

# THROUGH THE ALPS TO THE APENNINES

By P.G.KONODY



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THROUGH THE ALPS TO  
THE APENNINES







SUNSET AT VOLTERRA.

By ROBERT LITTLE, R.W.S.



# THROUGH THE ALPS TO THE APENNINES

BY

P. G. KONODY

WITH NINETY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS FROM  
PHOTOGRAPHS AND FROM PENCIL SKETCHES BY

E. A. RICKARDS

AND A FRONTISPIECE IN COLOUR FROM A DRAWING

BY

ROBERT LITTLE, R.W.S.

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## P R E F A C E



THIS is a book on Italy by a lover of Italy. It is the account of a motor tour by one who loves motoring for its own sake—in other countries. In Italy motoring is not less delightful than in France, or in Germany, not less delightful than it would be in England but for irksome and absurd restrictions. But Italy herself is so inexhaustible in her ever varied attractions, that motoring soon becomes a means of seeing the less tourist-ridden parts of the country within reasonable time. Many of the most attractive cities and monuments of Italy are so difficult of access by any other means of locomotion, that a week would be needed to do the work done by car in a day. Only, it is necessary not to be too voracious—to be content with seeing the best, and only the best, and to know by previous study where the best is to be found. Conscientious and systematic sight-seeing is out of the question when the car is waiting at the door.

If I have treated the French and Austrian and German sections of this tour in a perfunctory manner, if I have scarcely touched upon the wonderful things that are to be seen at Amiens, at Troyes, and at

Dijon, at Innsbruck and Munich, Augsburg and Ulm, it is merely because I could have done justice to them only at the expense of the Italian section, or by extending this volume to unreasonable bulk. I should have preferred to begin and to end with Italy. But one has to get there first; and one has to return. The few chapters devoted to the preliminary and final stages of the journey, confined as they are mainly to a description of the shortest route, may contain at least a few useful hints as to what to do and what to avoid. If they will frighten any of my readers away from the Valenciennes district, they will not have been written in vain.

Part of the chapters on Volterra and Orvieto has previously appeared in the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail*; part of Chapters IX. and XIX. in the *Car* magazine. To the editors of these publications I am indebted for permission to reprint these articles. My thanks are also due to Mr. Robert Little for having placed his admirable water-colour drawing of Volterra at my disposal for reproduction as a frontispiece, and to Messrs. Ernest Brown and Phillips of the Leicester Galleries for their kindness in lending the original for this purpose; to Mr. E. A. Rickards for having overcome his artistic scruples to allow his charming "crayon scribbles" of types and incidents to be reproduced; and to "Dan" for a large proportion of the photographs which will do much towards atoning for the shortcomings of this book.

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# THROUGH THE ALPS TO THE APENNINES

## CHAPTER I

### SPEEDING THROUGH FRANCE



WHEN four ardent lovers of Italy and of Italian art set out for a motor journey to the land of their desire, from which they are separated by a distance of some six hundred miles, they may be forgiven if their thoughts and longings lend wings to the speeding car, and if they pay but scant attention to the charms of fair France. On the early stages of the journey recorded in these pages, every fleeting impression was rendered more fleeting and unsubstantial by the mirage of the fairer land of romance and art that was looming for ever before our mental vision. And even now, when these impressions and experiences are a mere memory, I feel the same impatience to leave the green fields of France behind me, and to be whizzed on a magic carpet across the mountain barrier into the smiling

vale of Aosta. Magic carpets, however, are neither to be bought nor hired; and the best part of a week is needed to accomplish the journey by road and in absolute comfort.

The car was a 30 H.P. White Steam—noiseless, running as smoothly as a sledge, provided with a comfortable touring body and luggage-carrier; and, above all, a splendid hill-climber. She seemed positively to enjoy flying uphill, and to express her pleasure by a gentle, musical chirping sound, to which she owed her name—the Cricket.

The Cricket had a complicated organism, as is the wont of her kind; but Ryder, the man at the wheel, knew her every whim, and knew how to minister to all her wants. He was very young to be entrusted for a month with four valuable lives, but thoroughly capable and reliable, taciturn, but not moody, and always ready for every emergency. The four valuable lives represented four phases of artistic activity—dispositions widely apart, but united by love of art and love of Italy. Belle, whose tool is the painter's brush, was the much-needed restraining influence. Dan, whose expert knowledge of art is far beyond that of a mere amateur—calm, deliberate, phlegmatic, an experienced traveller, with a keen relish of all the good things of this world, and a liberality which succeeds in securing these good things. His luggage was characteristic of Dan. Luggage was by mutual consent to be confined to absolute necessities, and to this resolve we all adhered strictly. Only—we had different notions of necessi-

ties. Dan's notion was a kind of trunk that could only be lifted by two men, containing, among many other articles, a complete change of underwear for each day of the month, two pair of boxing-gloves and half-a-dozen games for evening amusement, a medicine chest, and a travelling library. He was also provided with two large cameras and stands, and telephotographic attachment, and some dozen packets of photographic plates. Pomponius, to whose artistry England owes some of her finest modern buildings, adhered more literally to his promise. He is a true Bohemian, a sufferer from the artistic temperament; a creature of moods, capable of great enthusiasms, and subject to spells of depression; with never a trace of self-consciousness, and never a moment of self-forgetfulness; much concerned about his health, his professional prospects, his *amours*—subjects all on which he could talk for hours so amusingly that his audience was never bored. As for myself—I confess to a spirit of restlessness and to an inclination to assume the command of an expedition like ours, which might easily have led to friction but for the restraining influence in petticoats.

Ill-luck would have it that whilst still on English soil, on the early morning run to Folkestone—the car had to be on the pier at 10 A.M.—we suffered our first puncture. A second tyre was disabled in the afternoon on the way to Amiens, so that the first day's work, in reducing our "spares," became responsible for much inconvenience we were to

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suffer later on in Italy through running on patched tyres.

At Boulogne, thanks to the admirable arrangements made by the Royal Automobile Club Touring Department, the landing of the car and the customs formalities were disposed of whilst we were lunching at the station buffet, so that there was nothing in the way of our starting early in the afternoon. Amiens was our goal; and the natural thing would have been to follow the *route nationale* via Abbeville. But the *Carte Taride* showed a tempting short cut, clearly marked in red as a motor road, by which some five or six miles could be saved. And since I had on many occasions cut across France on departmental and even on communal roads without having had to regret it, I saw no reason why we should depart from our original plan, which was to make for the Little St. Bernard as nearly as possible in a bee-line. Every mile saved meant a mile more in Italy.

And thus, instead of climbing the hill of Montreuil and passing through that Americanised old French fortress with its Anglo-Saxon artists' colony, we turned to the left at the foot of the hill and followed the left bank of the Canche for three miles, then turning due south to Douriez and Crécy-en-Ponthieu. It was a lovely afternoon, and the Cricket went so smoothly and swiftly, that even Pomponius, a comparative novice in motoring, forgot all his pessimistic misgivings. What struck us most in this rural, fertile district of the Somme was the scarcity of

human habitations: few farms, fewer villages, and scarcely a living soul to be seen in the long village streets.

Beyond Brailly we entered upon that long, straight run so temptingly indicated by the ruled red line on the map. Alas, it was a snare and a delusion. For some miles all went well; then the road began to get narrower and to deteriorate. It ceased to be a road and became a mere country lane. And suddenly this lane came to an end and was continued by a mere track along the edge of a wood—a track overgrown with grass and weeds, and recognisable only by the ruts cut in the earth by the wheels of woodcutters' carts. It was no good to think of turning back; we had gone much too far. The only thing was to persevere and to struggle slowly through the soft ground. So slowly, indeed, that in the time lost we could have covered ten times over the few miles saved by the "short cut." To add to our discomfort, it began to rain, first in heavy drops, then in a steady downpour; and a puncture necessitated changing one of the back tyres. The day drew in, and our head-lights had to be pressed into service long before a kind of phosphorescent luminosity of the sky over the far horizon indicated the extensive circle of the lights of Amiens. The road now improved too; the rain abated a little; and before long we were in the suburbs of Amiens—in a mean enough street, to be sure, but brightly lighted, and swarming with people; and, oh, so cheering after the experience of the last two hours, which had taught us the shadow

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side of the romance of the road. But it is one of the peculiarities of motoring, caused perhaps by the healthy and exhilarating rush of pure air into the lungs, that unpleasant experiences are soon forgotten. There was not a merrier and happier party in the dining-room of the Hotel de France et d'Angleterre that evening than the four travellers around our little table.

### ITINERARY

Place.	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Boulogne . . . . .	...	...
Montreuil . . . . .	36	36
Fouriez . . . . .	19	55
Fork to Abbeville . . . . .	14	69
Amiens . . . . .	49	118

The road map caused me considerable perplexity next morning. The line I had ruled across north-eastern France, from Boulogne to the Little St. Bernard, touched Compiègne and Montmirail; but of the two fairly direct routes to Compiègne, the shorter one meant fifteen miles of *pavé*, which we did not feel inclined to risk, whilst the other was for the first twenty-six miles a continuation of that straight line which we had tested on the previous day. The landlord, however, assured me that it was a *real* road, and a good one to boot, and thus gave the casting vote in our council of war.

His advice proved to be sound. All the way to Roye, a distance of forty-two kilometres, we could



abandon ourselves to the physical delight of unimpeded speed on an absolutely straight switchback run through rural France. At Roye we branched off in the direction of Lassigny and Compiègne. The mile of *pavé* leading into that picturesque old town gave us a terrible shaking, and made every one of us glad to get out of the car for a little break in the journey, which we resumed after lunch. We crossed the whole length of the magnificent, park-like forest of Compiègne, at the eastern end of which we had a glimpse of Viollet-le-Duc's picturesque reconstruction of the Château de Pierrefonds. The whole day's journey went without a hitch—to Rétheuil, Villers-Cotterets, Neuilly-St.-Front, and Montmirail, where we had originally intended to spend the night. But the afternoon was not far advanced; the sun was shining brightly; and Belle, far from being fatigued, expressed most emphatically her disinclination to abandon her comfortable seat.

Sézanne was our next objective. On the Carte Taride, Montmirail, and Sézanne are at the opposite angles of a square formed by the red lines of the recommended routes. We took the risk of the unrecommended diagonal, which proved to be as good a road as is to be found anywhere in this country of good roads, and saved us about six miles. We might have gone further still, to Anglures, but as we slowly drove through the main street of Sézanne, Dan's expert eye alighted upon an apparition in the doorway of the unassuming little Hotel de France: the proprietor of the hotel *en*

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*chef*, with an immaculate white apron and cap, and a beaming round face that immediately inspired confidence.

“I think we had better stop here,” said Dan, with a significant side-glance at the figure in the doorway, and with a deep note of conviction in his voice. We stopped. “Have you got any rooms, and can you give us a good dinner?” he asked the host, who had stepped out to receive us with the effusive politeness of his race. “*Oui, monsieur*. There are plenty of rooms, and as regards the dinner—you can try!” The modesty of the words was belied by the smile of confidence in his culinary skill.

Five minutes later Dan was closeted with the host to discuss further details. He was apparently satisfied with the result of the interview, and joined us in a walk round the charming, quiet, sleepy little town. At the inn of an English town of similar insignificance, one would have been pleasantly surprised if its resources ran to a cold joint and some cheese. But we were in France, and Dan had stirred the professional vanity of our host. When we returned to the inn, punctually at the appointed hour, we were served a dinner that would not have disgraced the reputation of one of the famous Paris gourmets' resorts. Exotic luxuries, of course, were not to be expected; but for a town more like a large village, and for a dinner at such short notice, the menu was not a little surprising. It comprised *Potage printanière*, *Melon Canteloup*, *Poulet grillé*, *Tomates farcies*,



Our Host at Sézanne



A Rainy Day at Annecy



*Salade Russe, Perdreau truffé, Haricots verts, and Dessert.*

ITINERARY

Place.	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Amiens . . . . .	...	...
Roye . . . . .	42	42
Compiègne . . . . .	34	76
Villers-Cotterets . . . . .	30	106
Château-Thierry . . . . .	42	148
Montmirail . . . . .	25	173
Sézanne . . . . .	23	196

We needed no one to awaken us next morning. That duty was performed by the sun, which streamed brightly into the rooms, and by the knowledge that we had a very long run before us. From Méry-sur-Seine (30 kilometres from Sézanne), where we first met and crossed the Seine, that river was our guide for the distance of eighty-three miles which we followed it almost to its source. Having covered the thirty-six miles to Troyes in a little over an hour, we were able to devote a few hours to that interesting cathedral city before continuing our run to Bar-sur-Seine and Châtillon-sur-Seine, the starting-point for the climb along the edge of the splendidly wooded Forest of Châtillon to the high plateau of the Côte d'Or with its miles of golden harvest-fields. Just before crossing the Seine, not three miles from its source, we had reached a height of 1509 feet, from which we had to descend at a very steep gradient to the bridge, only to climb again on the other side

to a height of 1778 feet, overlooking the picturesque grey-roofed cluster of St. Seine-l'Abbaye.

Pomponius was just pleading for a halt and a drink, when I saw straight before us the welcome sign "Brasserie" over the entrance to a large gravelled courtyard bordered by shrubs and trees, with some pleasant bowers and a few tables and chairs.

"How charming!" exclaimed Belle; "let's go in here."

We drove straight into the courtyard. Our arrival was watched by seven or eight people, among them a priest, an officer, and the owner of the *brasserie*, who approached us with raised hat and with a pleasant smile. The others also came near and examined the Cricket with keen interest, asking many questions as to her working and our journey.

"Can we have some beer?" I demanded of the host.

He smiled: "*Mais oui, monsieur.* How many bottles?"

I looked round. Everybody was so charming and polite, that I felt in duty bound to show our appreciation of this unexpected warm reception.

"*Pour tout le monde!*" I answered, with as French and all-embracing a gesture as I could muster, and proceeded to invite "*tout le monde*" to join us in one of the bowers.

The host gave his orders. A battery of bottles arrived. We clinked glasses, exchanged the usual courtesies, and finished the supply, which I immedi-

ately had replenished. A pleasant half-hour was thus spent, and we had to think of resuming our journey. I demanded the bill. The "host" shook his head with a smile and explained that he could not think of taking payment and felt very honoured by our visit. Then only did it dawn upon me that the word *brasserie* over the garden gate had a more literal significance than it has in Paris—that we were at a real *brewery*, and not a beer-restaurant; and that I had dispensed hospitality to "*tout le monde*" at the expense of the highly amused brewer. It was not a little embarrassing, and Pomponius chuckled audibly at my discomfiture. But there was nothing to be done but to apologize and to thank *monsieur le brasseur*, to shake hands all round, exchange cards, promise to return some other time, if possible, and to depart amid many hearty wishes of "*bon voyage!*"

From St. Seine-l'Abbaye we had to climb higher yet to an altitude of 1778 feet, through grand and rugged country on the most perfect of roads. Within half-an-hour we passed under the Fort d'Hauteville into the fortified area around Dijon, and soon saw the ancient capital of the Dukes of Burgundy below us. The question was now: which hotel? Dan was for the Grand Hotel de la Cloche, but the leading hotel of Dijon looked too big and too palatial for us who had tasted the charm and comfort of the homely little hostleries of France, and felt in no dressy mood after the long journey. The Terminus was "well spoken of" in Baedeker, but the name savoured of

railway smoke and noise. We finally decided in favour of the Hotel de Bourgogne, which turned out to be a "commercial hotel," but gave us no cause for dissatisfaction. Pomponius and I, when exploring Dijon later in the evening, struck the "well spoken of" Terminus, the ground floor of which we found occupied by an enormous and excessively noisy *brasserie* and *café chantant*, frequented by students, soldiers, officers, the young blood of Dijon, and innumerable gay ladies dressed in the height of fashion, and flashing with real and sham jewels. I should never have believed that a French provincial town could be so ultra-Parisian.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Sézanne . . . . .	...	...
Méry-sur-Seine . . . . .	30	30
Troyes . . . . .	28	58
Châtillon-sur-Seine . . . . .	66	124
St. Seine-l'Abbaye . . . . .	53	177
Dijon . . . . .	24	201

Another day of brilliant sunshine and perfect running through one of the most beautiful parts of France brought us an hour after sunset to Nantua. As we came nearer and nearer to the Italian frontier, we felt less and less inclined to waste precious hours in the insignificant though by no means unattractive little French towns on our route. Our thoughts were in Italy; our talk was of Italy; and we paid but the





Well spoken of"

AT DION.



vaguest attention to the surrounding scenery, which under other circumstances would have roused us to enthusiasm. Always with a view to taking the shortest available route, we passed through St. Jean-de-Losne, Chaussin, Sellières, Lons-le-Saunier, Orgelet, Arinthod, and Thoirette (1092 feet), where the road crosses the river Ain and scales a steep hill, the highest point, beyond Izernore, being 1883 feet above the sea. Nantua seems to be a great centre of automobilism. The hotel garage, though unusually spacious, was insufficient to hold all the cars that arrived in the course of the evening, and we considered ourselves lucky to have arrived just in time to seize the last available berth, to the rage of a blustering Frenchman whom we had overtaken not a hundred yards from the hotel.

