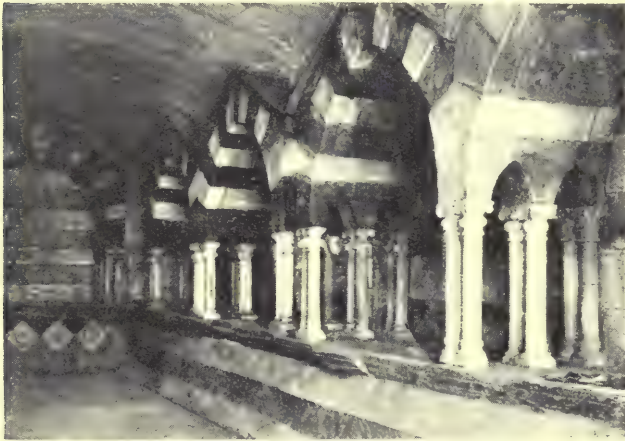


commanded the fleet of the King of Sicily in 1299, and who was buried at San Fruttuoso on September 22nd, 1305. That there was great need of Andrea's tower we already know. The whole of the littoral of Liguria was formerly, owing to the incursions of the Barbary pirates who infested the Mediterranean, in continual fear. These were old acquaintances of Andrea Doria. During his military career he had frequently had to fight against them—as they themselves knew to their cost—for he had defeated their powerful fleet at Pianosa. Many of the outlooks and defences built along the coast of Liguria were decorated with frescoes, and those of the San Fruttuoso tower—the coat of arms of the House of Doria and various warlike trophies painted in red on a yellow ground—are fairly well preserved. This tower was strongly defended with loopholes, and on the side facing the mountain there was a drawbridge. On the sides facing the sea there were also openings for artillery. At the entrance to the bay, on high ground, Andrea also placed a watch-tower (the ruins of which can still be seen), so that the approach of any suspicious-looking vessels could be observed and rapidly reported. Both these towers were built during the ten years which

intervened between the date of the Papal bull and that of Andrea's death, and it is said that, thanks to their protection, the monastery, which had become almost abandoned through fear of the Saracens, had a new lease of life. And it is indeed a fact that after this time the list of the Abbots of San Fruttuoso contains the names of many members of the House of Doria.

Having once descended to San Fruttuoso we decided that we would not leave it except by water. We had had enough of mountain paths for one day. So at one of the cottages we found an experienced boatman, who rejoiced in the name of Salvatore, and were rowed round the peninsula to Portofino. Once out of the little harbour, the sea was none too smooth, calm though it had looked from the top of the mountain, and our cockleshell of a boat was played with by the waves in a manner which would have been alarming had it been in less skilful hands. But Salvatore had managed a boat in those dangerous waters ever since he was a boy of ten : he knew the currents to be avoided, and how to round all the difficult points with the least expenditure of labour and a modicum of risk, and thus, after three-quarters of an

hour's work with the oars, beneath the towering cliffs of the peninsula and amidst flocks of screaming sea-gulls, bent on fishing expeditions, he brought us safely into the still waters of the sheltered harbour of Portofino.



*The crypt at San Fruttuoso*



*Santa Margherita, near Rapallo*

## CHAPTER XII

### PORTOFINO AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

ON the eastern side of the extreme point of the Peninsula of Portofino is a narrow, curved creek, which Nature would seem to have taken under her special protection. Though the sea may beat with all its fury against the promontory's conglomerate cliffs, the strength of its waves is almost spent ere they break upon the little semicircular beach of this favoured cove. The cold winds which sometimes blow from the mountains are powerless, too, to harm it, since it is enclosed,

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on one side by the thickly-wooded ridge of the peninsula, and on its two other sides by high hills, densely clad with olives. Within this remarkably sheltered spot lies Portofino, with its houses arranged in curves along the quays and in front of its narrow *lido*—as snug and as sunny a little port as ever a mariner could desire, and so picturesque that I know not where you would find a prettier.

A row of multi-coloured boats are drawn up on to the beach, in front of which is a little *piazza*, planted with acacias. On one side of this square are the porticoes (indispensable to every Italian town) where the lace-makers, during the hot days of summer, sit plying their bobbins with marvellous rapidity, and the old boatmen seek shade and repose. Then comes the graceful curve of the narrower of the two quays, bordered by houses with pink and yellow façades and green shutters. Seen from an open space opposite the church of San Giorgio, which stands on the high ground of the peninsula, overlooking, on the one hand, the harbour, and on the other, the open sea, this *piazza*, and above it the green hillside, these *portici*, these fishermen's houses, bathed in sunlight,

and their reflections in the usually still water of the harbour, form a picture of incomparable beauty.

Landscape beauty is not limited, however, to this one little nook of the peninsula of Portofino. If you follow the pathways which wind up and down among the olives that cover the hills on all sides, you cannot fail to discover many charming and unexpected points of view. There is one walk which is obligatory. It takes you, skirting the grounds of the Castle of Portofino and the gardens of the fine villas which occupy all the most favourable positions on the sheltered side of the peninsula, to the far end of the promontory. There, high above the sea—a lovely turquoise blue, save where it churns itself into foam against the base of the cliffs—you have, in one direction, an uninterrupted vista of water and sky, in another a view of the distant Bay of Rapallo, with the dark forms of maritime pines overhanging the sea in the foreground, and in the distance the hills above the coast, which throughout the day, owing to varying effects of light, is ever changing in aspect. The poet and the painter could find no more ideal spot than this pine-clad point to sit and watch the rising and



*Portofino*





setting of the sun, the marvellous cloud-effects which make the sky a never-tiring picture from morning until night, and the curious changes which are wrought by light and shadow on the surface of the sea.

Though Portofino possesses a *castello*, with stout towers of decidedly warlike aspect, I can hardly picture it as a scene of strife. Has its quiet ever been disturbed by war's alarms? . . . I know not; and I shall not seek to discover if its history has been one of battle-cries and bloodshed. Let us think of it as solely a place of gentle deeds, a spot off the beaten track which has escaped the turmoil of history, a welcome haven of refuge; as it was, indeed, to Maria de' Medici, when rough weather—whilst on her way to France to marry Henry IV—obliged her to put into the port and stop several days there.

The fact that Portofino is a great centre for the making of lace emphasises this idea of its gentleness. The women and girls of the entire district, including S. Margherita and Rapallo, devote themselves to this industry, but it is at Portofino that you see it carried on on the most extensive scale. This artistic occupation adds in no small measure to the picturesqueness of the village.

Under the arches of the porticoes and at many of the street doors the workers—from little girls of six to wrinkled dames of seventy—sit in front of the three-legged stands which support the pillows on which their work is produced, and on all sides you hear the click of their wooden bobbins. To an uninitiated onlooker, the dexterity of the more accomplished workers seems magical: he marvels at the rapidity with which the bobbins fly from side to side of the complicated pattern, at the unerring exactitude with which just the right ones are selected, and wonders that the innumerable threads never become entangled amidst such a forest of pins. During the season for visitors, the streets are hung with lace; stalls, bearing every article of feminine adornment that can be made on a *tombola*, are erected on the *piazza* and at all the points where prospective buyers are likely to pass; so that how to get by without stopping to admire and purchase becomes a most difficult problem. The fair young lace-makers invite you with such pleasant smiles and in so sweet a voice “merely to look” that it seems unmannerly to hasten away without accepting the invitation, and when you find that the price of their beautiful work is less than would

satisfy the most unskilled of city toilers, you rarely resist the temptation to buy lace collars and handkerchiefs for your friends across the seas.

Three principal kinds of lace are now made at Portofino: antique, Byzantine, and Venetian. The first—original Portofino point—somewhat resembles torchon in appearance, and is very effective when employed for large pieces, such as scarves, blouses, coats, and table-covers. Byzantine, which is rather closer in design, has a characteristic raised knot which distinguishes it from any other lace of the neighbourhood; whilst Venetian, as its name implies, recalls the well-known Venetian point. It is a charming pattern of complicated scrolls united by fine bars, and is equally suitable for an entire lace coat or a delicate lace handkerchief. Of the three, it is much the longest to execute, and is a pattern which only the older and more experienced workers seem able to undertake. The little children of Portofino make much narrow edging and insertion, all partaking somewhat of the character of torchon, and a good deal of guipure, largely employed for the trimming of household linen, is also produced by young girls.

Portofino is the terminus of a very good road which winds along the coast to Rapallo by way of Santa Margherita Ligure, passing many points of exceptional beauty and historic interest. With a rocky hillside above and precipitous descents into the sea below, you quickly come within sight of the little bay and castle of Paraggi, which, standing on an eminence above the sea, has been transformed by its fortunate owner into a most charming villa. The road cuts through the rock at the base of this residence, passes beneath the wooded heights on which the Convent of Cervara is built, and then gradually descends to Santa Margherita. The Convent of Cervara was founded in 1324 by Guido Scetten, Archbishop of Genoa, and is noteworthy as having been the temporary resting-place of two distinguished persons: Pope Gregory XI, in 1376, whilst on his way from Avignon to Rome, and Francis I, who was imprisoned there in 1525, after the Battle of Pavia. It was formerly occupied by Benedictine monks, but is now inhabited by some of the Carthusians who were forced to leave La Grande Chartreuse, in France. Between Santa Margherita and Rapallo there are again some steep ascents and descents,



Lace-makers, Portofino



past roadside shrines, rocky cliffs with pine-trees overhanging the sea, and hillsides covered with olives, amidst whose gray-green foliage there rises, here and there, the tall and slender dark green forms of cypresses. At Pagana, a little below the level of the road, stands the church of San Michele, which is worth visiting on account of a picture by Vandyck representing the Crucifixion. As so often happens when works of art are entrusted to the care of ecclesiastical authorities, this painting has been shamefully ill-treated: it has been burnt in parts by altar candles, and, when I saw it, was disfigured by spots of grease. It bears traces, too, of having been restored by an unskilled hand. However, the work is decidedly interesting, especially when we know that its history can be traced back to the days when Vandyck visited and worked in these parts.

Either Santa Margherita or Rapallo will be found to be an excellent centre for excursions in this part of Liguria. Both are well-sheltered resorts, on the shores of most agreeable gulfs, and the fact that they are crowded, during the season, with tourists and convalescents testifies not only to their interest but also to their climatic advantages. Eleven

years ago Rapallo was almost entirely English, but German visitors now predominate, and the demand for accommodation, as shown by the building of fresh villas and hotels, is ever on the increase.