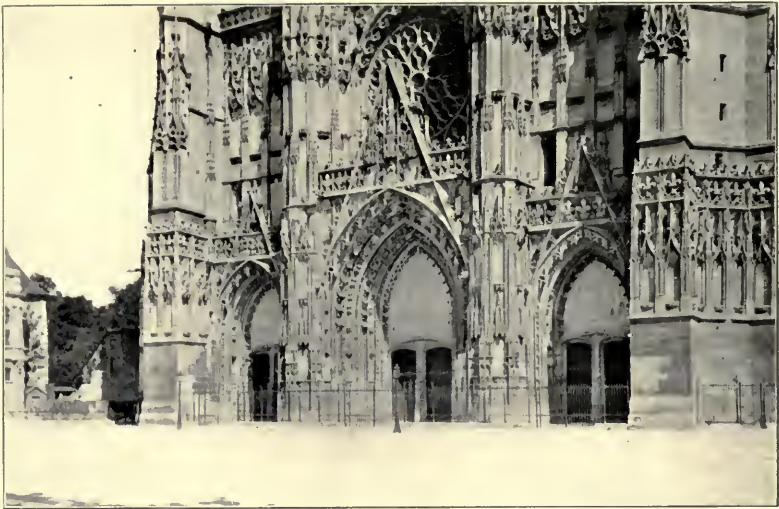
ITINERARY

Place.	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Dijon . . . . .	...	...
Chaussin . . . . .	52	52
Lons-le-Saunier . . . . .	42	94
Orgelet . . . . .	24	118
Thoirette . . . . .	34	152
Nantua . . . . .	21	173

Having enjoyed three days of uninterrupted sunshine, we were not a little dismayed next morning that the fine weather had broken up, and that the leaden grey of the sky held not the slightest hope of a cessation of the rain which, to judge from the

state of the road, had already been pouring down for a good many hours. The best thing was to get out of the wet zone as quickly as possible, and the Cape-hood, with the sides attached, was sufficient protection—at least for my three companions in the tonneau of the car. But there was no escape. From Nantua to Bellegarde, where we crossed the Rhône, from Bellegarde to Annecy the rain continued with unabated force, blotting out the beautiful Jura mountains and beating into my face with such violence that I found it difficult to keep my eyes open. At Annecy, from the balcony of the hotel where we stopped for lunch, we saw the peaks of the Savoy Alps shrouded by low clouds, which drifted far down towards the lake—and not a vestige of blue sky anywhere. All along the western shore of the Lake of Annecy, to Faverges, to Albertville, and to Moutiers—rain, and nothing but rain. Although it was only four o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived at Moutiers, we had had enough of it. To cross the St. Bernard under such conditions was out of the question, and there was no object in pushing on towards the pass unless we meant to cross it the same day.

Dan's boxing gloves came in well to while away the time before dinner, but caused the folk of the hotel, who could not fathom the cause of the prolonged noise and stamping overhead, to look at us with ill-disguised curiosity. Before sunset the rain had spent its energy; the clouds lifted from the mountain tops, and we had the satisfaction of seeing



The Cathedral, Troyes



The Town Hall, Troyes



the sky clearing and turning into a pale blue in the direction of Italy before darkness set in.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Nantua . . . . .	1568	...	...
Bellegarde . . . . .	1164	26	26
Annecy . . . . .	1476	41	67
Albertville . . . . .	1132	44	111
Moutiers . . . . .	1575	28	139

I peeped out of the window at six o'clock next morning. Bright sunshine! not a cloud in the sky! Just the weather needed for as formidable a climb as the Little St. Bernard. But though the sun was out, the road along the left bank of the Isère was still terribly muddy and cut into deep ruts by excessive heavy traffic. The scenery all along, and especially from the mouths of the three rock-tunnels in the Séez defile, is magnificent. At Bourg St. Maurice (2674 feet) we had already risen 1100 feet. Two miles further we passed the French custom-house at Séez; and now the climb began in earnest. It is a beautifully engineered road, with a gradient never exceeding one in fourteen, but with innumerable zig-zags first up the wooded lower slope, and then through the impressive stony desolation of the summit, in view of the eternal snow of the Mont Blanc range.

At the Hospice (7077 feet), close by the frontier, which is marked by a stone bearing on one side the inscription "France" and on the other "Italia,"

the Italian motor diligence was just preparing to start for Aosta. We were not anxious to follow a pacemaker, and started in front of the *posta* on the descent of  $13\frac{1}{2}$  kilometres, past the frozen lake on the summit, to the Italian custom-house at La Thuile.

The douanier was at lunch some distance away in the village and had to be sent for. We watched him running across the meadow to the performance of his duty. He saluted in military fashion and asked me to follow him into his office to undergo the usual cross-examination. There was duty to be paid on petrol, duty on spare tyres—even on the old ones. That at least was the law. How much petrol did we have? I could not tell. Just enough probably to take us to Pré St. Didier, if it was all downhill. Shall we say a gallon? Yes, a gallon. How about tyres? They have all been in use, and most of them were badly injured. The man hesitated, shrugged his shoulders, filled in his form, and let me off with a merely nominal payment of a few lire. I offered him a *buona mano* for his trouble—he withdrew his hands and protested, not indignantly, but firmly. An Italian petty official refusing a tip! Wonders will not cease.

At La Thuile, the first Italian village, we ran into a cattle market, and had occasion to notice the startling difference between the thinly populated French side of the mountains and the swarming life on the Italian side; the sad and rather dignified, quiet bearing of the French peasantry, and the gay, vivacious, noisy chatter and laughter of the Italian





On the Summit of the Little St. Bernard



The Frozen Lake on the Little St. Bernard



contadini, who bombarded us with good-natured banter as we passed slowly through their midst.

The descent to Pré St. Didier is rather steeper than the gradient on the French side, and affords some glorious views of Mont Blanc—so enticing that we were induced to leave our straight course into the Aosta valley and to branch off northwards to Courmayeur, whence the whole Mont Blanc range can be seen spread out in truly overwhelming grandeur. We lunched at the Hotel Royal, in an unbearably hot room, the windows of which were kept closed for the benefit of a French family, although the sun shone with an intensity that made it almost painful to look out of the windows. I tried to photograph the mountain view. I used a small stop and gave the minimum exposure of one hundredth of a second. And yet, when the films were developed, they were found to be considerably over-exposed.

After lunch we returned to Pré St. Didier, whence we had a twenty mile run to Aosta through a valley that gave us the first taste of the loveliness and romantic beauty of Italy. At Aosta they were celebrating a festa. The occasion was the unveiling of a new monument erected in honour of a local saint, and the whole town was gay with flags and red bunting and decorative devices, Venetian masts and garlands and pine branches, with the sound of brass bands, and the hum of many voices. We had to take in a supply of petrol, but the price of fifty cents a litre seemed so excessive that I thought it wiser

to take only just enough to see us through to Ivrea, which was less remote from the centres of supply to justify such extortion. I was mistaken. The petrol of Aosta was by far the cheapest petrol of any that we had occasion to buy in Italy.

At Châtillon we rested for a while at an open air café in the piazza, since Pomponius had for the last half-hour thrown out hints about trying Turin vermouth in the land of its origin. As we were arranging ourselves in the car to get ready for the resumption of our journey, a motor horn announced the approach of another car. In view of the excessively dusty state of the road we were not particularly keen to let any one get in front, and just managed to round the corner of the square when the other car appeared in view. The Cricket was quite capable of holding her own as regards speed, but our pursuers, a load of seven, were hard on our track, challenging us again and again to let them pass. It either meant tearing along at a breakneck speed on the twisting road or to give way. We preferred the safer alternative, and fell behind to get out of the dust. No sooner, however, were the others in front than they reduced their speed to under twenty miles an hour. And we were anxious to get to Ivrea in time for dinner.

We closed up with the other car, half choked by her dust. We tooted and shouted. The only result was a temporary increase in speed. The moment we fell behind, the wretches in front slowed down. Again and again we challenged them to let us pass—

with no better result. We were nearly choked with the dust, which settled on the car, on our coats and faces, in a thick white layer. But the road was effectively barred, and we had to resign ourselves to a belated dinner. The streets of Ivrea were already lighted up when we arrived at the *Scudo di Francia* in a condition which almost justified the impertinent stare of a group of eminently self-satisfied officers who were sipping their after-dinner coffee at the tables in front of the hotel.

ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Moutiers . . . . .	1575	...	...
Bourg St. Maurice . .	2674	27	27
Hospice . . . . .	7077	30	57
Summit of Little St. Bernard . . . . .	7178	1½	58½
La Thuile (Custom House) . . . . .	4728	13½	72
Pré St. Didier . . . .	3248	10	82
Courmayeur . . . . .	4015	5	87
Pré St. Didier . . . .	3248	5	92
Aosta . . . . .	1913	31	123
Ivrea . . . . .	777	59	182

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST DAY IN ITALY



WE are in Italy! was the first clear thought that flashed across the awakening consciousness next morning, engendered perhaps by the excessively brilliant light filtering through the chinks of the Venetian blinds. The restraining influence of the early hour and the enticing comfort of the typically Italian bed at the *Scudo di Francia* (where in the wide world are to be found hotel beds that can vie with those of Italy?) were insufficient to counteract the eagerness to be up and about. I dressed in haste, determined to steal a march on my companions, and to explore Ivrea before breakfast, since the day's long programme would necessitate a fairly early start. Ryder, indeed, was already busying himself about the car which, cleared of her thick layer of dust, had become recognisable once more. The duty of inspection absolved, I stepped out into the piazza—and almost ran into Pomponius, who, urged by an impulse similar to my own, had risen at an early hour and was just returning from his morning walk, beaming with the unreasoning joy experienced by every sensitive Northerner on his first contact with Southern life and sunlight.



MARKETING AT IVREA.





But another cause had contributed to Pomponius's cheerfulness. With a courage vastly ahead of his extremely limited command of the Italian language, he had been marketing on his own. His booty was a large parcel of figs, and the double triumph of having achieved an extraordinary bargain and of being able to deliver a blow to my often reiterated faith in Italian honesty. Pomponius, ever concerned about his physical welfare, was a firm believer in the efficacy of fruit before breakfast. The tempting wares displayed in the market square had proved irresistible to him. According to his own account of his adventure, there were things that he had never seen before : vegetable or fruit—who could say ? He was most attracted by the bright colour of the *peperoni* ; but he preferred to be on the safe side of the known. He pointed at a basket with juicy figs, and, drawing extensively upon his Italian vocabulary, boldly addressed the corpulent dame who presided over the stall : “ *Fichi—quanto ?* ”

The answer was voluble and friendly, but to him wholly unintelligible. So he produced the equivalent of two English pennies, whereupon the kindly old soul smilingly proceeded upon picking out her juiciest specimens for her strange customer. “ Now, where is your vaunted Italian honesty ? ” commented Pomponius, “ the old wretch was going to give me all the rotten, perspiring, burst, sticky fruit. But I would have none of it. I said, ‘ no, no, ’ and had my own pick. I must admit, she wasn't stingy. When I had enough she still insisted on filling the bag. Look

at the beauties—all the lot for four soldi!” And he proudly displayed his purchase of carefully selected, hard, unripe figs.

The garrison being conspicuously absent, Belle could safely be left to her own devices, undisturbed by impertinent stares, whilst her escort snatched half-an-hour after breakfast to attack the castle hill in search of food for the cameras. But alas! robbed of the mystery and romance of night, the plain walls and stove-pipe brick towers of the castle set in rigid symmetry at the corners of the square building—a prison, indeed, rather than a castle—looked as unprepossessing as the exterior of the often restored and rebuilt cathedral. There was neither picturesque detail nor happy accident of sky-line. I spared my ammunition for better quarry. Dan, whose grim determination was not so easily discouraged, fired a few carefully aimed shots at the castle. He sent me a complete set of his photographs after our return—handsomely mounted and bound in morocco—but the castle of Ivrea did not figure in the remarkably successful set.

Fear of dust and a predilection for the bee-line induced us to make for Vercelli, instead of the more obvious Turin, when we left Ivrea at ten o'clock. The twenty-six miles to Vercelli from the point where, about four miles from Ivrea, the road to Biella branches off on the left; and again the thirty miles from Vercelli to Casale-Monferrato and Alessandria, are *terra incognita* for most tourists. The popular guide-books are innocent of any reference to Palazzo,



A Lombard Church at Cavaglia



the charming Viverone Lake, or any of the other places between Ivrea and Vercelli. At Cavaglia we obtained a sudden and delightful glimpse of an unusually fine church in pure Lombard style, with an atrium of exquisitely graceful proportions—one of the many unrecorded architectural gems that so often meet the traveller on the by-roads of Italy. It was only a lightning impression from the corner where our route swerved away from the centre of the little town, but the delighted "Oh!" that burst from the lips of our architect was a spontaneous and unmistakable tribute wrung from one who generally reserved his enthusiasm for the imaginative exuberance of the baroque.

We had no difficulty in picking our road to Vercelli or indeed as far as Alessandria, since practically the whole run of sixty miles leads along a light railway-track, though Heaven only knows what the rails serve for. Most of the permanent way is covered with grass and weeds, and the only sign of railway traffic that we could discover as we sped along was a derelict engine, the condition of which suggested that it must have barred all traffic on the line for many months back. That there were sign-posts at cross-roads, in addition to a triplicated set of kilometre-stones—apparently the result of a twice corrected survey unaccompanied by the removal of the earlier and wrongly marked stones—augured well for our future progress. Little did I guess the tribulations that were in store for us from this source. I had to learn yet from experience the amazing vagaries of Italian mile-stones

and sign-posts, which seem to be devised solely for the purpose of mystifying and misleading the puzzled traveller.

It was 11.30 when the fascinating line of Vercelli's towers and cupolas became visible on the horizon, clearly marked against the intense blue of the sky. A few minutes and we were to enter the first shrine of our art pilgrimage : Vercelli, where Gaudenzio Ferrari left so many precious records of his prodigious activity. This pupil of Luini, who, in spite of having benefited by the example of Leonardo and Correggio, never abdicated his own personality—a primitive at heart, though eager to absorb the advanced knowledge of the cinquecento—can only be studied in the district of which Vercelli is almost the centre. From Turin to Bergamo there is scarcely a little town that does not boast some altar-piece from his brush. It was, years ago, at Varallo in the chapels of the world-famed Sacro Monte and in the Church of Sta. Maria delle Grazie, that I had come under the spell of his intense dramatic feeling and strange rhythm of movement. At Vercelli, in the chapels of the Church of St. Christopher, I was now to be confronted by his master-work, the frescoed scenes from the Lives of the Virgin and of St. Mary Magdalene.

Vercelli is a busy, compact town, with narrow, picturesque streets that provide dwellings for 18,000 inhabitants. It is the see of a bishop ; but, let it be said as a warning to motorists, it has no garage. Ryder wanted to get a defective tube vulcanised.

After several fruitless inquiries from members of the idle crowd that thronged the streets through which we picked our way with incessant tooting and shouting, a more intelligent worthy of the community directed us to some nondescript shanty, half bicycle repair-shop, half smithy, in charge of a youth, who volunteered to fetch the padrone. I explained to him our requirements, so that Ryder should be relieved of the task of practising dumb language; and then, all eagerness, we set out on foot in search of our Gaudenzio.

It seemed from the keen interest, with which the natives gathered in the large piazza close by followed our movements, that foreign visitors are by no means an everyday sight in the little Piemontese town. A whole crowd of urchins appeared determined to dog our steps, but were finally induced to detach themselves by one of their number who, eager to earn a few soldi, volunteered to act as guide. There are no distances at Vercelli, and we soon stood before the imposing pile of Sant' Andrea, the handsome cathedral of Vercelli. The exterior is a remarkable instance of intelligent restoration. The plan—especially the two flanking towers—suggests a Northern, presumably German, architect, although the decoration of alternating dark and light courses of stone is typically Italian. The interior—Gothic vaulting of the early thirteenth century—offered no features of interest save its pleasing proportions.

In the midday glare we trudged through the shadeless streets to St. Christopher to hold com-

munion with Gaudenzio Ferrari. But the midday hour had struck—and St. Christopher's was closed! "Till two o'clock," said our diminutive cicerone with a grin.

"And Sta. Catarina, and S. Paolo?" Both churches contain altar-pieces by Gaudenzio.

"*Chi lo sa?* Who knows?" came the reply, with the inevitable shrug.

We tried them both, with the same negative result. At S. Paolo I asked a jovial-looking priest, who was making his entry through a side-door, whether an exception could be made from the rule for our party of eager students who had travelled so far to get a glimpse at the picture treasured in his church. He was adamant with his "*Impossibile, Signore!*"

The heat was stifling. Waiting till two o'clock was out of the question. For lunch the hour was too early. Limp and weary, we dragged ourselves back to the piazza. There was the car surrounded by the usual idle, admiring crowd, and Ryder, hot and gloomy like ourselves. He had been unable to effect the needed repair, as the city of closed churches could not produce a vulcaniser.

It was only when the rapid movement of the car made a cool breeze play round our heated brows that we shook off our depression. We were now crossing the dead level of the vast plain that extends from Turin to the Adriatic; behind us the faint blue silhouette of the Alps, and before us in the hazy distance the delicate outline of the Ligurian Apennine. "To the South of Vercelli," I gleaned from Baedeker,



“lie the Campi Raudii where Marius defeated the Cimbri in B.C. 101.” That was two thousand years ago, but the road across the Campi Raudii, I vouch, has not been mended since. Twenty centuries of traffic have deepened the ruts presumably left by Roman and Cimbric chariots, transforming them into veritable ditches, over which the Cricket swayed and rolled, raged and rumbled at such moderate pace as could be indulged in without danger.

Still, barring the severe jolting, all went well for six miles or so, until the red roofs of Stroppiana hove in sight. A deep sigh from Ryder, and the car stopped: a mere trifling puncture—but the puncture meant twenty minutes on a dusty, treeless, shadeless, fly-infested road in the noonday heat of the Italian plain! It also meant “all hands to the pump!” for Hercules himself would have asked to be relieved after thirty seconds of muscular exercise under such conditions. It was the novelty of the experience that made the discomfort amount to positive suffering. A week later, Dan and I had grown hardened to the task, and even Pomponius would take his turn without being pressed into service. At the time we all agreed that there was, after all, something to be said for the despised railway. Belle went so far as to admit that Italy and Paradise are not synonymous terms, and Ryder, who had shod our disabled horse almost single-handed, was discovered to have changed his complexion from tan to bronze. The physical and moral changes wrought by these twenty minutes were prodigious.

Our tribulations were completely forgotten when, half-an-hour later, we were gathered around a table temptingly laid out under an awning on the restaurant terrace in the piazza at Casale-Monferrato. The long-necked *fiasco* of ruby-coloured wine, the variegated fruit piled up in luxuriant profusion, the delicious coolness under the awning, the bustling attentiveness of the waiters, and the air of satisfaction with which a group of officers plied their toothpicks at the next table at the close of an evidently enjoyable meal, made us forget that the ancient capital of the Duchy of Monferrato had such intellectual attractions as a fine Romanesque cathedral founded as far back as 741 by Luitprand, King of the Langobards. This cathedral harboured our last chance of setting eyes upon a Gaudenzio Ferrari. But Gaudenzio was out of favour. He had proved a fraud at Vercelli. For the time being, at any rate, the long-necked ruby bottle, the iced and sliced melon, and the appetising dish of *antipasti* were an infinitely greater attraction.

In dazzling brightness a narrow oblique strip of cloudless blue sky was visible between the awnings, and also the graceful slender shape of a Renaissance campanile in the distance. Under the terrace, on the square, the usual crowd of loiterers had been attracted by the car, which was made the object of a heated discussion. The whole piazza was teeming with the life of the provincial town—complete, a self-contained little world where everybody bears the outward signs of his rank and station, so different from the dull, colourless aspect of an English market-



MILITARY TYPES.



town of 18,000 souls, with its dead level of respectability! Soldiers and officers in uniform, priests in their cassocks, peasants and farmers in their rough attire, the "gilded youth" of Casale with gaudy shirts and ties and narrow-rimmed straw hats, bare-footed urchins, all sorts and conditions of men and women were revolving around an equestrian bronze monstrosity with the name of Carlo Alberto on the pedestal—all busily occupied with doing nothing and keeping cool, and all apparently perfectly happy. The whole scene was like a soothing narcotic—and an object lesson in the art of *dolce far niente*. We smiled with indulgence upon the offensive Carlo Alberto, who is worthy of a place of honour among the frock-coated bronze gentlemen in Parliament Square; we even began to detect a rhythmic cadence in the toothpick concert on our terrace, as we saw daylight through the bottom of the long-necked *fiasco*.

The rubber part of our "tooter," which was worked by foot-pressure, had during the last few days shown a tendency to detach itself from its metal tube. Indeed, the whole appliance was a little deficient in lung power. To find a substitute for it, I had to sacrifice my siesta. I found the needed object at an emporium for musical instruments. Eight lire seemed an excessive price for a little horn incapable of producing any sound except a fairly successful imitation of a roaring bull; but the Stradivarius of Casale evinced such pride in the solidity and effectiveness of his instrument, that any

attempt at bargaining would have been a downright insult. To me, the occupier of the front seat, fell the task of performing upon this horn, which was devised to be driven by steam rather than by a weak mortal's lung-power. From that hapless hour to the end of the tour, I was never allowed a minute's rest. Peremptory commands of "toot! toot!" dinned in my ear whenever a fowl was sighted by Belle half a mile ahead. It was only when I had to consult the road map that I was temporarily relieved by Dan or Pomponius. In time I acquired such proficiency on my instrument that I was actually able to extract a double note, the roaring bass being followed by a flute-like treble.

How necessary it had been to get the dreadful instrument was brought home to me forcibly on the run to Alessandria, during which we met countless carts, generally in the middle or on the wrong side of the road—an Italian peculiarity—and their drivers almost without exception fast asleep and at the mercy of their beasts. It needed these never-ceasing encounters to overcome the general somnolence caused by the heat, the monotony of the plain, and an abundant meal.

Alessandria has the distinction of being perhaps the only Italian town of any importance that is wholly devoid of artistic or other attractions. We had a glimpse of streets about as inviting as the neighbourhood of Waterloo Station, and preferred to follow the road along the fortifications instead of penetrating into the heart of the city. We had

now reached the lowest point of the plain, having descended imperceptibly from 886 feet at Cavaglia to 312 feet, from which we rose as imperceptibly to 646 feet on a run of seventeen miles to Novi-Ligure.

Beyond Alessandria the light railway no longer skirts the road. No sooner had we lost this sure indication of our direction than we became painfully aware of the absence of sign-posts at cross-roads. The *Carte Taride* proved utterly useless, and more than once we had to stop for inquiries. At a particularly puzzling road-fork we were saved from going astray by a strikingly handsome Piemontese peasant woman, olive-skinned, tall, of queenly carriage, and with a smile as full and generous as the sunlight of her country. Her gestures were more valuable than her verbal explanations in an unfamiliar accent. I gave her a few coppers. Whether she was amazed at such unexpected liberality, or eager to dispel the idea that she was a beggar, I know not. But she continued, with a fine display of gleaming teeth, to pour forth a volume of oratory, repeating many times a word that can only be phonetically rendered as "noosh," and that eventually turned out to be the local dialect for *noci*. Still talking, she freed her proud head of its heavy burden of walnuts in a coarse canvas sack, which she placed on the foot-board of the car, and began to distribute among us handfuls of her treasure. There was no stopping her with reiterated *bastas* and protesting hands. She would not rest until she felt that she had given full value for our money.

The incident, so typical of the true Italy—the Italy unknown to the legions of tourists on the beaten track, closed with a final exchange of smiles and courtesies: “*grazie!*” “*buon viaggio!*” “*arrivederle!*” “*addio!*” We disappeared in a cloud of dust; and through the gentle buzzing of the engine I could hear fragments of Pomponius’s rapturous comments on the beauty, the natural grace and nobility, and the full warm voice of that superb child of nature.

At Novi begins the climb of 1900 feet or 1000 feet respectively, according to one’s choice of the two available routes across the Ligurian mountains to Genoa over the La Bocchetta Pass, or Via Ronco, Giovi, and Busalla. Hills held no terror for the Cricket, and I should have much preferred the shorter and higher route—but it was not to be. For once, the direction “To Genoa” was so clearly marked on a sign-post pointing towards an avenue skirting the east side of the town, that there was no option but to follow it. Had we but passed through the town and taken the little frequented mountain road, we should have avoided hugging the railway for sixteen miles, and swallowing continuously the black smoke of engines and factories, and the white dust raised by the hoofs of horses and oxen.

Having done about seventy-six miles, and with the mountains in front of us, I was just consulting Ryder about the advisability of taking in a supply of water, when Providence intervened in the shape of a bronze-





Filling the water-tank at Novi



skinned perspiring slave of the municipality of Novi, wrestling with a snake-like hose, by means of which he was turning the thick deposit of dust in the *Viale di Circonvallazione* into an equally thick layer of mud. He needed no coaxing to direct the flush of his hose into the mouth of our tank, the while he evinced his friendly disposition by a grin extending from ear to ear. His timely assistance saved us much time and carrying of buckets, yet, to judge from his manner, he was surprised, almost offended, at being tendered coin of the realm. He pretended to hesitate, to fight against being paid for so small a service. Of course, he quite expected to be beaten in this fight, but he took his inevitable defeat with a natural grace and dignity that made me feel, that by accepting he had added to the obligation. Again and again, on our progress through Italy, we had to go through repetitions of this innocent little comedy so characteristic of the gentlemanly instincts that dwell in the soul of the North and Central Italian contadino.

We were gliding along leisurely towards the Scrivia valley, and discussing the superiority of the Italian men and women of the people over the townfolk and such specimens of the well-to-do classes as the unsportsmanlike motorists who had impeded our progress on the preceding day, when the sound of a motor-horn from the rear challenged us to let another car pass. Up jumped Pomponius, and through our trail of dust he was just able to distinguish our friends of the Dora Baltea valley, reduced in number

from seven to five. We were not anxious to repeat the last day's unpleasant experience.

"*Please*, don't let them pass and give us their dust!" pleaded Bella, waiving for once her objection to speed.

"Let's give them some of ours! Let her go!" was my vengeful encouragement of Ryder.

"The Lord hath delivered our enemies into our hands," commented Dan calmly.

"They are close upon us! I'm sure there'll be an accident!" quaked Pomponius, nervously gripping the side of the car.

And on went the mad chase at breakneck speed. Again and again our pursuers, blinded by dust, spurted close up to us, tooting and shouting and swearing. They tried the right and they tried the left. Then they dropped behind to prepare for another charge, Pomponius keeping us informed of their tactics, and imploring our imperturbable Ryder to let them pass. Their final spurt took their right wheels over a large heap of jagged stones by the roadside—and then we saw and heard no more of them, although we resumed our normal leisurely speed.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that under these circumstances the scenery passed on our first crossing of the Apennines did not impress itself vividly on the memory. We flew through Serravalle, Arquata, Isola del Cantone, and Ronco, where the railway line vanishes in the bowels of a mountain to issue again five miles further on the southern slope. It was

only at Busalla, where Pomponius's badly-shaken nerves required soothing by a Cognac or Vermouth at a garden café high above the verdant Scrivia valley, that we became aware of having almost arrived at the summit of the pass. Busalla is the typical Italian *villeggiatura*—which is a very different thing from the cosmopolitan tourist's resorts on the Riviera and the Lakes. It was quite obvious that the *forestieri* were here neither familiar sights nor particularly wanted. The place was a very beehive of befrilled and beribboned and tastelessly overdressed, sallow-complexioned Genoese damsels, and moustachioed youths with gaudy shirts and gaudier ties, yellow gloves, and jauntily poised narrow-brimmed straw hats. And it was no easy matter to decide which sex outdid the other in impertinence of stare; whether the icy imperturbable arrogance of the women's critical survey was preferable to the moustachio-twirling, eyeball-rolling, lady-killing self-satisfaction of the young gallants.

It was about five o'clock when we started, and with only sixteen miles of road before us we quite expected to reach Genoa in half-an-hour, and to use the remaining two hours or so of daylight to revel in her architectural glories. The calculation was doubly wrong. We were not sixteen miles *from* Genoa, but we were, so to speak, *in* Genoa. And yet, to get to the end of our day's journey, we needed, not half-an-hour, but two hours and a half. The explanation is simple enough. Maps and guide-books indicate a succession of little towns between

Busella and Genoa : Giovi, Pontedecimo, Bolzaneto, and so forth, each marked by a little circle at respectful distance from the next circle. In reality all these towns and villages have grown into each other, and are clasped by the outstretched arms of Proud Genoa. They form, as it were, an immense suburb. Their collective name : Pandemonium.

A very pandemonium of noise, smell, smoke, ceaseless unregulated traffic, whip-cracking, clanging bells, shrill steam-whistles and sirens is this sixteen miles of approach to the heart of the great Italian seaport. It is a gradual descent from smiling villaland through the throbbing life of industrial settlements to the dinginess and poverty of overcrowded slums ; and at the end of it, glorified by force of contrast, the magnificent amphitheatre of the city of palaces rising tier upon tier from the harbour basin. The first glimpse of the Mediterranean in the distance far below from the mountain-crest was so unreal, so ethereal, so indescribably unlike anything within the range of familiar experience, that we would scarcely trust our eyes. Indeed, Ryder flatly refused to believe that it was the sea that fringed the horizon.

But there were other things to divert our attention : first, the excitement of the swift glide down the sweeping curves of the villa-studded slope, amid the ever-increasing bustle of passing motor-cars and bicycles, carriages and carts of every description, to which other nerve-racking obstacles were soon to be added. The villas and country-houses (which, by the way, form by no means as picturesque a feature in the landscape as

some enthusiasts would have us believe, but rather offend the eye by breaking with uncompromising stiffness, squareness, and whiteness into the soft verdure of the hillside) soon began to retreat from the road, making room for large factories, whose ugly chimneys added their black smoke to the malodorous vapours rising from the railway lines to right and left. The surface of the road, cut up by incessant heavy traffic, became worse and worse. Moreover, it had been raining on this side of the mountains, so that we skidded and swayed along the ruts through inches of gritty, slimy mud. The roar of the traffic, with its attendant noises, had become deafening by now. In addition to the smart cars and victorias speeding at close of day from the business centre to the *villeggiatura*, there were now traction-engines and drags, carts and vans pulled by horses, oxen, mules and donkeys—single or two or three abreast, or again harnessed in tandem fashion three or four deep without distinction of species. Cyclists were threading their way through the tangle, pedestrians trotted along paying no more heed to warning signals than did the cattle that were being driven in small herds through the bewildering rattle and whip-cracking and shouting. And all this without any rule of the road—without any distinction between left and right!

The climax was reached at Pontedecimo, the terminus of an electric tram-line from Genoa. For the remaining ten miles these huge tramcars, running in both directions, and taking up at times almost the entire width of the road, were a constant source

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of danger, quite apart from the delays caused by blocks on the line at crossing-points. No words can do justice to the condition of the road—the terrible mud, the ruts, the stone-heaps piled up for the purpose of road-mending in a land where Dunlops, Michelins, and Continentals are too frequently left to do the work of steam-rollers. The factories were now vomiting forth whole armies of workmen, thousands of children were running about the highway, playing and romping and shouting, whilst groups of chattering women sat outside almost every door, forcing pedestrians from the pavement into the lines of vehicular traffic. It was a very Inferno, a weird nightmare which only ceased when the gleaming splendour of Genoa “*la superba*” arose before our astonished eyes.

### ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Ivrea . . . . .	777	...	...
Cavaglia . . . . .	886	20	20
Vercelli . . . . .	430	29	49
Casale . . . . .	381	23	72
Alessandria . . . .	312	31	103
Novi-Ligure . . . .	646	24	127
Ronco . . . . .	1066	26	153
Summit of Pass . . .	1614	10½	163½
Pontedecimo . . . .	297	10	173½
S. Pier d'Arèna . . .	16	11	184½
Genoa . . . . .	17	5	189½



## CHAPTER III

### GENOA AND THE LEVANTE



THE day was drawing to a close when we swung round the spacious piazza in front of the railway station into the Via Balbi which, with its continuation, the Via Cairoli and Via Garibaldi, is the chief artery of the old town, and, thanks to its wealth in masterpieces of secular architecture, the centre of attraction for those who travel in search of æsthetic enjoyment. But the noble palazzi, which stirred Rubens to such enthusiasm that he was impelled to publish a volume with seventy-two large plates of their plans and elevations engraved from his own drawings, with the avowed intention "to render a service to all countries this side of the Alps" by introducing to them "a new style of domestic architecture in accordance with the principles of classic art," these palaces were just then of far less moment to us than the choice of an abode for the night.

We all had been to Genoa before—some of us more than once—but none of us had a kind word to say for our hotel experience. Nor could Baedeker throw a light on the vexed question. Indeed, he

rather endorsed our views, the monotony of the consulted page being relieved by not a single star. We therefore decided to pin our faith to chance, and to put up at the first hotel that could boast a garage. It was only on arriving in the Piazza Annunziata, at the end of the long Via Balbi, that we realised the inadaptability of the Genoese hotels for the housing of cars, and the necessity to part from the Cricket for the time being. The Hotel Victoria, in the Piazza, seemed no worse than any of the hotels we had already passed, and was at least situated in a fairly open position. The porter, noticing our hesitation, pounced down upon us and immediately appropriated us. The luggage was unstrapped, and a diminutive hotel servant volunteered to conduct Ryder to a properly furnished garage in the new part of the town over a mile off.