Santa Margherita was the birthplace of the celebrated wood-carver Maragliano, and in the church of San Giacomo di Corte, on the hillside above the town, is an exquisite example of his work : a statue of the Madonna with six cupids at her feet, three on the right and three on the left. She is represented on a throne, her arms outspread, and her face and eyes, full of tenderness, raised towards heaven. This masterpiece is stored away for the greater part of the year within a glazed recess, high up in a side chapel ; but once a year—on Good Friday—it is brought forth and carried through the sunny streets of Santa Margherita. Its beauty can then be admired, though one's pleasure in looking on Maragliano's work is somewhat marred by the strings of paltry silver hearts which are suspended from the Virgin's hands—a hideous addition which the sculptor undoubtedly never foresaw.

There is another piece of sculpture which every one who goes to this little coast town



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should see. It likewise represents the Madonna, but carved in stone, and with a child upon her knee—a work of the Byzantine period, very primitive in execution, yet wonderfully life-like. Time and the stones of the mischievous small boys of Santa Margherita have much damaged this curious work in parts, so the space in which it stands, at the angle of a wall near a chapel, above the ruins of an ancient fort, has been carefully enclosed with stout wire-netting.

The principal occupation of the women and girls of Santa Margherita is the making of lace; whilst that of the men—from about the end of May to the beginning of October—is coral fishing. The greater part of the male population set sail in the former month for the coasts of Sardinia and Barbary, and often return with valuable cargoes on board their little vessels, known as *coralline*. But their work is extremely fatiguing, since it is continued, with only brief intervals for rest, throughout both the night and the day. The apparatus for coral fishing consists of a strong windlass placed at the stern of the vessel and furnished with a long rope, at the end of which is a heavy wooden cross, with an attachment of particularly stout nets.

This cross is sunk to the bottom of the sea by means of a large stone ; the signal to start is given by the owner of the boat ; and, as it slowly travels along, either by means of its sails or its oars, branches of coral are detached from the coral-banks by the nets and become entangled in the meshes. When the master of the vessel considers that the " catch " is sufficiently good, he gives orders for the boat to stop, and the nets are carefully drawn to the surface. This part of the work of the coral fishers is often a long and arduous operation, for the nets are often sunk to a depth of more than two hundred metres. On the coral being landed it is superficially cleaned, and then packed in the boxes in which it is sent to Genoa, where a speciality is made of polishing and mounting it.

The streets of Rapallo have now almost entirely lost that primitive picturesqueness which was once their characteristic. The only really interesting portion of the old town that remains is an ancient gateway and shrine, at the end of a street leading on to the promenade. But facing the Langan, as the little port is called, there is a very fine thirteenth century castle, which was built to protect the town against the Saracens,



*Rapallo and the Tigulian Gulf*



who here, as elsewhere, were very troublesome up to as late as the middle of the sixteenth century. On the night of the 6th of July, 1549, Dragutte and his fierce followers suddenly landed on the beach, took the castle by storm, sacked the houses of the entire district, and carried off a large number of prisoners. Near the mouth of the Bogo torrent, on the outskirts of the town, there is also another monument of the past: an arch of a Roman bridge. So these two antiquities to a certain extent make up for the modernness of Rapallo.

Rapallo's principal feature consists of its natural beauties. Many delightful walks can be made in the district. Two, in particular, are to be recommended. The first, which will take you a little over half-an-hour, is to the ruins of the Gothic monastery of the Val di Cristo, near the village of Sant' Anna. This monastery, whose chief architectural interest lies in its ivy-covered tower, and which is now surrounded by cottages and farms, dates from 1204. It was first inhabited by sisters of the Cistercian Order, then by those of Clarisse, and was suppressed in the sixteenth century. But the longer excursion to the sanctuary church of Montallegro (it

will take a good walker nearly two hours) is by far the more interesting. This sanctuary, standing at a height of over eighteen hundred feet to the north-east of Rapallo, was founded in 1557, and, as in the case of similar places of pilgrimage, the miraculous picture and holy spring play their part in its history. There are, however, two versions of the story, consequently its effect is somewhat spoiled. It was neither the church nor its story, however, which took us up the long, winding mule-path which leads to the Sanctuary of Montallegro—these were but the pretext for getting on to the mountains to admire the views of Rapallo and the Tigulian Gulf. Both the route and the views which it affords are, indeed, exceedingly picturesque. At its lower level, it winds past the luxurious gardens of many fine villas—past olive trees and cypresses—past the beautiful little chapel of San Bartholomeo, and rustic cottages with bee gardens, the hives of one of which were made, we noticed, out of logs of wood. As it reaches higher ground, it passes through ancient oak-groves: magnificent old trees with gnarled trunks and twisted branches, through the foliage of which, when you stop to look back, you see

Rapallo stretched out on its fertile plain, beyond the distant houses of Santa Margherita, with the white sails of its fishing-boats in the bay, and, still further in the distance, the dim outline of the Peninsula of Portofino.



*The Castle of Rapallo*



*The River Entella*

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT SESTRI LEVANTE AND VARESE LIGURE

THE Antiquary, almost all the way from Rapallo to Sestri Levante, quoted Dante. The *Divine Comedy*, he said, was the best of all guide books to this portion of the coast ; the rocky cliffs, rising high above the sea, their narrow, dangerous paths, which few could follow without trembling, and—in striking contrast to these—the lovely banks of the placid Entella were the best of all commentaries on the work of the great poet. His duty as a Ligurian, proud of his province and proud of the fact that Dante had found inspiration there, was to proclaim these



truths, in the hope that travellers would be induced to study their *Divina Commedia* in this new and important light.

Intra Sestri e Chiaveri si adima  
 Una fiumana bella, e del suo nome  
 Lo titol del mio sangue fa sua cima,—<sup>1</sup>

cited my friend, as we stepped along the road, and the caressing manner in which he lingered on the words showed how much he loved his national poet. This "beautiful river," flowing between Sestri and Chiaveri, was the Lavagna, or, as it is also called, the Entella, and the family which took its title from it was that of the Fieschis, the powerful Counts of Lavagna, who ruled over this part of Liguria during the Middle Ages, and with whom Dante's friend, Moroello Malaspina, was connected by marriage. The passage occurs in Canto XIX of the *Purgatory*; that in which the poet describes his ascent with Virgil to the fifth cornice, where the sin of avarice is cleansed, and where he finds Pope Adrian V (Cardinal Ottobuono Fieschi), who addresses him on the subject of his covetousness and his conversion, and, in addition to speaking

<sup>1</sup> ". . . the name  
 And title of my lineage, from that stream  
 That 'twixt Chiaveri and Sestri draws  
 His limpid waters through the lowly glen.  
 (Cary's translation.)

of the Lavagna, refers to his niece, the wife of Moroello Malaspina, in the following words :—

I have on earth a kinswoman ; her name  
Alagia, worthy in herself, so ill  
Example of our house corrupt her not :  
And she is all remaineth of me there.<sup>1</sup>

We spent many hours on the banks of the Entella, reading and discussing Dante (for the Antiquary was never without his pocket edition of the poet), trying to realise what the places and scenes through which we were passing were like in his day, and recalling the history of the Fieschis. This picturesque river, which forms the boundary line between Chiavari and Lavagna, is formed by the union of three streams : the torrent of the Lavagna valley, which flows for a distance of twenty kilometres ; the Sturla, which descends from the Borsonasco and other groups of mountains ; and the little Graveglia. The juncture takes place near Carasco, and thence the Entella, along a broad and fairly flat bed, bordered by trees, which are charmingly reflected in its clear waters, proceeds almost

<sup>1</sup> " Nepote a io di là ch'a nome Alagia,  
Buona da se, pur che la nostra casa  
Non faccia lei per esemplo malvagia ;  
E questa sola di là m'è rimasa.

in a straight line towards the sea. It can have changed little in its aspect since the days when Dante gazed upon its simple and touching beauties. In some respects, too, both Chiavari and Lavagna are the same as they were in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The latter takes its name from the slate quarries which abound at Monte San Giacomo, in the neighbourhood. These quarries, which provide work for quite five hundred hands, including nearly two hundred women, who, in groups of four to six, carry the heavy slabs of stone upon their heads, not only from the stone-yards facing the beach down to the boats, but all the way from where the slate is extracted, are known among the people of the district as *chiappe*—a word which Dante uses in the *Divine Comedy*, a striking proof of the fact that he was acquainted with even purely local details.

Walking along the left bank of the river towards the Ponte della Maddalena, we were not long in coming to the little village of San Salvatore, lying on the slope of a hill. A little away from the houses, and on fairly high ground, we found two splendid reminders of Dante and the Fieschis: a Gothic basilica, and, separated from it by a little grass-grown

*piazza*, the remains of a thirteenth century palace, with a façade of white marble and Lavagna stone, arranged alternately. The church has a magnificent rose window, a tower with most exquisitely carved windows, and its striped front clearly denotes its aristocratic origin. Above the doorway—if memory speaks truly—its history is recorded. It was founded in 1244 by the great Pope Innocent IV, who, as we know, was a Fieschi, and was completed in 1252 by his nephew, Cardinal Ottobuono, who, twenty-four years later, was himself to become “Rome’s pastor,” and discover that until then he was, as Dante makes him say, a soul in misery :—

. . . . alienate

From God, and covetous of all earthly things.

The house facing the church is part of one of the numerous residences which the members of this great family built in this district. The Counts of Lavagna had jurisdiction in the Middle Ages over all the places along the coast from Sestri to Rapallo, and as far into the mountains as Varese Ligure. Above San Salvatore stood their Castle of Caloso, and until 1198, when, in consequence of having broken their agreements with the

Genoese, they were forced to cede Lavagna to the Commune, they were the sole masters on the banks of the Entella. They continued to prosper, however, until 1547, the year in which Gian Luigi Fieschi undertook his unfortunate conspiracy against the Republic. The decadence of the family, which became divided into two branches—the Fieschis of Lavagna, and those of Savignoni—dates from that time.