The *albergo* turned out to be of the type known in England as "Commercial Hotel," although it was just undergoing extensive structural alterations and renovations, which *may* eventually turn it into a "first-class" establishment, but were not conducive either to quietness or comfort. A keen-eyed, intelligent lift-boy did his best to relieve the tedium of a snail-pace ascension to the third floor. He had all manner of interesting information, and as he spoke he exhaled a strange pungent odour which might easily have been mistaken for acetylene gas, but which our knowledge of things Italian soon identified as salami in course of digestion. One of his news-items was that the staircase was being rebuilt and could therefore

not be used. "But what is one to do in case of fire?" asked Belle, in a state of mild alarm.

"You joost ring for ze elevator!" was the naïve rejoinder.

Distinctly comforting! Only, the maximum speed of the lift was such as to make the odds against the possibility of escape somewhat heavy. It was fortunate that the emergency did not arise that night.

Pomponius had wrapped himself in glum silence for the last hour or so—any departure from regular hours for meals was sufficient to check his conversational energy. He only became himself again when, not before half-past eight, at a pleasant restaurant near the famous Teatro Carlo Felice, we did justice to a very substantial dinner, in the ordering of which Dan displayed a creditable knowledge of Italian culinary art. It was not, however, wholly due to a dulling of our critical faculties by generous libations and palatable fare, that modern Genoa found us in an enthusiastically appreciative mood when a post-prandial promenade took us through the brilliantly illuminated new Via Venti Settembre. Even Pomponius, habitually contemptuous of all modern architecture that is not derived from eighteenth-century France, had nothing but praise for this remarkable instance of intelligent "town-planning," and for the perfect use made here of a great opportunity.

Genoa is a city of noble architectural traditions; and the modern Genoese, animated by a spirit which is, alas! but too rare in progressive, commercial,

matter-of-fact young Italy, have here proved themselves worthy descendants of their art-loving ancestry. This splendid arcaded street, nearly a kilometre in length, is a very history of Italian architecture from Byzantine and Romanesque times to the golden days of the Renaissance, written in solid stone. Every group of three arches illustrates another style, and yet the heterogeneous elements are so skilfully combined, the proportions so perfect, that the effect is dignified and imposing where the slightest mistake might have led to a grotesque result. The crowning achievement is the Monumental Bridge, about half-way down the street, a splendidly conceived viaduct connecting the two parts of another important artery of traffic on a higher level. The noble span of the arch, with its admirably groined vaulting, inevitably suggested an invidious comparison with the three tunnels, weighed down by heavy masonry, erected between the Mall and Trafalgar Square in our city of lost architectural opportunities.

Having in the course of our examination of the building material—unpolished marble of every possible variety, and not painted stucco as Pomponius had pardonably assumed—become separated from the other half of our *partie carrée*, we retraced our steps to the old town, down towards the harbour. In addition to one common objective, the Cathedral of S. Lorenzo, of which wonderful building we both carried haunting recollections, each of us had his own special incentive. Pomponius yearned to taste the romance of Genoa *intime*, the mystery of the narrow, steep, dimly-

lighted streets, where the rare passers-by assume the air of spectres, and where the stillness of night is only broken now and then by vague sounds and by the echoes of your own steps. My motive may be deemed more prosaic. The name of Pietro Romanengo, so rhythmic in its roundness, after sleeping for fifteen years in some pigeon-hole of my brain-box, had suddenly begun to reverberate in its recess. It recalled pleasant memories from the far-away past, of a chance encounter at a private hotel in Nervi with the bearer of that musical name; and of a permit, scribbled on the Cavaliere's card, to roam at will in his famous orchards, stocked with the choicest of choice fruits—memories, too, of a visit to his premises in Genoa, where the pick of the orchards was temptingly displayed, preserved in a transparent coat of sugar, but with all the juice and aroma of the fresh fruit, and packed in neatly arranged boxes. Pietro Romanengo's preserved fruits were for Genoa what *panforte* is for Siena, *vermouth* for Turin, *mortadella* for Bologna. The lighthouse of Genoa and her Campo Santo, with its rows of vulgar atrocities in marble, may have rivalled, but did not exceed, their fame. And dim memory located Pietro Romanengo somewhere near the cathedral, whither we strolled guided by our mutual and individual longings.

The cathedral, that wondrous patchwork of many centuries encased in a shell of alternating courses of black and white marble, imposed silence upon our wagging tongues. In the dim light it rose, majestic and yet unreal and unsubstantial, to lose itself in the

obscure depth of the nocturnal sky. Whatever it may reveal to the sun's searching rays of the decay of age or of aggressively new restorations, was now obliterated in a soft warm shimmer. We found it difficult to tear ourselves away from the magic of the scene, and only recovered our voices when the vulgar glare of a "cinema theatre" brought us back to the prose of this twentieth-century world. In Italy more than anywhere else, there is something unaccountably and indescribably sordid about the sham splendour of these "picture theatres," which in many of the smaller towns have quite usurped the place of opera and playhouse. Could anything be more depressing than the sight of the wretched people buzzing like moths around the cruelly brilliant circle of electric light; so indiscreet in the revelation of miserable poverty thirsting for amusement, and of shoddiness as ill-concealed under a floridly decorated exterior, as are the ravages of time on a woman's face by the clumsy application of paint and powder.

*Mare senza pesci, monti senza legno, uomini senza fede, donne senza vergogna*<sup>1</sup> runs an often-quoted saying (probably of Tuscan origin) about Genoa. I know nothing of the submarine life in the bay, and had no opportunity to study the character of the men of Genoa; but the approach to the town from the mountains had sufficiently demonstrated the injustice of the assertion *monti senza legno*, and our nocturnal stroll certainly revealed nothing to justify the last

<sup>1</sup> Sea without fish, mountains without wood, men without faith, women without shame.

portion of the proverb, nothing to offend the susceptibilities of Puritanism incarnate.

We had plunged into a very labyrinth of dark, narrow lanes, where romantic adventure or unknown danger might have lurked in every dim corner, in every open passage, court, or doorway. Pomponius did his best to put himself into a frame of mind in harmony with the weird unreality of the place. The wide curves with which he circumscribed all patches of darkness looked as if he had managed fairly well to thrill himself by this auto-suggestion. He certainly was more successful in his quest than I in mine, for Pietro Romanengo I could not find, nor was information as to his whereabouts to be elicited from those to whom I addressed the question—unlikely frequenters, it must be admitted, of a fashionable confectionery. We finally climbed a long narrow flight of stairs between high walls, and emerged in the street of palaces not far from our hotel, where we found Belle and Dan awaiting us not without mild alarm at the cause of our late arrival.

Italians never seem to sleep, unless they happen to be in charge of a cart and horses on the high roads frequented by motor-cars, in which case the trumpets of the Last Judgment appear to be unable to detach them from the embrace of Morpheus. Late as it was when we retired to rest in charge of the acetyleneous lift-boy, the street-noises kept me awake until I drowsed off from sheer exhaustion. But before the clock had struck five, my fitful slumber was broken by a hubbub of shrill voices, screaming,

shouting, quarrelling, accompanied by sharp detonations. What had happened? Was the hotel on fire? Had Genoa risen in revolt? I rushed to the window. No! there was no revolution—not even a street-fight! But the vegetable and fruit-market was in full swing in the piazza, and buyers and sellers were trying, in the fashion of their excitable race, to come to an understanding concerning differences of a soldo or two. And the nerve-racking detonations emanated from Genoa's hopefuls practising their favourite sport, whip-cracking. Was it in Genoa that Schopenhauer was driven by these youthful tormentors to his diatribe against whip-cracking?

We were all up early that morning to make the best of the few hours before the resumption of our journey. When we met at breakfast at nine o'clock, I was the triumphant possessor of a large box of preserved fruit—not, indeed, Pietro Romanengo's, but a make scarcely inferior to his, which I had discovered in the Via Balbi. Dan had ascertained that we had again lit upon a *festa*, and that there was no possibility of turning paper into cash, unless the hotel proprietor could be inspired with sufficient confidence; and Pomponius, haggard with sleeplessness, and his nerves twitching at every new effort on the part of one of the whip-cracking fiends stationed outside the breakfast-room window, had again provided our table with a cargo of figs and grapes of his own marketing. "The brute!" he groaned at a particularly resonant detonation; "he followed me all over the market with his beastly





"The Vegetable and Fruit Market was in full swing," Genoa



whip. For two pins I'd have wrung his neck!" But nobody had volunteered to provide the fee for the youthful miscreant's punishment, so that Pomponius escaped a conflict with the municipal guardians of the law. They are an elegant, dandified body of men, these Genoese police officers, with their immaculate white gloves, glossy silk hats, well-cut long frock-coats, and massive walking-sticks. But they are thoroughly efficient in the execution of their duties. When the market broke up at nine o'clock, the whole piazza was littered with bits of paper and refuse of every description. Half-an-hour later, when we left the hotel, the square was as trim as a bandbox, thanks to the energy and authority of the very unmartial town police.

Systematic sight-seeing was not in our Genoese programme. It had, in fact, been our intention to run through Genoa and spend the night at one of the resorts on the Riviera di Levante. But since the delays on the road had made us deviate from our purpose, it was only natural that we should seize this opportunity to renew acquaintance with the best that Genoa has contributed to the history of art: the final and most perfect form given by the Renaissance to splendid domestic architecture. It has often been stated that the narrowness and steepness of the Genoese streets made Galeazzo Alessi, the real founder of the Genoese palatial style, and his followers neglect the exterior and devote their entire attention to the development of a sumptuous interior plan with a lofty, spacious vestibule with free-standing

columns, leading to a monumental staircase. Whilst it is true that these features were given an unrivalled nobility of proportions, there are only very few instances in which these new elements were developed at the sacrifice of the exterior. The palatial façades of the Via Garibaldi and Via Balbi, with but few exceptions, are by no means unworthy of the interiors. They have not the imaginative playfulness of the Venetian palaces, nor the sense of solid power conveyed by the palazzi of Florence, but their magnificent, stately proportions are the ideal expression of the tastes of the splendour-loving Genoese nobility, and their refinement of architectural detail is the more remarkable, as many of them belong to a period which in other parts of the country was marked by extravagant floridness of style.

The palace we had singled out for our visit was the Palazzo Durazzo-Pallavicini, but as we arrived before the hour when strangers are admitted, we whiled away the intervening minutes in the aula of the University Palace close by. The grand pillared hall and marble staircase of Bartolommeo Bianco's noblest building are surely the last word in Genoese architecture. Standing by the marble lions at the foot of that monumental flight of stairs, and drinking in the beauty, the classic rhythm, the harmonious balance of this hall, is it possible not to experience that strange, indescribable, soaring feeling produced only by the majestic moods of nature and by the perfect masterpieces of heaven-inspired genius? Reduced to silence, you call up visions of Veronesean

feasts and pageants ; you people the stairs and landings and balustrades with picturesque groups of proud, dignified nobles and merchant-princes and their women-folk sumptuously attired in heavy silks, velvets, and brocades—the Balbi and the Brignole-Sale, and the Cattaneo, such as they appear in the portraits left by Van Dyck's inspired brush. Does not the *milieu*, the atmosphere of the place, suffice to explain the inimitable distinction and princely bearing of the Balbi children in the great Fleming's masterpiece that Lord Lucas has lent to our National Gallery? Meanness of type and character are wholly incompatible with such framework. And so you abandon yourself to dreams of the golden age of Genoa, until you are rudely awakened by the aggressive touch of modern Italy. Your eyes alight suddenly upon whole rows of printed and written placards, time-tables, regulations, and official announcements, which, breaking disastrously into the harmonious lines of columns and pilasters, are as destructive to communion with the *genius loci*, as are the cards with "Please do not spit!" in the mysterious twilight of cathedral or church, or the inscriptions *Police Station*, *Cassa di Risparmio*, &c., over the doors of many a mediæval Italian palace stripped of every vestige of artistic adornment to the very door-knockers and mantelpieces, and annexed by a paternal government to serve the prosaic uses of modern municipal life.

The clock struck ten, and we hurried through a passing shower back to the Pallavicini mansion. A

young Franciscan monk was already waiting at the door. An angelic smile spread over his pale handsome face when he found that we, too, were bent upon obtaining admission. The door was opened by an antediluvian family-retainer, with at least five decades experience to help him in gauging the amount of the *buona mano* likely to accrue. The humble Franciscan might have aroused his suspicion; but one glance was enough to reassure him that we had been thrown together by a mere accident. The *custode's* features were as eloquent as words. In a second he had satisfied himself: "Inglese—good! Motorists—better! Which of them? He of the expensive coat!" And forthwith he wisely attached himself to Dan, hurrying us through the spacious vestibule and scarcely allowing us time to examine Tagliafico's glorious staircase, on which Pomponius would fain have lingered to vindicate his passion for the eighteenth century.

We were ushered through the long flight of rooms, badly lighted, and filled from floor to ceiling with the usual accumulation of indifferent or dingy pictures, with now and then a masterpiece—a wonderfully painted portrait of a boy in a white satin costume by Van Dyck, a full length of Philip IV. by Rubens, some wrongly attributed but to the student very attractive early German masters, and a few fine works of the later Venetian school: the typical Genoese gallery. It is the same in all these palaces—few, if any, Italian primitives; a predominance of the Northern Schools, which makes one wonder whether

Van Dyck, the idol of the Genoese during his stay in their city, did not influence their taste in collecting, or even act as agent charged with the importation of Flemish and German works; and a flood of uninspired, though scholarly, paint, poured out by the eclectic and decadent schools of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Italy. What pleasure might be derived from the investigation of problematic works attributed to Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, Brueghel, or anonymous Germans and Dutchmen at these galleries, is invariably spoilt by the importunities of the guide, who hustles you away from these "barbaric" attempts to point out to you the glories of some Carracci, or Sassoferrato, or Domenichino. Our antediluvian specimen had singled out poor Dan for his particular victim; and though Dan has a wholesome distaste for the late Bolognese, he was not spared a single Guercino, or Guido Reni, or Carracci. I dropped behind—but it was merely falling from the frying-pan into the fire, for I had scarcely installed myself before an early Fleming, when a timid hand was laid on my arm. I turned round and faced our young Franciscan with features lighted up by a beatific smile. He pointed towards a dingy "St. Francis receiving the Stigmata." "*Il nostro Santo!*" (our saint) breathed his soft voice, enveloping me in a cloud of that acetylenic salami-exhalation with which the lift-boy had already familiarised me. I tried to be interested in the object of his veneration. It was my undoing. For there is not a room in the Palazzo but has its representation of "*il nostro Santo,*" "*il nostro maestro,*" "*il beato*

*Francesco*"; and my Franciscan was in mortal fear lest I should overlook the founder of his order. And to this day I cannot dissociate St. Francis of Assisi from the pungent odour of garlic sausage.

Dan did not disappoint the fossilized retainer's expectations. We were bowed out with many *grazie, signori!* into the drizzling rain, and the Franciscan, having urged me not to fail to include Assisi and La Verna in our itinerary, commended us to the protection of his saint. Alas! St. Francis must have been displeased with his disciple's unvegetarian diet, for it was in the country around his mountain retreat that we were to suffer some of our worst tribulations.

We found the Cricket waiting at the hotel door, and Ryder highly pleased with a town sufficiently civilised to produce a properly equipped garage and a vulcaniser. Between the arcades of the Via Venti Settembre, by the Ponte Pila across the wide but almost waterless bed of the Bisagno river, and through the ugly new Corso Buenos Ayres—always in a line as straight as an arrow—we made for the Eastern Riviera road to Quarto, Quinto, and Nervi. A matter of not more than six miles—but six miles that in many ways recalled the horrors of our entry into Genoa from the other side. True enough, there was less dirt and noise and heavy traffic, for the eastern suburbs of Genoa are almost entirely residential, an endless succession of villas and gardens, but the road follows a double electric tram-line through many



narrow, tortuous windings, and is in constant conflict with the railway at the level-crossings that follow one upon another at absurdly short intervals. At Quinto we had a hair's-breadth escape from being crushed between two tram-cars rushing in opposite directions in a street so narrow as to leave only just enough room for the two lumbering cars. Nothing could have saved us but Ryder's *sang-froid*. Putting on full speed, he managed to pass the car on our left and to avoid the other with a snake-like twist, gauging his time to a fraction of a second. The slightest miscalculation, and none of us would have been left to tell the tale. The wonder is how a single day can pass on this dangerous road without some serious accidents. The regulation here, for a few miles east of Genoa, is as in England: Keep to the left! But it might as well not exist for all the notice taken of it by Italian drivers. Beyond Nervi one has to follow again the generally adopted continental rule of keeping to the right. Notice boards to that effect are scarcely needed. The fact of all the carters hugging obstinately the left side of the road, instead of going wherever the spirit may move them, is sufficient to indicate that you are beyond the jurisdiction of Genoa.

Fortunately the rain had ceased a few minutes after we had left the town, so that we were able to dispense with the Cape-hood and to enjoy the balmy warmth of the sun as we stood waiting at successive level-crossings. A goods train had left Genoa just before us, and as we moved a little faster than this train, we invariably found the barrier closed at the

crossings, and had to wait in patience, sometimes for ten minutes and more, to give it a new start. This game must have been repeated a dozen times between Genoa and Recco, near which little town the conflict between road and rail ceases, thanks to a 3000 m. tunnel across the Portofino Promontory. We were all struck during our long waits at the intelligent interest taken by the natives, young and old, in the mechanism of our steam car. Although to most of them it was a novelty, their questions and mutual explanations showed that they knew almost as much about its working as any mechanician of average experience.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the scenic charms of this far-famed stretch of the Riviera. Guide-books are full of their praise. They give long lists of trees and plants that flourish in this blessed region; they star many a famous garden and cheerfully painted villa, and enlarge upon the picturesqueness of the fortified hills that protect the great harbour. Well—we saw the wondrous botanical specimens on both sides of the road covered with such a thick coating of white dust that Linné himself would have been severely taxed to distinguish between olive and aloe and chestnut-tree. Towering sun-baked walls concealed the delights of the far-famed gardens, of which only now and then a lightning glimpse was obtained through a wrought-iron entrance-gate. The painted colonnades and sham architectural features of the villas were too suggestive of inferior scene-painting to arouse anything but pity at the childish device

at concealing the structural unattractiveness that made itself felt under the painted plaster. And Genoa with her fortified hills lay behind us, and could not be detected without craning of necks. Besides, the ever-present dangers of ill-regulated traffic were not conducive to the enjoyment of scenic attractions.

Nervi is an extraordinary instance of peaceful conquest by colonisation. It is a complete German town on the Italian coast. England, too, has annexed a portion of the Riviera di Levante. The best part of that garden of Eden, known as the Portofino Promontory, is owned or rented by British subjects. But it has all been done unostentatiously; no outward sign betrays the fact. At Nervi, on the other hand, the Teutonic predominance is thrust upon you in unmistakable fashion even as you swiftly glide through the main street in a motor-car. The names of the villas, the fascia-boards over the shops proclaim the German nationality of their owners. The place of the *Libreria* is taken by the *Deutsche Buchhandlung*; the *Salumeria* is ousted by the *Delikatessenhandlung*; the *Vendita di Vino* by *Münchener Bier*. There are German printers and German tailors, German *pensions* and German chemists. Even the windows of the few shops that are owned by Italians bear the announcement, *Man spricht Deutsch*.

It was only when we had left Nervi behind us and saw the densely wooded slope of Monte Portofino jutting out into the blue gulf, that we felt we had really left the confines of Genoa, for Nervi is as firmly linked

to Genoa as Eltham is to London on the Folkestone road. Up to now we had moved on fairly level ground, but a mile or so before Recco we rose to a height of about 250 feet, only to descend again almost to the sea-level at Recco, where the road branches off the coast-line to cut across the promontory. The two and a half miles thence to Ruta were a pleasant climb through a very garden of Paradise, between trailing vines, high creeper-clad walls, olive and orange-trees, blossoming oleander and gaily coloured flowers of every description to a height of 951 feet. More than once pleasant smiling faces peered at us from among the verdure of high-perched pergolas; and Pomponius, yielding to the contagious happy mood of the *milieu*, threw British reserve to the wind and blew kisses in response to every smile, conceitedly claiming for himself alone any acknowledging gesture or high-pitched *buon viaggio!* *Addio!*

Thanks to level-crossings, tram-cars, restive mules, and other obstacles, we had taken a full two hours for the fourteen miles from Genoa. It was now one o'clock, and we all agreed that lunch on the summit would be more pleasant than in the heat of the sheltered bay at Rapallo. The "Bellevue" Hotel, facing the gates of the Kursaal gardens, did not belie its name. The view from the dining-room balcony was a sight not easily to be forgotten. Above a tangle of vegetation of tropical luxuriance extending far down the hillside, was to be seen the whole littoral of the Riviera di Levante and Ponente—range after



"Smiling faces among the verdure and high-perched pergolas"



Waiting at a level-crossing



range of gently sloping hills leading the eye to the wide sweeps of the coast-line, the receding distances clearly marked by infinitely delicate changes of tone from green to grey-green and delicate blue, until on the far, far horizon all definition was obliterated by the rain that had drifted west from Genoa.

The Bellevue was a German establishment, and proclaimed itself as such in the heavy accent and broad shoulders of the attentive bearded proprietor, in the by no means unpalatable intrusion of Teutonic elements into an avowedly Italian menu, and in an indefinable something about the whole appearance of the place—an unpretentious homeliness and absence of taste, such as are still to be found in the remoter parts of the Fatherland. There was also something of old-fashioned German honesty in the charges, which were surprisingly low for a hotel in so favoured a position, and under circumstances which might easily tempt a less worthy host to fleece the passing tourist. In this connection I think it only right emphatically to contradict the frequently-made assertion that motorists are the special prey of continental hotel-keepers. In the course of several tours through many countries I have been singularly free from any such unpleasant experience, whilst I have often been surprised by unexpectedly moderate charges, even where absence of competition places the traveller at his host's mercy. The only danger is that in first-class establishments, if you meekly submit to the ruling of the *chef de réception*, you are likely to

be given the gala-rooms, for which, of course, the charges are correspondingly high.

Beyond Ruta the road leads through a tunnel 243 feet in length, then passes San Lorenzo, and descends in three swinging curves to Rapallo. Up and down, with many a twist and turn, now rising to 656 feet, then descending again almost to the level of the sea, and always between luxuriant gardens and olive groves, with ever new enchanting vistas either back towards Portofino or east towards Chiavari, shining out in dazzling whiteness from the verdure of the luxuriant plain, church-crowned hills on the left, the ultramarine and violet Mediterranean on the right, this wonderful highway continues for fourteen miles to Sestri Levante. Everything was as pleasant as could be desired, the Cricket running as smoothly as a sledge through the intoxicating scent bred of hot sunshine on a sub-tropical flora. It would have been ideal but for the excitement caused at every bend of the road by the unexpected meeting with carelessly driven traps, herds of goats or sheep, and beasts of burden of every description. On one occasion a young mule took a sudden fright, broke loose, and had to be chased by its cursing and wildly gesticulating owner for a good half-mile. Cursing in no mild manner, to be sure; but not, as he might well have done, at the innocent cause of his race in the scorching heat. His *sacra bestia!* *animale porco!* and other terms of endearment were flung at his lively animal. With the fugitive once more in his safe custody, he had nothing but a good-natured smile for



us, a raised hat, and words of gratitude for Ryder's considerate driving.

About a mile from Sestri the Spezia road branches off to the right from the one leading through a succession of high passes to Fornovo, the scene of Charles VII.'s last victory on Italian soil, to Parma and Mantua or Modena. At Trigoso, another mile further, it turns inland towards the Bracco Pass, away from the railway which returns to the coast after following the high road across the promontory between Sestri and Riva.

Let any one who is sceptical about the boon of the motor-car for travelling humanity take train on a hot August or September day from Sestri to Spezia, and let him return by car. The discomfort of the train journey amounts to positive suffering. There are, on a stretch of twenty-six miles, about thirty tunnels, one of them over two miles in length. Quite apart from the unbearable heat, the dirt, and the nauseating smell of inferior coal-smoke, you are constantly precipitated from underground blackness into blinding sunlight, only to be thrust back again into night before your eyes have become accustomed to the glare of the Southern sun reflected from the mirror of the sea.

But who can describe the fascination of the thirty-four miles of perfect road, which by rapid stages of change seem to exhaust the possibilities of nature at this latitude? Certainly not Baedeker, whose soulless compilers, unless they happen upon the snow and ice of alpine peaks, reserve their stars for the vicinity of palatial hotels, and are blind to the grandeur of

a vast loneliness. Nowhere, not even on the highest Tyrolese mountain passes, with their wealth of contrasts from the idyllic to the majestic and terrifying, can I recall such a rush of impressions, so fleeting that they are as difficult to disentangle and to put in orderly sequence as the blurred details of a dream after the awakening.

The topographic facts that may be of use to motorists are simple enough: an easy steady climb of seven miles, first through woods, then across a heath with dense heather and furze, from 40 feet at Trigoso to an altitude of 1014 feet at Bracco, then a further ascent with many windings and much switchbacking across steep gullies and wild clefts to the stony summit of the pass at a height of 2011 feet, about two and a half miles from Bracco; then a gentle descent to Baracca (1932 feet, two miles), an up-and-down course through magnificently wooded hill-land with repeated doubling back to avoid inconveniently steep gradients at the river-crossings, for ten miles to Borghetto (361 feet); about four miles of fairly level course along the wide and stony bed of the serpentine Vara river; and a final climb to Riccò (459 feet) and La Foce (791 feet, ten miles from Borghetto) on a sheer height above Spezia, so near at hand and yet nearly three miles away by the length of the white band that twists down the mountain-side.

Only few points stand out with tolerable clearness from the mist of vague impressions. First, an almost abrupt change, soon after the azure sheet of the



The Riviera, from the Hotel Bellevue, Ruta



The Cricket on the Bracco Pass



Mediterranean disappears behind Monte Moneglia, from sub-tropical character to a type of country that almost recalled the Surrey Hills; a "Devil's Punch-bowl" on a vastly magnified scale, but painted with an altogether different palette, the juicy greens and the blue and purple distances of England being replaced by those delicate atmospheric grey and silvery greens with the darker accents of black cypresses, which are so characteristic of Italy. From among the heather and gorse by the roadside an occasional flash of deep wine-red, the favourite colour adopted by Ligurian peasant women for the kerchiefs which constitute their headgear. Then, where vegetation ceases, a stony wilderness of forbidding grandeur, more awe-inspiring even than the mighty desolation of the alpine heights, because it combines the character of the mountain fastness with that of the desert. And far below, through the opening of deep, wooded gullies, the blue Mediterranean. Through alternating pine, oak, and beech woods, orchards, chestnut woods, according to the variations of altitude; through village after village in *festa*; past char-à-bancs, traps, market-carts, filled to their utmost capacity with laughing, singing, chattering contadini and their women-folk—the horses and mules more often in charge of Providence rather than of the wineous driver. And never a meeting with passing merry-makers without an exchange of banter, without waving hands and handkerchiefs. The climax was reached at beflagged and crowded Borghetto, where we halted amidst a loquacious and inquisitive crowd

to refresh ourselves and our water-tank. A little outside the crowd attracted by the car, and watching us with a wistful look, sat a lady whose pale and refined features and unostentatiously smart costume proclaimed the townswoman at a *villeggiatura*. The host of the inn explained: tired out after a long walk, husband and friend started on return tramp, leaving her behind to drive home; no conveyance available owing to *fiesta*; would we be chivalrous and give her a lift? I moved towards her, and a sunny, winsome smile betrayed her confidence in the purpose of my move. She took my front seat and I settled down at her feet. Pomponius was bursting with envy at the liveliness of our conversation, which her musical voice and soft accent made him mistake for a flirtation. She was the wife of a naval officer stationed at Spezia, and *in villeggiatura* in the mountains. She had never been in a car, and made a brave effort to conceal her alarm at the unwonted speed. She was delighted and proud like a child, when we overtook her menfolk and lost sight of them again in a cloud of dust. But she stood aghast and speechless with surprise when, having arrived at her destination, I told her that I was now going to collect the fare. She only regained her composure, and blushed with pleasure at the compliment, when I explained that the fee consisted in permission to take her photograph as a tangible memento of an unforgettable half-hour. Soon after we had left her, we were at the height of La Foce and beheld, gleaming in the afternoon

sun, the marble-snow of the Carrara mountains far beyond the vast harbour of Spezia.

ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Genoa . . . . .	17	...	...
Nervi . . . . .	...	10	10
Recco . . . . .	...	10	20
Ruta . . . . .	951	4	24
Rapallo . . . . .	17	7	31
Chiavari . . . . .	49	13	44
Sestri Levante . . . . .	...	8½	52½
Bracco . . . . .	1014	11½	64
Baracchino (Summit of Pass) . . . . .	2011	6	70
Baracca . . . . .	1932	3	73
Borghetto . . . . .	361	15	88
Riccò . . . . .	791	5	93
La Foce . . . . .	459	13	106
Spezia . . . . .	...	4	110

## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE MARBLE COUNTRY



IN the early sixties, before she had become the chief naval basis of Italy, Spezia was a little town of just above 8000 souls. To-day her inhabitants exceed 40,000 in number. The story of this rapid growth is reflected in the whole aspect of the town. The very plan of Spezia—a system of parallel lines at regular intervals and crossing at right angles—recalls the square blocks of some new transatlantic mushroom city. Spezia has none of the irregularities, accidents, and surprises of a town that has *grown*; it is obviously a town that has been *planned* and *made*. It is a significant fact that the guide-books never as much as mention a single church or palace, picture or relic of the past. The sights of Spezia are the harbour-works, and the war-ships anchored in the offing, and other modern constructions that belong to the age of engineering, and not to the age of art. For the rest, the attractions of Spezia begin when you leave the town, or at least when from the sea-front your eye wanders over the glorious panorama of the gulf and the semicircle of strongly fortified hills covered with acres upon acres of olive-groves.



What has become of the old town? Has it been altogether sacrificed to utilitarian necessities and sanitary improvements? Did it ever exist? The pages of history have nothing to say of Spezia, though at the time of Strabo the harbour was already renowned as one of the largest and safest of all natural harbours, whilst its strategic value did not escape the eagle eye of Napoleon, whose dream it was to make Spezia his chief military port. The snow-white city that we had seen so temptingly spread out from the height of La Foce, proved a disappointment at close quarters. We discussed the advisability of running on to Sarzana. Our mileage for the day had been short, and we had journeyed in comfort. But there is a kind of fatigue that demands rest more imperatively than mere physical exhaustion: the fatigue of the senses, caused by a surfeit of pleasurable impressions, which we all felt in varying degrees. At any rate, the question could be settled over a cheering cup of tea at the *Croce di Malta*.

And it was settled without much hesitation by a combination of circumstances; the new and rather fascinating aspect of Spezia from the hotel; a sore throat and a touch of neuralgia developed by Belle, the mention of which made Pomponius feel the symptoms of quite a string of ailings; and, above all, the inviting aspect of the prepared tables at the restaurant, and the obvious relish with which a party of naval officers did justice to an early dinner. A spotlessly clean tablecloth, bright cutlery and glass, a giardinetto of luscious fruit piled up in a high

pyramid, and a straw-covered *fiasco* swinging in a plated stand, combined towards forming a still-life that could hardly be resisted by weary and hungry travellers. Belle's inspection of the bedrooms proved, moreover, eminently satisfactory; airy rooms of palatial spaciousness, cool stone floors, comfortable beds, and a view across the public gardens upon the bay affording ample compensation for the other shortcomings of Spezia.

But the heat! bad enough in itself, it was made more unbearable by the glow brought upon our faces through the rush of air in motoring. After sunset came relief in the shape of a gentle breeze from the sea; and, like the rest of the town, we strolled through the aloë avenue of the public gardens to the harbour basin and the deserted mole. Out in the bay loomed the massive shape of a solitary man-of-war—the rest of the battleships and cruisers were engaged in the naval manœuvres further South—but close to the jetty lay a whole flotilla of torpedo-destroyers, in charge, so it seemed, of a single bluejacket, with whom, encouraged by Pomponius, I entered into conversation. It needed but little persuasion to obtain his permission to step on board one of the destroyers, which was as spick and span as if it were prepared for official inspection—as spick and span as the man who acted as our guide, or, indeed, as any of the Italian Jack-tars in their spotless white jackets whom we had seen on shore. The Jack-tar's clean, healthy life seems to efface all the differences of national temperament and even of type. No one could mistake a Ligurian conta-

dino for a Somerset farmer, or an English "Tommy" for an Italian *fantassino*; but between the British and the Italian bluejackets there is not much difference, apart from the colour of their coats. The mean, scowling, discontented faces so often to be found among the soldiers of Italy have no counterpart in the Italian navy; and the behaviour of Jack on land, so far as it came to our notice, can only be described as exemplary.

The closing hours of a holiday might have afforded a reasonable excuse for boisterous rowdiness and drunkenness in the town. But if there was any suggestion of unseemly behaviour, if there were ribald jokes and coarse words and quarrellings, the Navy took no share in them. In pairs, in threes, and in larger groups, the white Jack-tars joined in the evening promenade of the Corso Cavour and the Via Chiodo, the centres of such social life as Spezia can boast of. They chatted cheerfully enough among themselves, but not with the obtrusive liberty born of the cup, and only few of them strayed into the drinking saloons.