Sestri Levante, the first place which Dante deemed worthy of mention after he had left the Valdimagra, stands in a beautiful situation on the plain at the mouth of the Gromolo torrent and on the narrow strip of land which joins this fertile district of orange groves and vineyards to the rocky, mountainous promontory known as the Isola.<sup>1</sup> With its pink, white, and lemon-coloured houses following the graceful bend of the sandy beach ; its multicoloured fishing-boats arranged in a line along the sands ; its beautiful public garden, containing palms, yuccas, magnolias,

<sup>1</sup> The natural beauties of Sestri Levante were especially admired by Byron and the German poet Paul Heyse. The latter, who visited Sestri for the first time in 1862, writes most enthusiastically of the Villa Piuma and the Isola, where he was happy to find a brother poet in the person of Monsignore Vincenzo Podestà.

oleanders, and pepper-trees, Sestri is a place, either during the winter or the summer season, for a fairly prolonged sojourn. The character of the coast scenery is similar to that in the neighbourhood of Rapallo and Portofino. Of the numerous beautiful walks which can be made in the district, there are two which every visitor considers it a primary duty to take ere he or she has been there many hours. One is to the grounds of the Villa Piuma, situated on the highest part of the Isola, around the base of the ruins of the castle which the Republic of Genoa built there in 1134, with the consent of the monks of San Fruttuoso, who held rights over this portion of the promontory; the other is along a mule-path which starts from the main street of the town and, following the coast to the east, reaches a point, high above the sea and clad with maritime pines, where a fine view of the Isola and the distant coast-line, as far as the Peninsula of Portofino, can be obtained.

On reaching Sestri, our way no longer lay along the carriage road to Spezzia. Though this would have been the more direct route to the point where our travels in Liguria were to end, we decided, since it passed



*Sestri Levante*





through a rather deserted district, to proceed inland to Varese Ligure, over the Colle di Velva (1,635 feet), thence to Borgotaro, by way of the Colle di Centocroci (3,160 feet), and to descend to Spezzia by the valleys of the Taro and the Magra. The deviation is one which can be recommended not only to the lover of mountain scenery, but also to the geologist and mineralogist, who will find many things to interest them in these valleys. The serpentine formation of the rocks can be admirably studied there, as well as to the east of Sestri Levante, and whilst on your way to Varese you pass through the district of the copper mines of the Eastern Riviera. These mines—the Libiola, the Gallinaria, the Bargone, and others—produced, in 1903, 7,621 tons of copper, valued at nearly £13,000. Some of the ore is smelted at the works of the Società Ligure Ramifera at Bargonasco, at the confluence of the Petronia and Bargone torrents, about four miles from Sestri Levante. There are also manganese mines at Tre Monti and Gambatesa; and in the Vallegrande ravine, near Bargonasco, in an abandoned gallery, the rare mineral called datolite has been found.

Ere reaching the Colle di Velva, where you

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begin to descend into the valley of the Vara, you pass three picturesque mountain villages—Castiglione Chiavarese, Missano, and Velva—each sunning itself on the slope of a hill. But there is no special inducement to linger by the way. The historical interest which is centred in Varese Ligure makes you keen to cover the thirty-three kilometres of winding roadway that separates it from the coast; and, as you will find, it is a wise plan to have as much time as possible to spend at this half-way-house between Sestri and Borgotaro.

Varese, which as a summer resort (its altitude is a little over a thousand feet) bears the same relation to Sestri as Torriglia does to Genoa, is a very ancient town on the banks of the Vara. It was formerly one of the strongholds of the Fieschis, and as such was strongly fortified with walls, moats, and a castle. The last named, which was built by a celebrated *condottiere* named Nicolo Piccinino in 1440, is all that now remains of these defences. The old town was circular in form, with the castle, in all probability, in the centre, and some of the houses and a portion of the circular *portici* of this mediæval *borgo*, which was governed by its own statutes, are still standing behind the two ruined



*Varese Ligure*



towers of the *castello*. There is also a very old and picturesque bridge over the Vara, and at one end let into the wall, is a bas-relief which is, perhaps, the oldest thing in Varese. This curious carving—an example of very early Christian art—bears a rude representation of five human figures. Those in the centre are clearly meant to be Mary and Christ, since the head of the former is surmounted by a crown, whilst a dove, the Holy Ghost, is flying towards her; the Crucifixion is represented on the right, and the figure next to the Virgin is probably meant to be Joseph. But I am at a loss to say who is indicated by the remaining figure, with what appears to be a scythe suspended over his head,—unless this symbol represents Death?

Opposite the castle is a building which few visitors to Varese Ligure fail to visit, though it is neither art nor architecture which attracts them there. It is a church with two fine bell-towers and a very high cupola—the church of the nuns of San Filippo Neri, an order following the rules of Saint Augustine. Ignorant of the strict regulations which govern the lives of the inmates of this monastery, I sought to inspect that part of the establishment where, for the benefit of the

poor of the district, these holy women carry on a very interesting industry: that of drying mushrooms and making confectionery. But I found that this was impossible; no human being, save a priest to hear confessions and a doctor to give medical advice, ever puts his or her foot across the threshold of those sacred precincts. You can enter a little vestibule and talk with one of the nuns who stands behind a revolving apparatus with shelves, but look upon her face you cannot; you can step into an adjoining waiting-room and sample the confectionery, which will be brought to you by an attendant, who herself has never seen any of the sisters of this convent; and if you are satisfied with their wares, you can give your order and shortly receive, at the above-named revolving counter, a neatly made up parcel of sweetmeats, made of almond paste and fashioned in the form of fruit, flowers, and fishes, each with its appropriate colouring. Similarly, you can purchase samples of the dried fungi which the nuns of San Filippo Neri export to all parts of the world. But there your powers end, for once these women have taken their final vows, after having paid the entrance fee of 3,000 lire and spent their year's novitiate,

they are invisible to all save the two people I have named. Some fifty years ago, this community of sisters possessed a capital of 30,908 lire, producing an income of 1,431 lire. Both must now be very much larger, so the poor of Varese Ligure and neighbourhood may consider themselves extremely fortunate. Though it is difficult to obtain any definite information, it is said that these Augustinian nuns live very happy and healthy lives, and when, from the slopes of the surrounding hills, one looks down upon their beautiful and extensive garden, whose produce they also sell, one can readily believe it.

The Colle di Centocroci, or Hill of the Hundred Crosses, over which you have to pass when travelling from Varese to Borgotaro, is over three thousand feet in height. Situated between the valley of the Vara and that of the Taro, it forms a pass of the Apennines which was formerly the sole commercial route between the Principality of Parma and the sea. The ancient Parmesan custom-house, now transformed into an inn where comfortable accommodation can be obtained during the summer months, is still there to remind us of this period. The name

of the Colle, too, carries our minds back to the days when thousands of bales of merchandise were annually transported on the backs of mules over this hill into Liguria. According to local tradition, a band of robbers, disguised as monks, used to attack and murder the muleteers, or other travellers, and from the large number of crosses which were raised on the mountain to the memory of these victims it ultimately took its name.



*Early Christian art at Varese Ligure*





*The Bay of Spezzia from the hill above Portovenere*

## CHAPTER XIV

### FROM BORGOTARO TO SPEZZIA AND BEYOND

BORGOTARO is an ancient, fortified town on the left bank of the River Taro. It was once a feudal possession of the Fieschi family, who struck money there, and, like many another old place off the beaten track, it still retains that ineffable charm which we associate

with strongholds in the hills, picturesque castles, and powerful families. Facing the town's little *piazza* is the castle, now the town hall, making a fine show with its painted front. Near by, on the same square, is a monument in honour of the visit of Elizabeth Farnese in 1714, when she passed through Borgotaro on her way to Spain to become the wife of Philip V. And in the main street is a fine old mansion, with imposing stucco ornamentations, and the arms of the Farnesi and Bourbons. But no one goes to Borgotaro specially to see these antiquities. Travellers who find their way there look at them merely *en passant*, generally whilst making the town a centre—and an excellent centre it is—for excursions into the mountains.

To us, Borgotaro was but a stopping place on our way to the valley of the Magra, which, since it marks the eastern limits of Liguria, we proposed to follow nearly as far as the sea. We made our first acquaintance with the famous stream at Pontremoli, which we reached after a good four hours' tramp. Rising in Monte Orsaro, the Magra, in its course of forty-seven miles to Cape Corvo, assumes the most noble proportions, and I

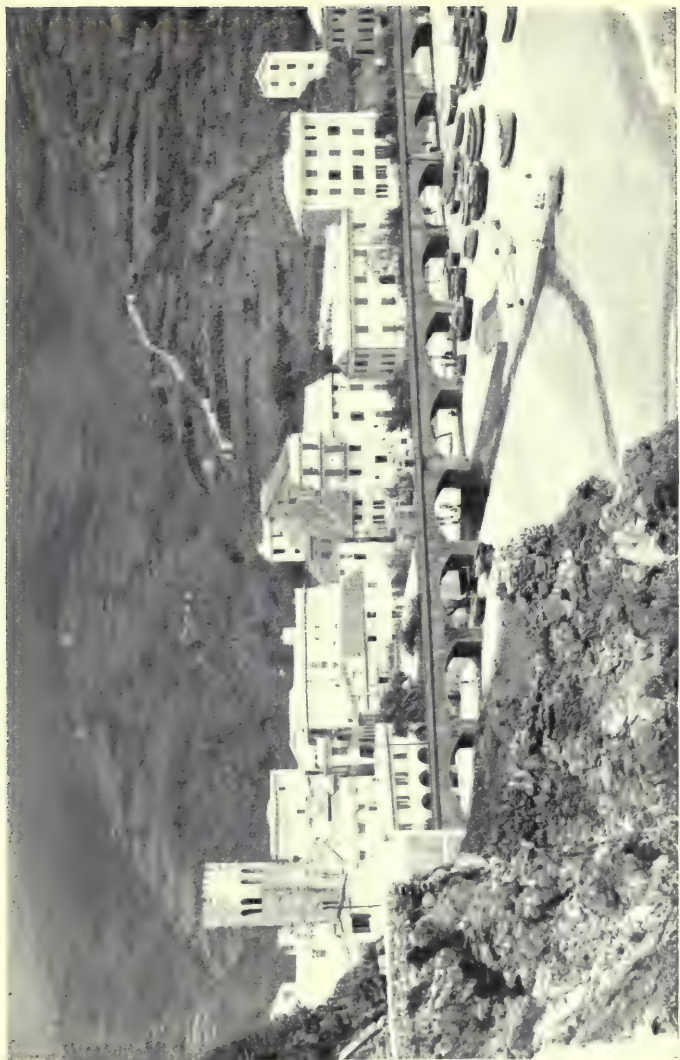
know no pleasanter occupation than to follow such a river from source to debouchure, and to note its gradual growth and ever-increasing diversity of landscape. We saw some of the principal mountain torrents which mingle with its waters: the Verde at Pontremoli, the Capra at Scorcetoli, the Bagnone at Villafranca in Lunigiana, and the Aulella at Aulla. In summer its broad bed is so dry that the thrifty people of Pontremoli convert a portion into kitchen gardens. It is a case of first come, first served, and each small-holder encloses his square of land with a roughly-constructed wall of boulders. But when winter and the rainy season comes, the Magra demands ample elbow-room, and everything is quickly swept away.