Still, heavy drinking cannot be wholly unknown in this whitest of white cities. The chemist, whose *farmacia* we three men invaded late in the evening in search of lozenges for Belle's throat, was clearly accustomed to deal with "bank holiday cases." If ever imbecility was writ large on human features, it was on his bullet-head with its bulging eyes, snub-nose, receding chin, thick lips, and wide-open mouth. Appearances may be deceptive, but he seemed a

dangerous individual to be left in charge of drugs and poisons. He had the vacant stare of a somnambulist and the manner of—well, he whistled when we entered the shop, and he never stopped whistling while we tried to explain to him what we wanted. Neither Dan nor I could remember the Italian term for lozenges; and Pomponius was always silent on these occasions. Something *per la gola*—for the throat—was the best we could muster. A faint gleam of intelligence illumined the chemist's features: "Capisco! Which one? We all do it sometimes—*fiesta* does not come every day!" And he resumed his whistling the while he compounded a poisonous-looking pick-me-up to clear the supposed bacchic reveller's head. The sight of the mixture was more than Pomponius could resist. On the principle that Prevention is better than Cure—which had already acted as an excuse for a double dose of cognac—he gulped down the contents of the glass. He could rise to real heroism where his physical welfare was concerned, and he enjoyed the consciousness of appearing a hero both to the chemist and to us. However, on this occasion he was spared the penalty for his rashness.

Everything promised a restful night. The nocturnal buzz of Spezia was like funereal stillness after the roar of Genoa. The beds were delicious. A gentle breeze carried just a faint trace of the fresh smell of the sea through the open windows. The open windows! . . . Why do Italian hotel-keepers, waiters, and chambermaids never issue a warning to make the unsuspecting traveller take protective measures

against those tormenting fiends known throughout the country by the onomatopedic term *zanzare*. Why cannot their honesty rise to a frank admission that such things as mosquitoes have been known to exist in the locality? To ensure comparative immunity one would only have to keep the windows closed while the lights are up. In the absence of this simple precaution, the little fiends enter the bedrooms, attracted by the lights, and begin their malicious attacks as soon as their prey has gone off to sleep. Now, if there is anything worse than the irritating bite of the mosquito, it is the expectation of that bite when you hear the high-pitched *bzzz* of his war-cry. To wake up with itching bumps all over your forehead and knuckles is not apt to make you look upon the world through rose-coloured spectacles—even if your first glance alights upon as rare a sight as the Gulf of Spezia in the morning sun. But it is a hundred times preferable to the interminable hours spent in fighting an invisible enemy, when an unlucky chance has made you aware of his presence. You hear the shrill *bzzz*; you dive under the bed-clothes till you get almost choked; you wrap yourself up in the sheet, leaving just a little opening for your mouth and nose; you get into a state of feverish perspiration and throw off your things, only to pull them over you the tighter. Sleep is impossible whilst you hear the concert of the *zanzare*; and you rise in the morning with heavy eyes and aching limbs.

Pomponius was anything but sympathetic at breakfast next morning. “Fancy making all that fuss,”

he said contemptuously; "just look at me! Now I *have* been bitten, and you don't hear me complaining. If there's any mosquito or other insect about it's sure to come to *me*. Last time I was in Venice"—and we were regaled to a vivid description of what happened in Venice which so completely absorbed Pomponius's interest that he absent-mindedly abolished the entire *giardinetto*—grapes, peaches, figs, and all—which a kind Providence had placed upon our table.

We made a fairly early start. The programme was: lunch at Massa, with what sight-seeing might come our way en route; arrival at Lucca before four—two hours of churches and museums, a promenade along the famous plane-tree avenue on the city-walls which completely hide the town in a circle of verdure; an early dinner, and then an evening at the opera, if opera there be—of which we had little doubt. But man proposes, the right-hand-side back tyre disposes, as we were to learn before long.

Mere knowledge of the direction for which we had to make would have been of little use without the hotel porter's elaborate instructions, as the network of roads east of Spezia is very confusing. Fortunately there was a tram-line to be followed nearly as far as the cemetery, a little over two miles from the town; and then the main line of the railway to Pisa, which we had to keep to our left until we approached the Magra valley. This river has to be kept to the left until some distance beyond Arcola, between which little town and Sarzana the road crosses both the railway and the Magra. Along the whole distance

the road, where it does not pass through olive woods, is bordered by mulberry and other trees connected by garlands of trailing vines. The peasant women with their red kerchiefs tied around their glowing faces, and with heavily-laden fruit-baskets poised on their heads or swinging from their arms, seemed to have stepped out of the frames of some of Mr. La Thangue's Ligurian pictures—living testimony to the truth of that fine artist's power of observation.

Not before we stopped in front of the white marble façade of the Gothic Duomo of Sarzana did we realise the intensity of the heat on that morning of unclouded brightness. The glare of the sun on the cathedral front was so blinding that the subdued light of the cool interior seemed like black night until our eyes became accustomed to the changed conditions and began to realise the surprising beauty of this building—surprising because a Duomo of such magnificence seems strangely out of place in so small a community. The well-preserved fifteenth-century city-walls, erected a full century after the reconstruction of the Duomo into its final form, prove that even at the time of Sarzana's political importance the town did not extend beyond its present limits. The cathedral builders of Italy often failed to give their interiors a sense of loftiness and spaciousness commensurate to the gigantic scale of their erections. S. Petronio at Bologna, and even S. Maria del Fiore in Florence, may be quoted as examples of this disproportion between the means employed and the effect produced. The Duomo of

Sarzana is a pigmy compared with these two giants ; but the wide span of the nave, supported by four noble octagonal piers of probably earlier date than the refashioning of the fabric, is of such grand proportions as to make the interior appear far more spacious than one is led to expect by the front elevation.

Nor is the wealth of Sarzana Cathedral exhausted with architectural form. The monuments, it is true, belong to a late period that on the whole suffers from a lack of restraint and has not given many great personalities to Italian art ; but the tombs of Innocent XI. and Clement XI.—how did these Popes come to be buried in this remote spot?—though executed at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries respectively, are marked by so much sober dignity in the spirit of the best tradition of the late Renaissance, that I made a point of ascertaining the name of their author. “*Sono fatti dai Ricomani Sienesi,*” said the courteous sacristan, expectorating on the marble floor in defiance of the conspicuously posted warning against such misdemeanour in the House of God. I called Pomponius away from the rapturous contemplation of the spiral columns and fluttering angels, draperies of a rococo altar to coax him into a grudging admission of the Sienese sculptor’s vastly superior talent. The most impressive feature of the Duomo is, however, the simple inscription on the tomb of Joseph Buonaparte’s second daughter, the wife of the Grand Duke of Berg, elder brother of Napoleon III. *Ici reste*



*Charlotte Napoleon Bonaparte, Digne de son Nom.* Charlotte Bonaparte died at Sarzana in 1839. History has nothing to record of her except in connection with the Napoleonic genealogy. But what a weight of proud meaning lies in that simple phrase, "Worthy of her name."

If the brightness of the day had made us blink before we entered the church, it absolutely blinded us as we stepped out from the soft twilight into the full glare. The leather seats of the car were almost too hot to sit on. The folk of Sarzana wisely kept indoors, so that the street was quite deserted but for a handcuffed wretch escorted by two carabinieri, whose regular military footfall resounded loudly from the stone pavement. Though in the course of our tour we frequently encountered representatives of this picturesque force, who always hunt in couples, and whose uniform is a survival of the late eighteenth-century military fashion, this was the only occasion on which they proved to serve another than a merely ornamental purpose.

We were now in the marble country, and for about twenty miles we could enjoy the wonderful spectacle of the grand mountain-range on our left. From those peaks, glittering with a whiteness to put virgin snow to shame, Europe has drawn her marble supply for many centuries, and many many more centuries will have to pass, many more quarries will have to be opened, many marble rocks will have to be blasted, before there can be any fear of the treasure becoming anything like exhausted.

On a rigidly straight, tree-lined, and excessively dusty road we passed near the site of the ancient city of Luni, from which the whole district derives the name Lunigiani, but which at some unknown period and from some unknown cause had vanished from the face of the earth, leaving but a few miserable ruins to recall its name. We came to Avenza, whence a little branch-line and a very bad road fork off towards Carrara, the first centre of the marble industry. Avenza, too, has a fine church. Nothing, however, would induce Belle to move in the enervating heat, and I was deputed by the others to investigate the interior and to report any discovery. Their instinct proved to be right. I could report nothing but "Cavaradossi"—a generic name we had given to those atrocities so frequently to be found in renovated Italian churches, which recall the ludicrous canvas on which the Cavaliere Cavaradossi is seen at work in the first act of "La Tosca" at Covent Garden—or, indeed, at any other opera-house. There must have been a whole army of Cavaradossi let loose in Italy at that time—and not enough Scarpias to rid the country from that plague.

Between Sarzana and Avenza we had already encountered a few carts drawn by powerful white oxen with large twisted horns, whose hoofs, stirring up the mountains of dust on the white road, filled the hot air with fine powder. Beyond Avenza things became considerably worse. The dust was now so thick and loose and dry that any passing light-footed dog would whirl it up in clouds. A little



Carting the Marble, near Massa



A Typical Cart in the Carrara District



gaily-painted Sicilian cart, pulled by a trotting horse, had the effect of a motor-car going at forty miles an hour on what we in England would call a very dusty road. The surface of the road was cut into ruts of such depth as we had never come across, and, to make matters worse, these ruts were frequently made invisible by the piled-up dust. How a highway could be left in such a state of neglect—how it ever could have got into such a condition—was incomprehensible to all of us until we discovered the cause of the mischief. From out a white cloud, towards which we had been moving for some time on that inflexible straight, emerged something monstrous and terrifying—a gigantic crawling white dragon or other prehistoric phantom-beast. Ryder slowed down, and as we drew nearer the apparition explained itself as a trailing and swaying line of ten white oxen in pairs, every two connected by a yoke on which a driver sat with dangling legs and with his back turned to the direction in which the procession was moving. Each of the men was armed with a long goad-stick; and to the five pairs of powerful beasts was attached a long platform-shaped cart on low wheels, on which rested a very mountain of white marble.

It was a wondrous sight. And its manifold repetition, with slight variations in the length of the oxen-teams, was sufficient to account not only for the condition of the road, but for the hopelessness of any attempt at effecting an improvement. Ryder derived what comfort he could from the fact that, con-

trary to the general custom of Italy, the carters were wideawake and kept to the right side of the road. If we suffered inconvenience from the dust, we learnt tolerance from these poor wretches who, on passing the Cricket, immediately disappeared in an opaque white cloud, and who yet never showed a sign of irritation, and were never lacking in courtesy. I wonder to what degree the exceptional alertness and wideawakeness of the Carrarese peasants and labourers is due to the fact that the marble industry is largely under English management.

Ducal Massa, the old capital of the Cybo princes, that great family of benevolent and cultured despots, is situated about 200 feet above the general level of the plain, and approached by a fine avenue which leads straight into the centre of the town, the Piazza Umberto I., one side of which is occupied by the truly magnificent Ducal Palace. However, we all agreed to leave sight-seeing until we should have assumed our normal aspect by vigorous scrubbing and generous application of hot water and soap at the Hotel Massa. As the car came to a standstill before the portico, the sudden ceasing of the current of air gave us the sensation of being precipitated without warning into a choking heat-wave. It was appalling. Belle was on the point of fainting, and only recovered in the comparative coolness of the hall. To go out into the noonday glare was now out of the question. And for the first time the luncheon hour found us in an unappreciative mood. We merely toyed with an appetising selection of antipasti and a chicken-

liver risotto, and confined our attention to a pyramid of fruit and a succession of iced drinks.

Indoors the temperature was quite pleasant. The hotel was luxurious, palatial, after the modest hostelryes where fate had landed us hitherto. It impressed one by a lavish disregard of the value of space; everything was big in scale, needless to say with an abundance of marble; no meretricious ornamentation, no overcrowding, nothing to offend the most sensitive eye. And the emptiness of the large apartments, especially of the large dining-room, gave one a certain sense of proprietorship and privacy. Pomponius startled us with one of his little shrieks of surprise when he raised one of the sun-blinds which had shut out the view from the dining-room windows. And there was abundant reason for his delighted "Oh!" Across a marvellous tropical tangle of vegetation, such as one does not expect to find at this latitude—palms and cactus of every description, trees and shrubs and masses of bright blossom to which none of us would venture to give a name—and outlined against a sky of such depth that it assumed the hue of indigo, on the crest of a high hill dominating the town, rose the massive walls and towers of the impregnable castle of the dukes of Massa-Carrara, the Rocca, now, of course, a prison, but a prison in Paradise.

Over our coffee we gleaned what information we could from available guide-books about Massa, her history and her rulers—the ten generations that held paternal sway over the Duchy for three centuries of

constant political upheavals in other Italian principalities. There was much praise of the "mild climate" of Massa, which alone was enough to make one sceptical. Elisa Bacciocchi, the great Napoleon's sister, was apparently better able to endure furnace temperature than we ordinary twentieth-century mortals, for she "chose the Palace of the Duke of Massa for her *summer* residence." We also had it in black and white that Massa, such as it is to-day, is the creation of Alberic the Great (1532-1623)—which is, to say the least, an exaggeration. Alberic's Massa became known by the significant name "la Dipinta" (the painted), yet the Massa which we saw after lunch had only one building with remains of exterior fresco decoration. Alberic's Massa had a fine cathedral in the centre of the square, which to-day is planted on three sides with flourishing orange-trees, the cathedral having been ruthlessly sacrificed to Elisa Bacciocchi's desire to have an open space before her windows. I suppose the thought came to her on one of those "mild" summer days. And the Palace itself, which *is* modern Massa, though it may have been begun by Alberic—the inner colonnaded court certainly suggests the cinquecento—belongs to the early days of the eighteenth century.

But the Palace—I can recall no other baroque building, not in Salzburg nor even in Vienna, in which an architectural style that is generally given to excessive floridness and bulging forms attains to such dignity and noble rhythm, without any loss of that light-hearted gaiety which is of the very



essence of the baroque. The very delicate white stucco ornamentation stands out against the rich red of the wall-surface. The grilled ground-floor windows have shell-shaped pediments surmounted by volutes on which rest the simple and elegant balconies of the first-floor windows. The pediments of each window on the first floor repeat the shell design, but smaller and flanked by two bold volutes leading up to a bust, the head of which forms the apex of a pyramid. All these features are accentuated by the flatness of the blank wall above, the very joints of the masonry being hidden under the coat of red paint. Above this solid wall follows a clearly articulated attic with a regular row of smaller windows, from the top of which spring forth the boldly projecting coffered eaves supported between the window-openings by pairs of massive corbels. To counteract any sense of monotony that may arise from an absolutely symmetrical disposition of the long-stretched façade, the very beautiful porch is not placed in the very centre of the building. The Ducal Palace was certainly a triumph for Pomponius.

Stucco and red paint would be mean material for so magnificent a building in any other town. But in Massa, where the streets are paved with marble, and where every modest dwelling shines forth with the splendour of what we consider precious building-stone, marble ceases to be an extravagant luxury. The very abstention from its use produces an effect of aristocratic aloofness. Dan and I vainly tried to find a point from which we could take a

satisfactory photograph of the Palace. Wherever the orange-trees did not interfere with the view, the camera had to be pointed at an angle which precluded a good result. We were seized by something akin to Elisa Bacciochi's vandal spirit, and by a wild desire to tear those fine orange-trees out by their roots.

When that lady's high-handed action made the Duomo disappear, the church of S. Francesco was raised to the dignity of a cathedral. To that church we wended our way before resuming our southward journey—but only to find yet another tastelessly modernised interior. In the crypt of the church are the simple tombs of the Cybo dukes, whose burial-place is entered by a door above which are to be read the words—

INGRESSUS AD REQUIEM  
REGRESSUS AD JUDICIUM

the chief attraction of S. Francesco.

Belle was herself again when we returned to the hotel, where she had enjoyed a quiet siesta. Ryder was more than himself. We found him in the orchard behind the hotel, guarding the car under a shady tree—the object of the admiration of two comely young “Masseuses” (which is, I hope, the correct designation for the women-folk of Massa), who amid loud laughter chattered to him in their melodious tongue, whilst Ryder, generally so taciturn, returned their compliments in honest English. It was a linguistic duel, in which the combatants could enjoy

their own prowess without fear of the opponent's thrust which glanced off the steel armour of their mutual unintelligibility.

Never was the blessing of our mode of travelling brought home to us more convincingly than now, when the Cricket gathered speed and with it brought us such coolness and comfort as could not have been obtained that day outside a swimming-bath. The mere thought of what we would have had to suffer in a railway train was enough to double our enjoyment. And yet before the end of the day we were to hear Ryder protest amid sighs that he could not understand how anybody could think of travelling by car when he could have all the comfort of a nice railway train!