Castles and ancient buildings are numerous in the historic valley of the Magra. There is an interesting *castello* at Pontremoli, now partly occupied by the inhabitants of that remarkably picturesque town, and at SS. Annunziata, a suburb, a fine church and convent, built in 1471, and formerly occupied by Agostinian monks. This is another of the districts, by the by, which is associated with Dante; not many miles away is Mulazzo, where the Malaspinas received the poet after

his banishment from Florence in 1306.<sup>1</sup> Mulazzo and Villafranca in Lunigiana were two of the favourite places of residence of the Malaspinas, and at the latter place one of their castles is still standing. The district is still inhabited by descendants of this noble house, but their power has long since departed, and you find them now working as millers, carpenters, and common labourers. There is also an ancient castle at Terrarossa, and another, known as La Brunella, at Aulla, which dates from 1543.

Spezzia is the great naval base of northern Italy. Militarism is the dominant note of its streets, its incomparable harbour, and the surrounding circle of hills. Its gardens and shady avenues are ever crowded with smartly-dressed officers and blue-jackets. Pyramids of shells are on the quays, and long rows of torpedo boats are moored alongside. Out in the bay blue-gray ironclads ride at anchor and are continually reminding you that nothing would be easier than to crush you out of

<sup>1</sup> See Canto VIII of *Purgatory*, in which Conrad Malaspina predicts Dante's future banishment. The *Divina Commedia* contains other references to members of this great family who "once were mighty in Valdimagra": to Alagia de' Fieschi Malaspina, *Purgatory* XIX; and to Moroello Malaspina, *Inferno* XXIV.



*Monterosso al Mare, near Spezzia*



existence. As you pass in row boat or steamer, on one of your inoffensive excursions in search of the picturesque, there is a sudden flash from one of the big guns—pointed, as it happens, straight towards you—the sea-birds wheel away with terrified screams, the echoes are awakened, and you bless your stars that only blank cartridge is being used. A grim circle of forts, constructed in 1888, are visible on the high hills, and there is hardly a creek which has not been provided with bastions and cannon.

Notwithstanding this blemish, which did not exist in the days when Byron and Shelley sojourned in the district, Spezzia is a very brisk and pleasant little town. As a centre for excursions into the country it could not be improved upon. One of our most memorable outings was to the Cinque Terre : Monterosso al Mare, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, and Riomaggiore, five ancient villages pent in between the sea and the rocky coast which in the twelfth century were banded together and gained a reputation for robbing anyone who passed that way. With their castles, steep, crooked streets, and terraced, vine-clad hill-sides, they are ideal spots for the painter and photographer. All are celebrated

for their wines, especially Riomaggiore which produces a *vino bianco* of exquisite bouquet, and Corniglia, whose *vino vernaccia* is mentioned both by Boccaccio and Dante.<sup>1</sup>

Portovenere, a village in a magnificent position on the western point of the gulf, and separated from the Isle of Palmaria by a narrow strip of water, is reached either by road or steamer. No visitor to Spezzia ever fails to feast his or her eyes on the beauties of ancient *Portus Veneris*. Tall, irregular, weather-beaten houses rise high above the sea. On the hill above stands the ruins of a twelfth century castle, and here and there, in the village and on the hill-side, are the remains of the fortifications which defended the place when, as an inscription over the entrance tells us ("Colonia Januensium—1113"), it was a Genoese colony. Portovenere and Palmaria are celebrated for a very beautiful marble, generally black, veined with yellow, and known as Portoro. The

<sup>1</sup> Ebbe la Santa Chiesa in le sue braccia :

Dal Torso fu, e purga per digiuno

L'anguille di Bolsena e la vernaccia.

*Purgatorio*, Canto XXIV, 22-24.

Had keep of the Church ; he was of Tours,  
And purges by wan abstinence away  
Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel.



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marble quarries here are the only important ones in the whole of Liguria, and are, therefore, well worth seeing. Those of Palmaria are the most convenient to visit, since they can be seen whilst making an excursion by boat to the Caverna dei Colombi, a sea-swept cavern on the island where human bones and utensils of the stone age have been found. There is another cavern, or grotto, at Portovenere, which the small boys of the place are very eager to point out to English visitors as the spot where Byron landed when he swam over from Lerici. But we were not to be tempted by their offers as guides, for we knew that, though the poet undoubtedly frequented Portovenere, there was no foundation for this legend.

On leaving Spezzia I took the steamer, in company with my friend, to Lerici. As the little vessel slowed down and entered the harbour, the Antiquary was ready with an appropriate quotation from his favourite poet.

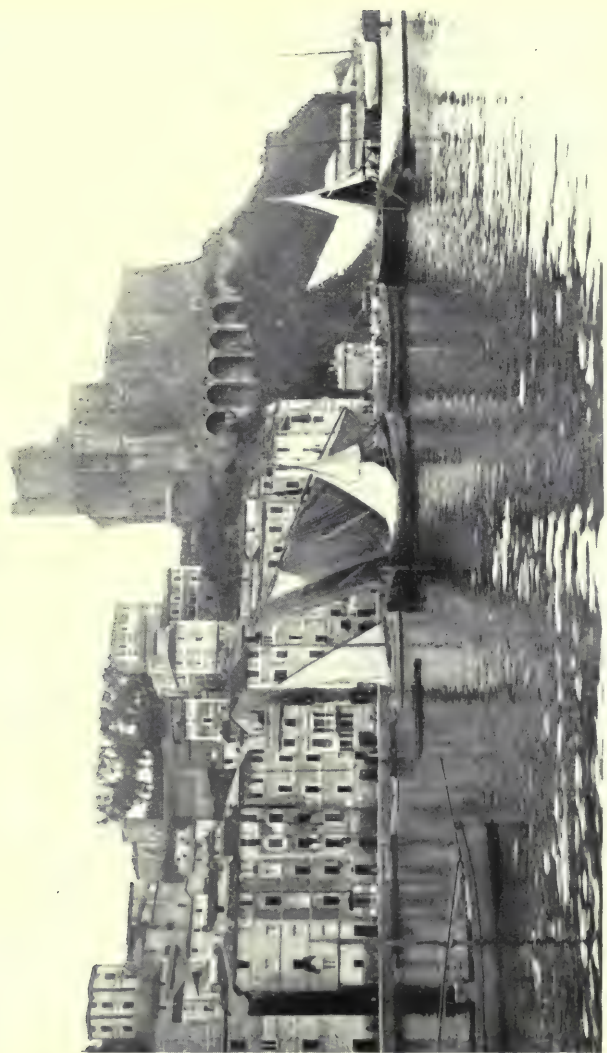
The most remote,  
Most wild, untrodden path, in all the tract  
'Twixt Lerici and Turbia, were to this  
A ladder easy and open of access,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tra Lerici e Turbia, la più diserta,  
La più romita via è una scala,  
Verso di quella, agevole ed aperta.

*Purgatorio*, III, 49-51.

sings Dante, in describing the steepness of the mountain of Purgatory, at the foot of which he and Virgil halt, ere a troop of spirits show them the easiest ascent.

But we have no need to go to the *Divina Commedia* to prove the antiquity of Lerici. Without going back as far as Hercules, who, according to an ancient legend, was its founder, it is evident that Lerici and its picturesque castle, perched on a little headland, at whose base the village nestles, were of importance long before Dante's day. Old though the present castle is—and it was founded by the Genoese some time between 1174 and 1241—it was preceded by a still older one, owned by the Malaspinas. Counting for much in the balance as a military position, it was much coveted, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, by the rival powers of Genoa and Pisa. Between 1241 and 1256 it was in the hands of the Pisans, who considerably strengthened the work of their predecessors. But they were not content with this victory alone: they insulted the Genoese and their other enemies, the people of Portovenere and Lucca, by carving the following lines between two of the towers :—



*Lerici and its Castle*



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Scopa boca al Zenoese  
Crepacuore al Portovenere  
Strappa borsello al Lucchese—

an inscription which, perhaps, would have been hardly noteworthy but for the fact that it was the first one in the common tongue to be inscribed on marble. The Genoese, however, had their revenge ; they recaptured the castle, considerably added to it, and, later, made the Pisans pay dearly for their insolence. From 1477 to 1562 it was in the possession of the *Officio di San Giorgio*.<sup>1</sup>

But these historical memories were, in my case, at any rate, a little overshadowed by other recollections. Whilst lending an ear to the tale which was spun from my friend's well-stored mind, and admiring the charming picture formed by the castle, the tall, harmoniously coloured houses stretched along the quays, and the reflections of the sailing boats in the still waters of the harbour, I could not forget that, at but a short distance away, on the other side of the little bay which the castles of Lerici and San Terenzo guarded so well in former days, was an attraction which to an Englishman made the strongest of appeals. Who, indeed, could fail to be

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 217-220.

drawn towards the Casa Magni and to be moved by the story of the last days of Shelley? What story, in the whole range of modern literature, is more touching or more dramatic?

The Casa Magni, which the inhabitants of San Terenzo now call the Villa Maccarani, is one of the first houses to which you come on walking along the coast from Lerici. With the exception of one or two unimportant architectural details, and a few changes which time has wrought in its surroundings,<sup>1</sup> the Casa Magni bears the same appearance to-day as on that 1st of May, 1822, when Mary Shelley, the poet, and their friends took

<sup>1</sup> Comparison between a modern photograph of the house and Captain D. Roberts' sketch, published in E. J. Trelawny's *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* (Edward Moxon, 1858) make the architectural changes clear. As to its changed surroundings, my authority is Mantegazza, who, in his description of the original appearance of the building, refers to it as "une casa antica, rozza, coi piedi nel mare e colle spalle difese da un monte sempre verde di pini e di lecci"—"a rude and ancient house, with its feet in the sea and its back defended by a hill, which was ever green with pines and oaks." This well-known Italian writer, who did much towards making Shelley's greatness known to his countrymen, was, I understand, the one who composed the inscription on the white marble tablet which is fixed above the entrance to the Casa Magni—an inscription which speaks of the portico being formerly within "the ancient shade of a green oak."

possession of it. The green oak which shaded its portico has disappeared and, through the making of the coast road, its base is no longer precipitous to the sea. But its broad terrace or verandah, with five arches in front and one at each end—a terrace running the whole length of the house—is the same as when Trelawny and Williams chose it as a summer residence for the Shelleys. The windows of Mary's and Shelley's rooms looked out, and still look out, upon this terrace, on to which, says Professor Dowden in his *Life of Shelley*, "an occupant of the dining-hall could step out and in a moment stand in the presence of a landscape and sea view of unimaginable loveliness." The Casa Magni then consisted of a ground floor and one storey. "Two staircases, one public, the other intended for a private staircase, led to the large dining-hall, off which to the rear was Mrs. Williams's bedroom; while the seaward rooms, occupied by Mary and Shelley, faced each other on opposite sides of the central hall."<sup>1</sup> Judging by Trelawny's account of his visit to the house after the tragedy, it can have been anything but a prepossessing residence when the tenants took possession. "I arrived early at Lerici,"

<sup>1</sup> Dowden, *loc. cit.*

he says, " and determined to sleep there, and finish my journey to Genoa on the following day. In the evening I walked to the Villa Magni. . . I walked in. Shelley's shattered skiff . . . was still there : in that little flat-bottomed boat he had written many beautiful things :—

' Our boat is asleep on Serchio's stream,  
The sails are furled like thoughts in a dream . . . '

And here it was, sleeping still on the mud floor, with its mast and oars broken. I mounted the stairs, or rather ladder, into the dining-room they had lived in. . . . As I surveyed its splashy-walls, broken floor, cracked ceiling, and poverty-struck appearance, while I noted the loneliness of the situation, and remembered the fury of the waves that in blowing weather lashed its walls, I did not marvel at Mrs. Shelley's and Mrs. Williams's groans on first entering it, nor that it had required all Ned Williams's persuasive powers to induce them to stop there. We men had only looked at the sea and scenery, and would have been satisfied with a tent. But women look to a house as their empire. Ladies without a drawing-room are like pictures without frames or birds without feathers ; knowing



this, they set to work with a will, and transformed it into a very pleasant abode.”<sup>1</sup> In spite, however, of Mary Shelley’s efforts to make the place homely, her mind was far from being at ease. “My nerves were wound up to the utmost irritation, and the sense of misfortune hung over my spirits,” she wrote to Mrs. Gisborne. “No words can tell you how I hated our house and the country about it. Shelley reproached me with this. His health was good, and the place was quite after his own heart. What could I answer? That the people were wild and hateful; that though the country was beautiful, yet I liked a more countrified place, and that there was great difficulty in living; that all our Tuscans would leave us, and that the very jargon of these Genoese was disgusting.” Shelley’s enthusiasm for the divine bay of Spezzia, where he spent his time “reading Spanish dramas, and sailing, and listening to the most enchanting music,”<sup>2</sup> blinded his eyes to the manifest defects of the Casa Magni. Yet he himself was not unaffected at times by the sense of tragedy which seemed to hover over the house from the very

<sup>1</sup> Trelawny, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Horatio Smith, dated Lerici, June 29, 1822.

first. Only a few days after entering into occupation, the poet, seizing Williams by the arm, had a vision of a naked child (Allegra, the daughter of Claire Clairmont) rising from the sea and clapping its hands. In the midst of his boyish delight at the newly-acquired sailing-boat, the *Don Juan*, which, when tried in the bay, passed the smaller craft "as a comet might pass the dullest planet of the heavens,"<sup>1</sup> thoughts of death and the means of avoiding "needless suffering" were often uppermost in his mind. He wrote to Trelawny asking him to have the "great kindness" to procure a small quantity of prussic acid, adding, "I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest."<sup>2</sup> Mary's illness at last resulted in Shelley's delicate nerves being completely shattered, so that his sleep was troubled by the most horrible visions—the invasion of the Casa Magni by the sea, the fall of the house, the occupants' lacerated bodies, and a vision of himself strangling his beloved one.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Trelawny, dated Lerici, May 16, 1822.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Lerici, dated June 18, 1822.

As we stood, with the sound of the sea in our ears, and read the inscription<sup>1</sup> on the marble tablet above the entrance to the Casa Magni, relating how "in July, 1822, Mary Godwin and Jane Williams had waited with tearful anxiety for Percy Bysshe Shelley, who, whilst sailing from Leghorn in his frail boat, had been borne to the silence of the Elysian islands," how vividly every detail of the tragedy in which that house had played its part came home to us! With the aid of Trelawny's *Recollections*, and the fuller, more accurate, information which, since the publication of that work, has been brought to light by Guido Biagi,<sup>2</sup> and other searchers,<sup>3</sup> the picture of the poet's life at San Terenzo was complete in every particular. We could imagine we were witnesses of Shelley's and Williams's enthusiasm on the arrival of the

<sup>1</sup> It runs as follows, and a little to the right was suspended a wreath of laurels: "Da questo portico in cui si abbateva l'antica ombra di un leccio, il luglio del MDCCXXII Mary Godwin e Jane Williams attesero con lagrimante ansia PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY che da Livorno su fragil legno veleggiando era approdato per improvvisa fortuna ai silenzi di de le isole elisei. O benedette spiagge, ove l'amore, la liberta, i sogni non hanno catene!"

<sup>2</sup> *Gli ultimi Giorni di P. B. Shelley.* G. Cioelli, Florence, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> *La Spezzia—à P. B. Shelley.* Off. Tip. "La Sociale," Spezzia.

*Don Juan*; we could see them testing her capabilities, and the poet taking his first lessons in seamanship. The two friends "were hardly ever out of her, and talked of the Mediterranean as a lake too confined and tranquil to exhibit her sea-going excellence. They longed to be on the broad Atlantic, scudding under bare poles in a heavy sou'wester, with plenty of sea room."<sup>1</sup> There they were, practising in front of the house, whilst Mary and Mrs. Williams looked on from their terrace. The poet, with his beloved *Plato* in his hand, was trying to read and steer at the same time; and as the boat, in consequence, became unmanageable, Williams was rating him for his neglect and inattention to orders.<sup>2</sup> A few days having elapsed, Shelley had become more skilful. They ventured, now, to take the *Don Juan* towards the point on which stands the Castle of Lerici. Becoming still bolder, they waved a farewell to their wives and sailed away to the Punta del Corvo, or to the Isle of Palmaria and Portovenere, or to Spezzia, which was then a place of little importance. And thus did Shelley, under

<sup>1</sup> Trelawny, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

Williams's guidance, serve his apprenticeship to the element which was so soon to claim him as its own.

It was not without warning that Shelley, on that stormy 8th of July, when he and Williams and a sailor boy set sail from Leghorn in answer to a letter from Mrs. Shelley, recalling them to the Casa Magni, went to his death. Many a time, as an old priest of San Terenzo, named De Marchis, related to Mantegazza, did the sailors of the district warn the poet not to venture out in the *Don Juan* when the Mediterranean was in a treacherous mood.<sup>1</sup> But, in the same spirit which prompted him never to learn to swim, he took no heed of advice. Surely no one was ever more indifferent to death than he; no man more fearless. It is possible that even up to his last moment he was wholly careless as to his perilous position. For was not a copy of Keats's *Hyperion*, "doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading had hastily thrust it aside," found in his breast pocket when Trelawny discovered the poet's mutilated remains near Viareggio?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> La Spezzia, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Trelawny, by the by, is not very clear in his indications as to the place where Shelley's body was burnt, and there is every reason to believe that, in his description of the ceremony,

I know not the history of the Casa Magni immediately after the disaster. But if Trelawny's story of its deserted state be correct—and he speaks of the ground-floor having neither door nor window—it must then have fallen upon evil days. Later, when Shelley's genius began to be more fully realised, and the house became a place of pilgrimage, a change for the better took place. From 1845 to 1878 it was occupied by Colonel Cross, and in 1855 repairs were undertaken. The road, which now prevents the sea from dashing, as in former days, against its verandah, was constructed in 1888. On the occasion of our visit in 1910 the Casa Magni gave us the impression of being in a neglected condition. But not long did it remain so, for on January 4th, 1911, it came into the possession of a lover of letters, Signor Alberto Civita, of Florence, who immediately saw to the necessary repairs being done. He has faithfully maintained, as he informs me, the decorative lines of the façade and the large he sacrificed truth for the sake of dramatic effect. Guido Biagi (*loc. cit.*) has succeeded, after a searching inquiry, in settling this disputed point in literary history. He proves that the poet's remains were cremated on that part of the shore which lies between the Vittorio Emanuele naval hospital and the Pineta, or pine-wood, and at a spot about two hundred and fifty yards from the sea.

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terrace, as well as the disposition of the rooms on the first floor—those occupied by the poet—consequently nothing has been altered in the general aspect of this historic house.

Apart from a certain feeling of sadness which cannot fail to result from a visit to the Casa Magni and the recollection of Shelley's pathetic story, San Terenzo remains fixed in my mind as a place of melancholy. For it was there that I parted from my friend. We had travelled so long together along the highways and by-ways of Liguria, and had spent so many joyous hours in each other's company, that the idea of the inevitable parting never really came home to us until the day of that literary pilgrimage. At last, however, the separation had to be faced ; it was imperative that the Antiquary should return to his curiosity shop at San Remo. We said farewell on the little landing-stage at San Terenzo, where my good friend took the steamer back to Spezzia and the railway. Not until the boat was well out of sight did I turn to go. Then it was that I fully realised the break had come and with

what little heart it had left me to continue journeying alone into Tuscany : to Pisa and to Leghorn, where Byron, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt sojourned, and to that spot at Viareggio where, with some of the accompaniments, if not the rites, of ancient Greece, the remains of the poet were cremated.