The seven miles to Pietrasanta were a repetition of the run to Massa; ruts that made us sway like a ship in a storm; dust, oxen, loads of marble, and hay-carts of gigantic dimensions. Once we were stopped on a rather narrow part of the road between two high walls by one of these moving oxen-drawn mountains of scented hay, which had such inordinate width that it scraped along the walls both right and left. There was no option but to back some three or four hundred yards, a proceeding which brought home to us the suffering we could not help inflicting on others, since we were forced to swallow our own dust on our retreat. It was brought home to us still a little more forcibly a few minutes later when, right in front of us on the straight road, we saw a dense volume of smoke which made us think the

whole countryside was on fire, until it dawned upon us that we were merely facing an approaching car, and that the supposed conflagration before our eyes was no worse than the one behind us of which we ourselves were guilty. Luckily there was a little branch-road on the right, leading to a farm-house. We ran up this providential refuge some fifty yards, and quickly improvised a roof of rugs and overcoats, under which we ducked as the cloud drew near. In spite of the distance between us and the high road, we had to wait a good two minutes before we could venture to peep out, and even then the landscape appeared as through a veil of heavy mist.

At Pietrasanta, the first real Tuscan town (for Massa is Tuscan only by an arbitrary extension of the frontier, and not by race or language), we did not allow ourselves as much time as I should have liked to have given to the picturesque little place that lies between the imposing thirteenth-century Rocca and the much decayed Rocchetta. The piazza of Pietrasanta would, indeed, not disgrace a city of far greater importance. Into it are crowded the marble-faced Cathedral and its adjunct, the red brick Campanile; the Torre delle Ore; the Palazzo Pretorio; the Palace of the Comune; the Church of the Austin Friars; a monument to Grand Duke Leopold II.; and above all the tall marble column with the Marzocco, the noble symbol of Florentine power. Throughout the conquered towns of Tuscany, this lion sejant with his paw on the arms of the Republic marks the erstwhile sovereign power of

Florence as surely as the winged lion of St. Mark indicates north of the Po the extent of Venetian rule. Behind this fine group of buildings rises an olive-clad slope with remains of the crenellated wall that formally surrounded the whole city.

The delightful ensemble presented by this group of buildings added appreciably to the pleasure caused by the knowledge that we were at last to bid farewell to that wretched road which from Pietrasanta turns towards the coast and proceeds to Pisa via Viareggio. I have read a graphic description of that road in muddy weather, and the horrors of it were such as to make any automobilist's hair stand on end. Up to now we had had no choice, but at Pietrasanta we seized the first opportunity to branch off in the direction of the hills that lie between the coast and Lucca. Three miles beyond Pietrasanta we had the choice of two available routes: either to the left to Camajore to the summit of a hill of 735 feet and then along the Freddana to Lucca, or the shorter, though perhaps not quite so interesting, road via Montramito and Quiesa, which crosses the southern spur of the Apuanian Alps at a height of 557 feet. Our longing for Lucca made us unhesitatingly decide in favour of the second. We got beyond Massarosa, and then . . . I should like the memory of that afternoon off my mind.

There had been no trouble on that infernal road through marble-land. But now that every cause for complaint had ceased, there came a succession of punctures and wrenched-off valves which left us

about a mile from the top of Monte Quiesa without a single workable air-tube for the back-wheel. Ryder had to fall back upon patching. And there we sat on the low road-side wall, and the hours rolled by, and swarms of midges tormented us, and hunger and thirst increased with every quarter of an hour. Fortunately it happened in a shady wood and the heat was no longer oppressive. For Dan the whole incident was a welcome opportunity to set the elaborate mechanism of his camera going—he was to have many more such opportunities. His series of road-side pictures showing a disconsolate group around a temporarily disabled car should suffice to fill a formidable volume.

I suggested to Pomponius that we might start on a foraging expedition. He agreed joyfully: anything to escape the dreaded pumping. Beyond the crest of the hill, about a mile and a half from the scene of our discomfiture, we found at last a road-side inn. There was a goodly choice of wines. Pomponius was for trying them before deciding on any particular brand. He “tasted” them all: the first tumblerful was too sweet, the second too sharp, the third seemed just the right thing. Their combined effect made Pomponius markedly unsteady on his legs as we trotted back laden with a large-bellied *fiasco*, a couple of syphons, a loaf of bread, and a bag of biscuits. Never did relief-party receive heartier welcome than was given us on our return. But we had not escaped the dreaded physical exercise, for the pumping stage was still a good way off. We



Tyre trouble on the Road to Lucca



"Stranded" en route to Florence





reached it when the day drew to a close. And we had to light up before we entered the gates of Lucca. There were no more churches for us that evil day.

ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Spezia . . . . .	...	...	...
Sarzana . . . . .	85	19	19
Avenza . . . . .	26	12	31
Massa . . . . .	213	8	39
Pietrasanta . . . . .	66	12	51
Montramito . . . . .	45	10	61
Summit of Hill . . . . .	554	9	70
Lucca . . . . .	63	11	81

## CHAPTER V

### SNIFFING AT PISA



HE compact little rampart and bastion-girt city of Lucca leads a double life to-day, almost as much as it did eighty years ago, when Heine was struck by the sharp contrast between lively, festive, bright nocturnal Lucca, and the dead daylight city of magnificent decay, of which he gives so graphic a pen picture: "The whole town was as still as the grave; everything was so bleached and dead; on the roofs the sun-rays played like gold-tinsel on the head of a corpse; here and there from the windows of some old tumble-down building trailed a few ivy tendrils like dried-up green tears; everywhere glittering decay and anxiously lingering death." The town seemed to be but the ghost of a town—a stony phantom in broad daylight. That was, of course, before the awakening of a new national and municipal life, before the process of decay was stopped by the props of restoration, before superfluous churches had been turned into barracks, and palaces into hotels and breweries, before Lucca had become a lively garrison town. But all these changes notwithstanding, Lucca by day still fairly

answers to Heine's description, and is a very different place from the brightly illuminated beehive of contented, jovial, and apparently prosperous humanity into which we were taken by our lame duck at a late hour on that day of evil memory.

There was no festa, but all the way from the Porta S. Maria, by which we made our entry, to the Hotel de l'Univers in the Piazza Napoleone at the other end of the town, we had to steer slowly and cautiously through a leisurely moving crowd. Lucca, of course, cannot rival Genoa as regards size and importance, yet there was a comparative elegance and "towny" air about the Lucchesi that we had found neither in the great port nor anywhere else since we had started on our journey. Again I recalled a remark of Heine's: that at Lucca you never come across Philistine physiognomies. There was a notable absence of that peculiar type which almost invariably prevails in the narrow horizon of a small, self-contained community with pretensions to town-life. At the albergo we really felt that we had once more struck the luxuries of an advanced civilisation. The "Universo" occupies the sixteenth-century palazzo of the Arnolfini family, and palatial, indeed, was our accommodation—palatial, and yet surprisingly inexpensive. Palms and bamboo-trees lined the hall and turned it into a pleasant lounge. In the restaurant several tables were occupied by dandified cavalry officers and ladies dressed in the height of fashion. Through the open windows could be heard the strains of *Tannhäuser* discoursed some-

where in the distance by a military band with all the liveliness that only Italians know how to impart to it. About everything there was an air of cheerfulness and comfort, which soon revived our depressed spirits. The last cloud rolled away when Ryder returned from the garage with the news that there was a vulcaniser, and that all the disabled tubes would be restored to new life next morning.

Before starting on our evening promenade I cross-examined hall-porter and chambermaid to ascertain whether there were any mosquitoes, and was given the usual indignant denial, in the face of which I made a point of securing a generous supply of mosquito candles or fumigators at the first chemist's shop in the lively Via Nazionale. Pomponius was very superior and scorned all precautionary measures ; but Dan, who had more experience of Italy and its plague, pounced eagerly upon a bottle of lavender water, than which there is no better protection against the invisible nightly tormentors. Our purchases completed, we strolled towards S. Michele to get a foretaste of Pisan-Lucchesan Romanesque church architecture in the dim light of the summer night, which suggested rather than revealed the inimitable elegant grace of the colonnades that rose tier upon tier into the darkness of the nocturnal sky. If the preciousness of the material used for the incrustation of pillars and architraves remained a surprise to be revealed only next morning by the kindness of the sun, the architectural forms could be enjoyed without the loss of structural value consequent upon

injudiciously applied decoration; and the mystery of the night gave the whole edifice a vastness of scale far in excess of its actual plan.

Pomponius was beside himself with excitement. He was affected by architecture as other sensitive people are by emotional music. He had looked forward to the romance of a walk on the ramparts in the sacred stillness of the night. Now he was all for bed, so that we should be up betimes in the morning to see as much as possible of the seventy churches enclosed within the narrow circle of those ramparts. No objection was raised. We returned to the hotel and passed the lavender water from room to room to rub our faces and hands—a precaution which was scorned only by Pomponius. I opened the windows only after the lights were turned out, and settled to rest. Before I had quite succumbed to my pleasant drowsiness, I heard the dreaded sound of a mosquito's shrill buzz, a war-whoop before the attack. It came close to my face, within reach of the lavender scent, and stopped dead. I almost fancied I could hear it swear. Once more it advanced with a rush, only to be repelled again. I felt safe and took no further notice of the high-pitched voice that had so often banished sleep from my heavy lids. And I awoke in the morning without disfiguring bumps on forehead and cheeks.

Pomponius failed to appear at breakfast at the appointed hour, though he was not in his room when I looked in. The porter had not seen him leave the hotel. We ordered coffee and rolls and sent up to his room—it was still vacant. We finished breakfast

without him and made our plans for the day, how best to employ the few hours that we could spare for Lucca. The *Pinacoteca*, with Fra Bartolommeo and Giulio Romano as *pièces de résistance*, was ruled out at once in accordance with our unanimous determination not to fatigue ourselves or blur our impressions by omnivorous sightseeing. In roving over as vast a field as was to be included in this short tour, it would have been sheer lunacy to try to exhaust the art treasures of the cities set down in the itinerary. We could only attempt to take the cream off the dish, and at Lucca the cream was to be found in the churches and not in the picture galleries. The Cathedral of S. Martino, S. Frediano, and S. Michele *had* to be visited, and the rest could well be left to chance and to the tender mercies of the vetturino, whose lean horse and ramshackle vehicle were already waiting for us at the door. In the churches of our choice we should at any rate find the principal works by Lucca's one great master, the sculptor Matteo Civitali, who in the second half of the sixteenth century found sufficient patronage in his native city to keep him fully employed, so that even to this day his art can only be properly studied at Lucca. We should have liked to extend our drive to S. Francesco, where Lucca's hero, Castruccio Castracane, lies buried; but his shrine stands in too remote a corner of the city. Did ever military leader or petty despot bear a prouder name than this Castruccio Castracane, lord of Lucca and Pisa, and vanquisher of mighty Florence? And is it to honour the memory of his deeds on the battlefield that the

church which holds his remains has been turned into a military store?

But what on earth had become of Pomponius, for whose sake we had got up at so early an hour? I was just about to send once more to his room to inquire, when he appeared in person upon the threshold—scarcely recognisable, his forehead, cheeks, and chin covered with mosquito-bites. He apologised for his lateness; he had spent the morning sitting in a cold bath to cool his bites. He wondered whether it would do him any good if he were to rub himself with the lavender water which he had disdained as a precautionary measure the previous evening. For the rest he was quite ready to fall in with our plans. In fact, the prospect of a round of churches restored to him his normal humour by awakening the recollection of a conversation with a frail chance acquaintance of a Covent Garden costume ball: "She had recently been to Italy. 'And how did you like it?' I asked her, with a view to discovering by this easy means her tastes and inclinations, and taking her intellectual measure. There was no hesitation about her drawling reply: 'Too many chuahchahs for *me!*'"

We stepped out into the glare and drove through the hot deserted streets to the Duomo, thankful for the inadequate protection provided by the canvas awning of the shaky carriage. No sound but the reverberating echo of the horse's hoofs and the vetturino's cruel whip-slashing of the poor emaciated animal, which was immediately put a stop to at Belle's behest. The indignant driver pulled up in

front of the Duomo, and we gazed in wonder at that magnificent patchwork of many centuries, with its grand atrium, elegant colonnades, incrustations, bands of bas-relief and other decorative devices blended into a rich, warm harmony by the patina of time. In Lucca there are many churches founded as far back as the ninth or even the eighth century, but rare indeed are the traces left of their earliest forms. They were nearly all rebuilt during the Pisan dominion, and therefore reflect in their salient features the style of which the three *fabbriche* in Pisa are the world-famed prototype. The large plain wall spaces and sparsely employed blind arcading of the early Lombard churches are here replaced by graceful tiers of colonnades, whose free-standing columns and arches, quite apart from their intrinsic beauty, add in the strong light of the south a clear and rhythmic pattern of cast shadows to the less pronounced pattern of variegated marbles.

The Duomo of S. Martino, in spite of its un-Pisan atrium and of the Gothic triforium of traceried arches added in the fourteenth century, belongs, in its front and back elevation, to this Pisan-Romanesque type. The round apse in particular only wants the addition of another tier of low arcades to make it almost a replica of the east side of Pisa Cathedral. Pomponius was tremendously impressed, but his fear of a sunstroke was stronger than his professional interest, and he led the way into the much restored interior. It is a very museum of Civitale's work. The pulpit and



the *tempietto* which holds the famous Volto Santo; the monumental tomb of Pietro da Noceto; the two charming Adoring Angels in the Chapel of the Sacrament; the pilaster decoration of the Sanctuary Chapel; the Altar of St. Regulus; the somewhat lackadaisical St. Sebastian, and other marble carvings enlist one's interest for this little-known follower of Desiderio da Settignano, and leave one in doubt whether he is to be ranked with the great masters of the Renaissance, until one is arrested by the absolute beauty and noble simplicity of Jacopo della Quercia's sarcophagus of Ilaria del Carretto. In one moment all doubts are dispelled. With this standard for comparison, Civitale immediately sinks to second rank—a fine craftsman, fertile in the invention of decorative motives, refined in all his details, imbued with the Renaissance spirit of architectural design, but lacking in individuality and personal distinction when he attempts the higher flights of his art. His place is as much below Desiderio, as Desiderio's is below Donatello. His frequent use of different-coloured marbles to gain a polychromatic effect is almost an admission of his inability to make the best of purely sculptural possibilities. It is when his task was of a semi-architectural character that he achieved his greatest triumphs.

But that wonderful recumbent figure chiselled by Jacopo's master-hand three quarters of a century earlier! Never has absolute repose, the peaceful—one might almost say happy—aspect of death, been so nobly, so sympathetically expressed in art. In

spite of the insistence on long parallel lines in the disposition of the draperies, in spite of the general air of "lying in state," the figure has nothing of the forbidding rigid stiffness of death. And then the sarcophagus encircled by garland-bearing angels in high-relief against a plain background—ancestors of the countless generations of lovable, dimpled, round-limbed putti that gambol, and dance, and sing on the tombs and monuments of the Italian Renaissance. What an extraordinary phenomenon, this flashing up of Jacopo della Quercia's genius at Siena, where the art of sculpture had never been indigenous, and at a period of transition from the Gothic to the early Renaissance. Michelangelo forestalled before Ghiberti had arrived at full maturity! And here at Lucca the most perfect instance of sculpturesque repose from the chisel of a man whose peculiar excellence lay in his power of expressing violent muscular action.

The Volto Santo—that extraordinary, large cedar-wood crucifix, carved, according to legendary tradition, by Nicodemus, and wafted across the seas to Luni, whence it was carted to Lucca by a pair of unguided oxen—being hidden from profane eyes in the *tempietto* except on the occasion of certain church festivals, and the majority of the pictures being concealed by curtains, we just lingered a while before a much restored early Domenico Ghirlandaio—a Madonna with SS. Gregory, Peter, Paul, and Sebastian (the St. Sebastian an elegantly attired Florentine youth, not the customary arrow-pierced nude)—which shows



The Atrium of S. Martino, Lucca



S. Maria della Rosa, Lucca



to what extent Ghirlandaio in the early stage of his artistic development was indebted to Filippo Lippi, and Verrocchio ; and then we made for our carriage. It was only when the unbearable glare of the sun on the wall of the terrace-garden attached to Ammanati's Palazzo Bernardi-Micheletti opposite the Duomo made us turn round in the atrium, that Belle was struck by the wonderful animation of a *Deposition* relief in the lunette over one of the cathedral doors ; a work of Niccolo Pisano's youth, according to Baedeker, though from internal evidence of mature style it should be placed between his Pisan and Siena pulpits, some time after 1360, before which date the activity of the first Italian sculptor who drank at the fountain of classic art is veiled in impenetrable obscurity.