*Shelley's House at San Terenzo*





*Pergola and ornamental basin near Bordighera*

## APPENDIX

### NOTES ON THE BOTANY OF LIGURIA

NEITHER the Antiquary nor myself are—in the strict sense of the word—botanists, but we are not without an eye for the beauties of the flowers of the field, and the instinct or intelligence to discriminate between what is patent and what is curious in plant life. It would, therefore, have been strange had we resisted the temptation to collect, by the wayside, specimens of the flora of Liguria. These, when we could not identify them by the aid of the works of Mr. Clarence Bicknell, of Bordighera, I periodically sent to England to my Father, Dr. F. Arnold Lees, F.L.S., the author of *The Flora of West Yorkshire* and other botanical works. The many letters which we received in acknowledgment (letters often enthusiastic and clearly denoting that our 150 “finds” had given the intensest joy) have suggested to me the advisability of setting down the following notes on the principal species interesting to the non-botanist or noteworthy for ecological reasons. Those

who follow in our footsteps on the Italian Riviera will, I trust, derive some pleasure and not a little knowledge of Nature by perusing this partial *Flora Ligurica*, which is arranged in its natural order, beginning with the spring Anemones, and ending with the Horsetails, the most ancient type of existing vegetation.

The Star Anemone (*Anemone stellata*, Lamk.), with its magenta or puce, and occasionally white blossom, is rare in Liguria, and only among the Canes (*Arundo donax*) westwardly at Bordighera and San Remo. But it becomes commoner eastwardly, and is fairly plentiful at the top of the Righi funicular at Genoa, where our specimen was gathered.

*Helleborus foetidus*, L.—the Foetid Hellebore, not the Classic one—was also found above Genoa, high in the hills, at Torriglia, in the month of March. Its fan-fingered leaves and green drooping flowers, tipped with maroon red, make it a notable herb in the thickets and torrent beds throughout Liguria.

*Fumaria capreolata*, L., resembling a cloud of smoke, was discovered on the road leading from Spezzia to Portovenere, in May. It is a herb of singular aspect—not a rare one, but always noticed by the most perfunctory of wayfarers.

*Cochlearia saxatilis*, R.Br., a rare Alpine plant like a hoary Alyssum, with silver seed-pouches—Honesty in diminutive,—and with neat white flower-spikes, was found in the morainic torrent bed at Albenga in October. According to Mr. Bicknell's *Flora of Bordighera*, it is very rare on the highest rocks of Monte Toraggio. In the station where our specimen was collected it was a "wash-down," brought as seed, or torn rootstock from its natural home on the higher mountain scarps, but it is of interest as emphasising one of the ways of adventitious dispersal of plants and the fact that change to a mild climate from a rigorous one is not inimical to an Alpine. It would be a bad thing for the lowlanders' "rock garden" if it were. "High Life" in plants is maugre rigour in air and connotes the select—less competition with the mob, more burly yet more tender, a paradox in herb life!

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*Silene quinquevulnera*, L., grows in certain hot sandy places at Spezzia. Legend connects the five blood-like stigmata on the petals (one on each) of this common weedling with the five wounds of the Crucifixion.

*Lychnis Flos-cuculi*, L., the Cuckoo-flower, or Ragged Robin, likewise came from the Spezzia district—a marshy place east of the town known as *gli Stagnoni*.

In the neighbourhood of Albenga both *Reseda Phyteuma*, L., and *Reseda saxatilis*, Pourr., were gathered. "The former," writes my Father, "is perhaps the origin (with another Spanish species) of the sweet-smelling Mignonette of gardens. Like wheat, the wild plant is said to be unknown, but as the species of the family 'cross,' and *Reseda Phyteuma* has occasionally a slight perfume, when grown on rich soil or upon heaps of *pozzuoli* (sea-wrack) on the littoral, that most ozonic or sea-breezy of flower-scents may quite understandably have so initiated. Horticulturists have had in the past too much of careless unreason in their experiments to help us to the How and Why."

*Saponaria ocymoides*, L., a Soapwort, grows in many of the torrent beds of Liguria.

*Gypsophila repens*, L., the lime-loving White Pink, was found in several districts.

*Tunica saxifraga*, Scop., the Stone-breaking Pink, was discovered to have taken firm hold in the stony torrent bed at Albenga. It makes a moss-leaf cushion from which spring dozens of branching miniature trees bearing neat full purple pink star bloom. The roots are disproportionately stout, strong and long, enabling the plant to retain its hold on the most disturbed coigns of vantage, and by the insinuation of its wire roots into every niche or crack of the rock succeeds, in time, and with the aid of water, in fissuring and cleaving it.

*Epilobium rosmarinifolium*, Haenke, Rosemary-leaved Willowherb, was in the same torrent bed at Albenga. This is another pretty wandy purple-flowered "wash down" from the sub-alpine slopes of talus and scree in the mountains. It is a moraine lover.

*Dianthus furcatus*, Balbis (*D. tener*, Ard.) is a third

"wash down" of the Albenga district. It is a rather rare forked-stem Pink.

*Dianthus Seguieri*, Chaix, the Cluster Pink and a near relative of our Sweet William, was also found.

All these, as most of the Pink tribe, are mountaineers by breeding, liking best barren, rough ground.

*Cistus salvifolius*, L., the Sageleaved Gum Rockrose, grows at Genoa and on gravelly banks at Spezzia. This was the only one of the three species which occur in Liguria which we had the opportunity of gathering.

Only the rosy, larger yellow flowered and typical forms of *Helianthemum vulgare*, the herbaceous Rockrose, were gathered, the white-flowered and silky-leaved species (*polifolium* and *italicum*) not being seen.

Of the *Polygala* order of the *Laitier* or *Litania* Milkworts there are five in Liguria. Two were found over and over again: the pink-flowered *Polygala rosea*, Gren et Godron, and the hirsute *P. pubescens*, Burnat, with blue flowers. The intensely blue-bloomed *P. vulgaris*, L. was also seen.

One Geranium only, the lime-rock or sea-sand loving (because of the comminuted shell lime in the sand) *Geranium sanguineum*, with inch-across crimson flowers, was found.

At Torriglia, in the mountains above Genoa, the Stork's-bill, *Erodium cicutarium*, L'Herit, was found at 2,000 feet. Mr. Bicknell gives 1,500 metres as its upward limit.

Naturalised all along the Riviera—proof of its amenity of climate—the three-leaved Sorrel-Shamrock, *Oxalis cernua* or *libyca*, with fine yellow flowers, was noted from San Remo eastwardly. It is a native of South Africa and there flowers in the winter of the Tropics (July), but in Liguria from March to May, being "a remarkable instance of a plant having undergone a complete change of season of blooming" (Henslow). In a way, however, *Oxalis cernua* is one of the Sensitive plants, and the March to May calenture of the Riviera is the Tropic winter a little before its time. Needing a certain (not well known) temperature for the maturation of its reproductive elements (not too hot clearly, as clearly not below 45° F. its minimum

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growing point) it blooms simply at the right season, disregarding the arbitrary Kalendaric divisions. It keeps to its individual need-and-seed time, just as does the well-known pink-flowered Almond of Persia, which, planted in our English park-lands, *will* insist on blossoming in March (its kalend in the East), even though snow is on the ground.

*Tribulus terrestris*, L., the Caltrops, so called because of its spiky horns of fruit of the Bean-caper order, and the Caper plant (*Capparis spinosa*), not indigenous but established as well as cultivated, were both among the species gathered; whilst at Vernazza, near Spezzia, the curious disk-like leaved, turreted-flowered *Umbilicus pendulinus*, De Cand., adorned walls with its fleshy rosettes and spires.

The Rose order was poorly represented in our consignments. Among those sent were three Cinquefoils, *Potentilla verna*, *P. argentea* and *P. erecta*, with the small-flowered Barren Strawberry, *P. micrantha*, Ram., from Torriglia, at 2,000 feet elevation.

But the great Pea flower tribe, the legumes, were well illustrated. The Laburnum in one form, the upright *Cytisus sessilifolius*, was seen near San Remo, the common 'Gold-Rain' in many places; with, near Spezzia, the Italian form of the Plantagenet—*Genista pilosa*, var *diffusa*, Willd., peculiar in having triangular twigs like a Sedge and leaves with a (protective?) cartilaginous border.

The trefoils—our Clovers—were represented by the silky hare's-footed *T. arvense* (Albenga); the pinky *T. incarnatum*, *T. stellatum* and the hop-clover *T. agrarium*. The Lotus pea flower was represented by *L. decumbens*, Poiret, and our English-turf *L. corniculatus*. The two most singular plants of this tribe gathered were the lens-fruited Medick, *M. orbicularis*, All., the circular, flat, half-inch pods being made up of a three to five turned spiral lying curled flat one turn above another, with a green membranous border spineless but veined over with net-like ridges, similar to those on the back of an aged hand; and the Blue Pitch Clover, "Forfoglia," *in vulgo italiano*. The former was

gathered on the heights at Sarzana ; the latter at Portovenere, near Spezzia. Blue Pitch Clover has blue-violet heads of bloom on long stalks surpassing the stalked tri-foil ; its science name is *Psoralea bituminosa*, so called by Linnæus because the odour exhaled when the plant is bruised strongly suggests a mixture of pitch and liquorice. Whether it is eaten or refused by sheep or goats one would like to know, but, unaware of its rustic Italian name at the time of gathering, inquiry was not made. Mr. Bicknell says nothing on the subject in his *Flora of Bordighera*, although he does mention the fact of bruise-smell in his earlier and finely illustrated *Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Riviera and Neighbouring Mountains*.<sup>1</sup>

Near Spezzia, too, we got the small-flowered Indian Melilot, well naturalised now in the west of Europe, and even in England by roadsides holding its own. This is one of the species which corroborates the fact of slow but sure change of flora in almost every area ; as one species naturally dies out, some other, from some "far Cathay" of plant-land, comes, by favour of merchandise or natural aeroplane of seed, and takes its place.

Of the tare and "fitch" families two only were observed and gathered, probably because cultivated fields were not much trespassed upon by us. These two were the Fodder Vetch, *V. sativa*, and the *Cicerchia porporino*, or *Mouchi* of the Italian (Linnæus' *Lathyrus Clymenum*)—the Honeysuckle Vetchling.

The spring-blooming *Orobus niger*, L., was also gathered, near Pigna, and is interesting because (though turning from green to a dull black in drying) it grows in our own classic mountain glen, the Pass of Killiecrankie.

The Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*), poorest of edibles perhaps, but loveliest of fruit forms, was, of course, observed and admired here and there on rocky banks and along the torrents, but it was not practicable to dessicate specimens for the herbarium. It is almost certainly from a hotter latitude and not indigenous even on this favoured littoral ; and the same, but with less emphasis, may be said of the

<sup>1</sup> Trübner & Co., 1885.

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classic and decorative Oleander, most distinctive of green growths as regard form and flower,—a Rose offering on an Olive branch!

Continuing our enumeration of some of the salient features of the vegetation of Liguria—apart from the arborescent and evergreen class which, from Privet, “Rovere,” pubescent Oak, flowering Manna Ash, Bruyere or Tree Heath to Strawberry Tree, Chestnut, Ilex oak, “Büss” or Box, Hornbeam oak (*Ostrya*), Alder, various Pines, the Cedar Juniper, the White Beam tree, and the noble *Laurus* or Sweet Bay, “Lauribaga” in popular speech, Wayfaring-tree, tree Woodbine, red-berried Elder (*Sambucus racemosa*) Sloe, Cherry, Hawthorn, and the Amelanchier pear, constitute in varying degrees the woodland and thickets from the mountains to the headlands of the seaboard—some special singularity led to the gathering of the wing-stemmed purple Loosestrife, in a damp place near Spezzia—*Lythrum Graefferi* of Tenore, the Naples’ systematist, cousin-german in plants to Shakespeare’s “Long Purples of the Date.”

*Campanula macrorrhiza*, Gay, a lovely serrate-heart-leaved plant with thick white woody roots and large open bell-bloom with a long protruding clapper-like style, seems, along with *C. isophylla* (Moretti), special to the Riviera di Ponente. It grows under, and hanging from rocks on the hills above Albenga; and Mr. Bicknell says “more abundantly inland to a distance of five miles behind Finalmarina, still in bloom at Christmas.”

From the same district came the *Campanula Sabatia*, De Notaris, another Harebell, recalling the Bluebell of Scotland, but with drooping flower bud, incurved sepals, and differing habit. It is represented by Fig. B, Plate 36, of Mr. Bicknell’s *Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Riviera*.

One of the three Heathers attracted notice and was gathered because of its departure from heathery ways in a singular direction. The tip of the needle-leaved shoots develop an abortive globular tip on which, through arrest of stem-growth, broad boat-shaped hair-clothed leaves

crowd, one laid closely over another. This is *Erica scoparia*, the Besom-heath in the vulgar.

On stony banks, brushwood, in the Finalborgo area, we gathered the singular European Plumbago, so called because of its clear prussian-blue or dark lead-coloured tube flowers. It is a cousin-german of the *P. Capensis* of English green-houses, held in such firm estimation by reason of its pale turquoise to lavender flowers born in bottlebrush spikes, each stalked flower springing from a sundew-gland-like calix.

Near Albenga the Dyers' Woodruffe (*Asperula tinctoria*) was gathered. The roots are used to dye wool a red colour. *Asp. arvensis* was likewise noted.

Both Scabious were found—*S. maritima* and *S. candicans* ; as well as the Red Beadstraw, *Galium rubrum*.

Of the great order of Asters (compositæ, as called by botanists, from their many flowers gathered into one head, the central ones usually yellow, the outer rows white, though there are many exceptions, a few, like the Chicory, being even bright blue) only a few were gathered for preservation. Mostly coarse and bulky, these plants do not lend themselves conveniently to pressing and drying by those who are upon the road. The principal ones were the yellow Shore Daisy, *Chrysanthemum Myconis*, Marguerite-like but all yellow ; the field Wormwood *Artemisia campestris*, and, at Torriglia, in the torrent bed, the familiar British Coltsfoot, and rhubarb-leaved Butter-bur, which has, since the landscape painter first set up his easel on a river's bank, made a fine, foil foreground for more pictures than any other single thing of green life. The yellow scaled, narrow-leaved Everlasting, *Helichrysum Stoechas*, also was noted on calcareous rocks at Albenga ; but the Edelweiss, called *Stella d'Italia*, which, though associated mostly with Swiss legends, is "extremely abundant, in masses, on the higher slopes of the Maritime Alps" (Bicknell), was not attained to under the special circumstances of our peregrination.

The next floral notable, gathered oftener than once between Albenga and Genoa, is the Blue Globe Daisy, in



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connection with which there are two economic and ecologic facts of interest. The bush *Globularia* has leaves which are senna-like and mildly aperient and much used to adulterate those of the well-known "Black draught" of the "liverish." The smaller form, *vulgaris*, is very common in gravelly, grassy places, spangling the ground from November to May with its blue "pompom" asterine capitula. But both are specially adapted for fertilization by butterflies (Müller) and the species (three in all) are the only instances in the Germanic and Italian-Swiss floras "of a blue colour having been produced by the selective agency of Lepidoptera."

Travelling now a good way on the avenues of botanic classification, the curious leafless Broomrape—"minor" or "major" 'tis hard to say with such a mummy as our example of the Orobanche family became—was collected on marshy, grassy ground outside Spezzia.

The Snapdragon order yielded the *Moth Mullein*, the Ivy-leaf Toadflax, and, in turf on arid hills, the pretty and distinctive *Odontites lutea*, yellow awl-leaved Eyebright; whilst the Genoa neighbourhood in spring gave us Barrelier's Veronica, True Image, with flower "eyes" of pale blue, and Torriglia, at some 2,000 feet, the Comb Eyebright, *Euphrasia pectinata*, Tenore, and Jordan's *majalis*.

In sandy, grassy places near Spezzia the two grass-root parasites, the Great Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus major*) and the gland-sticky *Trixago viscosa*, alike abundant in colonies on the littoral in the Riviera and the sand dunes of Lancashire and Cornwall, were gathered.

The White Henbane, *Hyoscyamus albus*, was found on the sands of pathetic, deserted Bussana Vecchia. It is a plant of no great beauty, but has a curiously-lidded box fruit. In botanic parlance the seed receptacle is a *buxus*; it, and the black Nightshade of the same Sodomean order being called—*vulgo*—"Morella."

Of the Convolvulus tribe, two only were gathered: the Cantabrian and the mallow-leaved *C. altheoides*, L. They have pretty frail trumpet blooms, but are ephemeral like other Morning Glorys.

At San Remo the bee-beloved Borage, with its harsh, repellent leaves and invitingly-open eye-blooms, was in evidence ; whilst its relation, the bulbose Comfrey (*Symphytum*), attracted one's notice at Nervi, and, deepest of violet-eyed flowers, the Stoneseed (*Lithospermum purpureo-cæruleum*) was noted in bushy places and under the olives in many of the more calcareous mountain spurs and fangs which form the successive headlands of the littoral. This plant has a curious and protective trick at its command. It grows in tufts, in shade or on open banks, the stems which flower successfully leaving behind them a polished porcelain nut ready to be jerked off into some adjacent niche where it may germinate and renew its life ; while those other leafy stems—the majority—which cannot, for lack of time, attain to blossom, lengthen out and, bending over until their tips touch earth, at once take root there, literally striding away two feet or more to establish a nidus of independent life. This curious progression, to the end of preservation of existence, is well-nigh unique among European herbs, and yet was never adequately described until Dr. Frederic N. Williams (of Brentford) reached its class in his "Prodrromus" of the British Flora, a work not yet completed.

The odoriferous species of the Mint order, herbs or shrubs, of Liguria are best described as legion. From English Wild Thyme to other Thymes, many gatherings were made to please eye and nose. Bee-worshipped and antiseptic, their outlines and hues are as varied as their virtues ; without undue assertiveness as individuals, though strikingly pretty in some cases, on the dry, bushy hill-sides of Liguria, "bee-haunted" as ever our own Furness fells, their precision of qualities in mass dominates the scene. There is the fruticose *Calamint*, holding up, as with fingers, little candles of its own on the hillside of Toirano, below the shrine of St. Lucia. There is the even more rococo *Lavandula staechas*, Spike Lavender, with tongues of violet hanging from between the toothed lips of its flower-mouth, hoary gray of foliage sweetening the air on the marble brows of Spezzia. Two Herb Bugles (*reptans* and *Iva*) blow, one

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or the other from April into late October, in suitable sites on the ground they love ; and the maculated Dead Nettle, with a pale yellow stripe down every heart-shaped leaf (as though the sap-green had run short) occurs, more rarely, on damp banks at Calizzano, Torriglia, etc.<sup>1</sup>

*Satureja montana*, the shrubby Savory, makes sweet even the torrent beds, wherein it blooms on its wiry wands into late October.

And of Sage plants the noble *Salvia pratensis* spires in the purple and green of its helmet-capped blossom from out a neat tuft of hearty leaves in the grassy places it affects. The pink-lipped *Salvia canariensis* even, on the Promenade at Sestri Levante, hung out one or two late blossoms well into December.

Two Hemp Nettles, *Stachys recta* and *maritima*, not so beneficently aromatic as the rest, occurred at Spezzia and Albenga.

Of the Asclepiadeae—Milkweed—which have their greatest development and variation in the western hemisphere, only one, and that not truly native, *Periploca graeca*, was observed on the public promenade at Nervi.

Of the decorative and distinctive herb Spurges, well developed (there are over 30 different growths) along the Riviera and Ligurian coast, the tree form, the only European one growing to any size, was observed on barren slopes from Finalmarina eastward, and the more familiar (in English borders) Welcome Husband Home in many places throughout the bee-land.

Near Spezzia we also gathered the *Erba lazza* or *Cometa* (Ital. vulgo), a Spurge with softly hairy testicle-like fruit, and horned purple-red glands ringing the green ruffed blossom ; a singular plant in physiognomy, nodding modestly in its youth, proudly displaying its umbrella-rib flower-stalks in its maturity, inviting the worship of many

<sup>1</sup> The green (*chlorophyll*) of leaves is developed under the invisible wand of Sunlight, *Palinurus* the harlequin of the world's stage ; and this " dead-nettle " being partial to shade one may, not too fancifully, guess that the lack-green line bordering each leaf's sap artery is, broadly speaking, due to there not being enough passes of the magic wand to affect all the surface !

sorts of winged life. The flax-leaved *Daphne Gnidium* also attracted notice in Eastern Liguria; and by the Nervia bridge, at Dolceacqua, and elsewhere near Sestri, the spine-leaved blue-bloom-berried Juniper with needles twice as long as the berry when ripe, which takes two years to accomplish.

At Nervi, by the old mule-paths, was noticed a Nettle, new to English eyes, with very thin long-stalked leaves, and inflorescence differing with the sex: the male a curved spike, on a winged stalk, and the female, a short-stalked agglomeration at a lower level. It is sparsely supplied with very venomous hairs.

With the Juniper we exhaust one great class of plants and approach—with reverential care, lest we misread or inread too much—that highly specialised group of Endogens of which the Orchids, Lilies, and Grasses are grand types.

At Granarolo, above Genoa, about mid-April, we made our first acquaintance with the insect, the fly imitating Ophrys family, renewing it, with heightened amazement, at Spezzia in May-time, the midsummer madness of Orchis, Ophrys, and Serapias. Eleven species riot in the grassy turf of a hill-side overlooking "La Superba": ivory white, cream yellow, old rose, fawn, blue-gray, velvety brown, red plush, green-veined pink and butterfly-winged purple, all find some living green-thing of a flower to proudly or shyly wear their colours in livery of garb that wondrously closely represents a humble bee, a lady's mirror mounted on black-purple plush like a coat of arms, a dark-bodied blue-winged fly, a horse-fly, a saw fly, a diadem'd spider, a livid leering satyr with tongue out, a chain-hanging malefactor, legs splayed and arms dropped, or a striped lizard suspended by its tail!

The *Ophrys Bertolonii*, of Morette, is the Bee Orch with glazed shield on the back of the bumble's body; the *Serapias lingua* (commonest near Spezzia) and the *Cordigera* with a third, a crossed intermediate, are the Iris-like Orchids of more or less satyr and Silenus-like pose. The *Serapias cordigera*, with its three-lobed tongue, purple below, paler and browner towards its tip, in especial,

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cosmically harmonises—every hue and curve beautifully ordered and synchronising through the successive stages of its flower-time.

*Orchis papilionacea*, the Butterfly Orch, has a simple conscious flaunt as of a pretty rustic about it, and the commoner *O. coriophora*, with a variable sickly odour, is almost the only Orchis with a distinctive rustic name—from its odour of bugs, it is the *Cimiciattola* of the Italian; whilst the tall, long loose-spray, deep violet blossomed *Orchis laxiflora* (common near Spezzia) is simply the *Orch' di prato*—of the fields.

Another, *O. Morio*, var. *picta*, is very pretty, spurred, with waved purple lip and wings of delicate rose with green veins accentuating their slightness and transparency.

Yet another simulator is the *O. simia*, the Monkey Orchis, of which but one was gathered; and, still one more, the *Ophrys scolopax*, of Cavanilles, the broad-veined toothed lip of which seems to have a miniature long-billed Woodcock perched on the rim of the flower's throat, this effigy being nor more nor less than the beak of the hood or helmet which conceals the pollen masses and guards them from wet. Another *Ophrys*, the *O. Nicaeensis*, Barla, a variety of the Spider Orch, has a round, notched lip of brown velvet impressed with crossing lines and dots of yellowish white, similar to the markings of the Shrubbery Spider (*Diadema*), which weaves such a wonderful geometrical web from leaf to leaf on our Portugal Laurel bushes in the London parks.

Others—not to be defined here—are the variety *Monstrosa*—a cross between the Green-winged Orchis and *O. papilionacea*; *O. tridentata*, Scop.; the sword-leaved *Cephalanthera ensifolia*; the pink hanging-man Orch *Aceras longibracteata*; the clove-scented *Gymnadenia conopsea*; and the other *O. Fragrans* which has points about it that suggests hybridity, but with what particular species it polygamates is not clear.

This ends the tale of these Orchs, the tribal features of which are refinements and freakish adaptations far beyond what obtains in any other less vegetised (one cannot say civilised) races.

The Lilies, including the Garlics, present fewer difficulties and so, perhaps, less interest to students. The most beautiful and possibly biggest of all the Rivieran flowers is amongst them, though not to be lightly gathered and dried by reason of its proportions. This is the Amaryllid, by name *Pancreatium maritimum*, a lovely white, fringed cup Lily, found on the sands of the shore (a shell idealised in a flower) in many a spot between Cannes on the west to beyond Albenga and Savona eastwardly. It flowers July to October from a big sand-buried bulb, with glaucous daffodil leaf blades, and an umbel of truly magnificent chalices of blossom, with six stalked golden stamens growing from each second dent of the twelve toothed crown of living alabaster.

Of the Arums, two were gathered—the Friar's Cowl (*Arisarum vulgare*) of quaint rococo outline, its leaf a compromise between a blunt arrow-head flint and a mule's calkin (it was got in October amidst the herbage of rocky places), and the Italian Lords-and-Ladies, vulgo *Phallus monachi*, with great diverging lobed arrow-shaped leaves, the nerves of which are margined with white (through absence of chlorophyll), got at Nervi in April, the immense white spathe or sheath enclosing the female organs and the male purple pollen-club at once revealing its kinship with the great white cornucopia of the Lily of the Nile.

At Albenga the asperous *Smilax*—Wild Sarsaparilla—attracts attention not only by its needle-fanged leaves, which are a cross between heart and pike-head in shape, wire stemmed, but by its tendrils climbing most ornamentally over hedge vegetation.

The bicoloured (crown and ruff two shades of yellow) *Narcissus Tazetta* was gathered above Genoa.

In sandy fields and in corn near Spezzia the beautiful hyacinth (*Bellevalia comosa*, Kunth) arrays its habitats in crowned spires of vividest violet, both individually and *en masse*, like the red Poppy, a glory for the eye while its loveliness lasts.

At Sestri Levante and again (in fruit) at Pegli, the singular leafy Tongue-Bloom, *Ruscus hypoglossus* ("very rare in the Arma valley, Ceriana," says Mr. Bicknell) cried out for

notice. The two-inch acute ovate "leaves" are but expansions of the stem, as is shown by leaves bearing first a flower and then a berry fruit, right in the central line of the upper side of the leathery, laurelline blade. The real "leaf" is minimised to an awl-like scale below.

The hollow-stemmed Asphodel (*A. fistulosus*)—one of the classic blooms of "the glory that was Greece"—outstretched its candelabra of six rayed white stars by the sides of the mule-paths at Nervi, near Genoa, and elsewhere. Its spires possess a prim pale charm all their own:—the vestal taper flames of the *fallentis semita vitae* that Horace commemorates.

At Torriglia, in the Appennine foot hills (600-700 metres) the Crocuses, (*C. vernus* and *versicolor*), white, purple, or violet striped, are a gay feature of March and April, just after the melting of the snow sets free their enciente corms—not a true bulb but a swollen rotund root-stock.

Only one Iris, or Fleur-de-Luce proper, was preserved, the Yellow Flag of English water-meads (*Iris pseud-Acorus*), seen near Albenga and in damp ground in the neighbourhood of Spezzia. It is not given for any place nearer, more west, than that in Mr. Bicknell's *Flora of Bordighera*; nor does the Western Riviera harbour the distinct red and green bearded *Iris Italica*, par excellence a Ligurian indigene; it occurs along the sands and railway banks at Borgio, Verezzi, and near Finalmarina in "great profusion" in early spring (Bicknell's *Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Riviera*, Plate 67). Our example was gathered near Portovenere, where, also in damp, sandy places, grew that other Irid the Illyrian Corn Gladiolus (*G. segetum*), with its one-sided spikes of rosy-purple trumpet blooms.

In October, in the stony bed of the Centa, near Albenga, the neat violet rose heads of *Allium pulchellum*, Don, cried out to be garnered. It is of the Shalot sort, with two or three narrow leaves on the foot-high stem. In April, near Nervi, was got *Allium neapolitanum* with numerous paper-white stalked blossoms—"lasting long in a water-vase" (Bicknell). There, likewise, grew *Allium paniculatum*, with pale rose purple heads of bloom (stamens *not* protruding

from the perianth) and prolongation of the flower-head stalk through the umbel bearing silvery bulbil onions—a second string against extinction to hang on to life by.

In conclusion, of the many Grasses, Sedges and Fern allies, what shall be said? To the expert in those directions in which perception and comparison are the paramount factors, there are many both instructive and illuminative forms, and a few of great decorative interest like the Canes, *Arundo Donax* (often planted although very common and native in damp places in the valleys), the fingered *Andropogon hirtum* of variable facies, and the viviparous bulbous-rooted *Poa*, so impious of aspect because of the baby tufts of grass growing *out of* the parent inflorescence. But to the casual tourist, who takes an interest in grass *en masse* rather than in little, it is hardly possible to describe the salient forms in a popular manner. The Burr-grass of Italy, *Lappago* or *Tragus racemosus*, with singularly pretty, purplish spine-protected flower-sheaths, partial to hot, sandy places where it can live when little else will, was gathered near Albenga, and remains, though a mere mummy dried, a continuing joy to the botanist. *Briza maxima*, the great, brown silvery inflated Trembling Grass, was not rare near Spezzia, while the huge green-plume panicles of the Great Reed (*Arundo Donax*) never fail to give the impression of combined grace and power. It is excelled, perhaps, only by the Bamboo or the Sugar-Cane, which, however, strike a coarser note. Then, again, those love-grasses the *Eragrostis megastachia* and that of Ravenna; the branching Melics, *M. major* and *M. Baugini*, by the roadside out to Portovenere from Spezzia; mingle with the graces and the beauties of idyllic days that have come and gone to comrades, leaving in their wake the silver streak of Memory which outlives much more material things.

Last—but earliest type of all in existing vegetal forms—the Horse-tails (*Equisetum*), in four varieties—1, the field *E. arvense*; 2, the swamp's *E. palustre*; 3, the great bottle-brush *E. maximum*, and 4, the loose-sheathed, branched *E. ramosissimum* of sandy places—were all retrieved from



the neglect they suffer at the hand of the passer-by. On the Ligurian littoral they strike a note of reminder—of historic Change, unending, still evolving in the vegetable world, its Alphas, its Deltas, ay! and the rest, through the letters that are as eons in Evolution, though not, it must be added, down to any Omega of the present day.



*Aloes in flower on a Ligurian wayside*



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