I had given our vetturino a list of the three churches we were bent upon visiting, with instructions to drive us to any other notable sights that could be worked into our time limit. In taking us round to S. Maria della Rosa, close by the southern ramparts of the town, he proved himself to be possessed of sounder artistic judgment than Baedeker's compiler, who dismisses this daintily carved marble casket, one of the purest and most perfect gems of the Italian Gothic, in two lines, as though he had approached it in a closed carriage on a rainy day and had hurried straight into the deplorably modernised interior. An attempt to photograph the exquisite low-relief carving of the porch only led to the temporary disablement of

my Kodak, which, having slipped from my hand on to the ground, refused to move on the hinges, and became a useless piece of luggage for the rest of the day. Next we clattered past S. Maria Forisportam and other Romanesque churches which may remain nameless, but did not stop until we arrived before the interesting façade of S. Frediano. With the exception of some few antique columns in the interior, nothing remains of the original seventh-century edifice, the present building dating from the early part of the twelfth century, to which period also belongs the intelligently restored Byzantine mosaic of Christ and the Apostles on the façade above the colonnades. Of all the existing Romanesque façades in Lucca, this is probably the earliest. It differs from the others in so far that the columns are not connected by semicircular or stilted arches, but support a straight entablature.

There was more sculpture by Civitali in S. Frediano, more work by Jacopo della Quercia—an altar with an admirable predella in mezzo-relief, the receding planes of which, with their gradually retiring figures, according to Vasari “had the effect of increasing the courage of other artists, and inciting them to enhance the grace and beauty of their works by new and original inventions”; a sadly wrecked fresco by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, and a fine *Immaculate Conception* by Francia, to see which we had to hunt for the sacristan to get the inevitable curtain removed. As a museum of art treasures, San Frediano was disappointing. As an interior of noble pro-

portions and solemn impressiveness it left nothing to be desired.

We had no intention to play the part of the conscientious tourist who, in his unselective greed, wants to see everything, and as a result only tires his eyes and body until he is unable to appreciate even the best. We wanted a little time to digest in peace what we had seen so far. The vetturino was for taking us to the amphitheatre, and would scarcely trust his ears when I asked him whether he knew of some shady garden, restaurant, or *birraria*, where we could have a rest and a refreshing drink. It was an unusual request, which seemed to puzzle him just for a moment. But only for a moment. He had thought of the very place: *Andiamo al Palazzo Controni!*

"No, no! No more palazzi just now—a beer-garden or outdoor restaurant!"

"I understand. You leave it to me! The Palazzo Controni is just what you want."

And it was. That strange lack of reverence for their glorious past, which is so often found among the modern Italians, had transformed the most beautiful secular Renaissance building of Lucca into a brewery and mineral-water depot! The noble *cortile*, enclosed on one side by a magnificent double loggia of the Doric order, with a monumental open staircase, and on the other by a dream of an Italian garden, with rows of baroque stone and lead figures, pergolas, balustrades, and fountains, had been turned into a beer-garden! Over one of the doors of the palace that must have witnessed many a sumptuous pageant,

was the incongruous inscription "Birra e Gazzosa." The square abacus of a mighty capital, the fragment of who knows what noble edifice of the past, was put to the same prosaic use as the iron tables that filled the shady courtyard. In the background beyond the garden could be seen the soft curves of the apse of S. Frediano.

Over the cool foaming beer and in sight of the exuberantly vital forms of the sculptured figures planted in the picturesquely neglected, weedy garden, Pomponius had a final attack of baroccomania. A quarter of an hour later, when we halted in front of S. Michele, he expressed his firm determination to design his next important building in the Tuscan Romanesque style. He had chosen the wrong building for this sudden conversion—or perhaps the conversion was due to the faults rather than the virtues of S. Michele, for there is in the excessive use of playful ornament at the expense of clear articulation something that is almost akin to the spirit of the baroque. Not *two* of the columns are alike in treatment, or colour, or material. Some are elaborately carved with human, and animal, and plant forms, others are grooved in spiral bands, others again decorated with geometrical patterns of intarsia. At the corner of the first tier four very slender and detached columns rise from a common basis to the corners of one massive capital, and are linked together halfway up their stems by an entwined snake. The capitals, too, introduce a bewildering variety of motifs; and the spandrels and architrave are a very Noah's ark in intarsia. To add





"Birra e Gazzosa," Lucca, Palazzo Controni



A Beer-garden at Lucca



to all this, the wall behind the arcades is divided into horizontal courses by narrow bands of darker marble, and the whole façade is crowned by a wall with two additional colonnades, which is a mere screen, and fulfils no necessary architectural function. The restorations on this façade have been carried out with great care, but are of too recent date to have acquired the lovely patina of the untouched earlier portions.

Altogether S. Michele by daylight did not fulfil the promise of S. Michele by night. But within its walls was the one thing that above everything else had made me look forward to Lucca with eager anticipation—an important altar-piece by Filippino Lippi, and one of the few works by that master that were only known to me through photographic reproductions. Somehow Filippino, whose three large pictures at the Badia in Florence, at our National Gallery, and in Mrs. Warren's collection in Boston, would suffice to stamp him as one of the greatest figures in the history of the Tuscan School of Painting, has always been overshadowed by the fame of his father, Fra Filippo, and of his master, Botticelli. Too frequently he has been judged by his frescoes at S. Maria Novella, and not quite unjustly condemned for a certain lack of restraint and of refinement, which is particularly noticeable in his later works. For my own part I must confess to being attracted even by my favourite's excesses, of which the comparatively early Lucca altar-piece would certainly show no traces.

My only fear was now that this group of SS. *Helena, Jerome, Sebastian, and Roch* would be either altogether hidden from view or placed in some dark chapel where it could not be properly seen. But for once we were in luck's way, for on entering the chapel we not only found the picture unveiled and in the best possible light, but some scaffolding had been erected under it, with steps leading to a platform, upon which stood an easel with an unfinished copy of the figure of St. Helena. That the copyist should have chosen this figure was scarcely surprising, for, without in any way conforming to any conventional standard of beauty, the head of the saint has a charm of piquancy and a winsomeness of expression that cannot easily be effaced from the memory of anybody who has seen the picture at close quarters. In striking contrast to the refinement of this face and to the Botticellian dreamy beauty of the St. Sebastian, the hands of all the saints show in a very marked degree Filippino's morphological characteristics of plebeian form, swollen knuckles, and coarse, broad finger-tips. Of composition there is scarcely an attempt: the four saints, standing side by side, fill up almost the entire area of the canvas without any inner cohesion, each of them being intent upon his own doings and oblivious of his or her companions. As a beautiful pattern of boldly and yet harmoniously juxtaposed colours, Filippino's altar-piece must, on the other hand, rank among the great achievements of Florentine fifteenth-century art.

“No more chuahchahs for *me!*” quoted Pom-

ponius, with quite unnecessary emphasis on the *me*, when we had done with San Michele. None of us had the slightest inclination to extend our tour of church inspection beyond reasonable limits, and we had seen quite as much as we were able to digest. Besides—it was quite time to return to the Universo for an early luncheon, if we were to “do” Pisa the same afternoon and arrive at Volterra before nightfall, as we had decided to do—tyres permitting—over the breakfast-table. Pomponius, it is true, had not been consulted. He was ready enough for lunch, and quite in favour of an early start, but he snorted at the idea of “doing Pisa” *en passant*. Very much *en passant*, as matters turned out.

This had been our first day of serious and systematic sightseeing, and though we had done it with moderation and in comparative comfort, the well-cushioned springy seats of the car were more welcome, seemed more luxurious, than ever before. The delicious, cooling rush of air, as we put on speed after leaving the enclosure of the ramparts by the Porta S. Donato, was the final touch of blissfulness, and soon blew away certain alarming speculations as to future possibilities of a “rise in petrol,” and as to how far south we should be able to get, if every degree of latitude marked a further jump. At Aosta I had been unpleasantly surprised to find the price of petrol at 50 centimes the litre, about 35 per cent. higher than in France. At Ivrea it had gone up to 60 centimes the litre; at Spezia to 70 centimes, and at Lucca to 75 centimes. It

was lucky indeed that we did not propose to penetrate into the heel and toes of Italy!

Our road followed the railway through the valley by which the Serchio river breaks through the wooded hills that form an almost complete circle around Lucca. A happy, smiling, fertile, and well-cultivated country, with alternating cornfields, mulberry and olive plantations, and maize fields. However, we had not proceeded ten miles on the winding road, when the sunny sky lost its smile and assumed a threatening frown, followed by some heavy tears which made us stop to put up the Cape-hood. It was just what one might have expected. Does Pisa ever enjoy a day of unbroken sunshine? Possibly, or it could not have been described with the degree of exalted enthusiasm with which its vaunted charms have been belauded by some of its admirers. But to me the charming side of Pisa was and remains a sealed book. I had tried to break the seal on four previous occasions, and each time I got drenched to the skin. And Pisa is quite peculiarly unpleasant in rainy weather. It is more depressing than any other Italian town I have visited in similar conditions. Pisa in rain is enough to ruffle the sweetest temper and to make honeymooners quarrel.

By the time we had passed Bagni S. Giuliano and swung round into the fine straight avenue of over three miles in length that leads to the Porta Lucca, rain was pouring down in torrents, and we were all quite ready to be annoyed with Pisa. Instead of entering by the Lucca gate, I made Ryder turn to

the right along the old city walls, the extreme north-west corner of which encloses the famous *fabbriche*, and take us round the Jewish cemetery to the Porta Nuova, which leads straight into the Piazza del Duomo, the "glory of Pisa." There was no sunlight to bring out the warmth of the time-worn marble, and to accentuate the architectural articulation and elegant details by the play of cast shadows; but still the Duomo, planted on a vast grassy plot between the Baptistery and the Leaning Tower, with the Campo Santo and the mediæval city wall in the background, was a sight to force a shout of admiration even from unwilling throats.

No sooner had we stopped than we were surrounded by the swarm of beggars, cripples, and hawkers who invariably infest the precincts of Pisa cathedral. Picture post-cards, abominable alabaster models of the freakish Campanile, and other souvenirs were thrust under our noses, accompanied by maimed limbs and noisome diseases of varied description. We left poor Ryder to defend himself as best he could against their importunities, and made a dash through the rain for the door of the Baptistery, which happened to be the nearest building.

I have no wish to compete with the excellent guide-books that give an exhaustive account of the artistic riches heaped up in this corner of Pisa. The importance of Niccolò Pisano's great pulpit of 1360 for the whole evolution of Italian art is a matter of common knowledge. But we were not in an appreciative mood. We were more struck by the illogical

absurdity of the supporting columns being placed on the backs of walking lions—a motive often repeated in Romanesque art—than by the beauty of the whole fabric and by the classic sense of form and movement in the relief figures on the walls of the hexagonal pulpit-box. That we had to submit to the undesired explanations of a guide who had attached himself to our little party added to our irritability. I knew the man was waiting for his supreme *coup*—the wonderful echo of the Baptistery, in which imaginative writers have discovered the voices of the angelic choir. For the guide that echo spelt more soldi than all the marble miracles wrought by the Pisani; and he certainly knew how to pitch his voice so as to get the most effective response from the masonry of the lofty dome, which the reverberating sound seemed to lift into space. It was an echo that suggested a moving geometrical pattern of interlaced curves. It did not seem to be thrown back from the walls, but rather made the massive masonry sway in gentle movement. Still, we did not admit any surprise, and made for the door before the guide had finished his vocal recital.

The Campo Santo was our next objective. I was all eagerness to renew acquaintance after so many years with the “solemn loveliness” of this sequestered plot of cypress-planted sacred earth shut in by an ambulatory with colonnades of exquisite Gothic tracery; and with the famous Roman sarcophagus from which Niccolo Pisano drew his inspiration; and with the faded splendour of its sadly deteriorated



frescoes—those much-debated early paintings of the *Triumph of Death* and the *Last Judgment*, which the best modern expert opinion has given to the Sienese brothers Lorenzetti and their pupils, and the vast series of genre-like scriptural subjects, in which Benozzo Gozzoli has left for future generations a living representation of the life of his own days. We waded across to the turnstile at the entrance to the Campo Santo, and tendered coin of the realm to the doorkeeper. He shook his head and cut figures through the air with the waving forefinger of his right hand. He was not allowed to take money at the gate. We would have to obtain tickets at some place right at the other end of the piazza. Could he send for the tickets? No, he had no one to send. Arguments were of no avail. After a brief consultation we decided not to submit to so unnecessary a piece of chicanery, told the incorruptible uniformed Cerberus what we thought of Pisan red-tape, and hurried back to the western gates of the Duomo.

By now we had become possessed of the real Pisan temper, and I fear the beggars at the church door did not reap the harvest they expected. The *fabbriche* had lost their charm; the Baptistery looked more than ever like a pepper-pot; the façade of the Duomo was no better, if not worse, than that of many a church in Lucca; the interior annoyed us by its zebra stripes of black and white marble; the pictures, with the exception of the “modernised” Byzantine mosaic once attributed to Cimabue, were mostly of too late

a date to enlist our interest, and the Leaning Tower seemed more drunk and freakish than ever. We simply walked through the Duomo more to keep our feet dry than to see anything in particular; and five minutes after our dispute with the Campo Santo guardian we were again in our wonted places in the car, driving over the wet flagstones of the Via Solferino to the Arno Bridge, and then through the southern quarter of the town to the old fortress and the Porta Fiorentina.

Not a word was spoken as we sped along, between a railway on the right and a tram-line on the left, on a wretched, shaky road in the direction of Florence. Then suddenly I was startled from a resentful reverie by an explosion of cackling sound behind me. It was Pomponius literally rocking and swaying with laughter, gasping for breath, and then firing off a second volley. He had realised the humour of the situation, and enjoyed the joke for some time before he was able to blurt out an answer to satisfy our curiosity.

“Sniffing at Pisa! literally sniffing at Pisa! Has anybody ever heard of such snobbery? To come a thousand miles and more by car to see Pisa, and then just to sniff at it! He! he!” And he was seized by another fit of explosive hilarity.

Meanwhile, as though heaven itself wished to demonstrate that it reserved its wrath for Pisa, it had ceased raining, and before we had covered the ten miles to Cascina the Cape-hood was sufficiently dry to be taken down again. The sight of the blue sky

was particularly welcome, as there was little else to cheer us on a run through the manufacturing district on the southern bank of the Arno. For the first time in Italy—and the only time—we had cause to be displeased with the manner of the people encountered en route. Some of the carters on the much-frequented road took a positive delight in barring our passage, and refused to take any notice of our signals. Scowling looks were more in evidence than friendly greetings. And as luck would have it, one of the newly vulcanised back tyres received a new wound within sight of the last houses of Cascina, to the intense delight of the Cascinese children and loafers, who scarcely left elbow-room for the necessary work. To give poor Ryder relief a rival show had to be set up, and for this purpose our cameras were the very thing. Posing for the amateur photographer is a very passion with Italians, young or old. Dan and I took it in turns to manipulate our respective instruments, slowly and deliberately, and soon the whole crowd abandoned the car and formed a picturesque group in front of the lens, whilst Ryder and Pomponius replaced the punctured tube. The pumping operation was entrusted to a strikingly handsome muscular youth, who had volunteered for service in the hope of earning a few soldi, and performed his duty with such energy as I had never before witnessed in this easy-going country.

The repair did not entail much delay. Before long we were at Pontedera, at the very beginning of which little town the Volterra road branches off the main

route to Florence at a sharp angle to the right, following for close on twenty miles the course of the river Era, which has its source in the mountains near Volterra. For a few miles beyond Pontedera the road continued to be of inferior quality, but from the time we left Capannoli (about seven miles from Pontedera) until we passed the Austrian frontier a fortnight later, we had but little cause for complaint on that account.

The rest of the day was unalloyed delight ; perfect weather, smooth running, infinitely varied scenery from the verdant, cultivated plain, to the indescribable lonely grandeur of the sun-parched cleft hills that extend from Montecatini to Volterra, and, above all, effects of colour on land and sky that no painter's palette could have even remotely approximated. With the exception of one or two isolated farmhouses there was no sign of life—nor, indeed, a signpost to indicate whether we were on the right road—for a distance of over sixteen miles to the point where the road to Cascina branches off to the right. The towers and domes of “lordly Volaterræ” then appeared on the crest of mighty hill, far, far away in the east, flushed by the rays of the late afternoon sun, which threw brilliant flashes, darts, and streaks of silver upon the warm clouds. On one side a sunset of tragic intensity, on the other the mild, soft tints and soothing sweetness of colour known from the pictures of the Umbrian masters.

Beyond the lonely Osteria di Bacchettoncina, where the road from Saline and Pomarance joined

ours, and where we had a true Tuscan welcome from the rough but kindly padrone and his motherly wife, the climb began in earnest, and the country assumed an aspect of terrifying weirdness and ruggedness. The sky had now turned to purple, and gold, and indigo. The hills were rent asunder as though by volcanic action, so that again and again the road has to describe wide détours to circumvent the hollows and ravines. Hesitating, as though in fear of the frowning giant upon the mountain, the road circles round his rocky bed, slowly drawing nearer and nearer through the open country—a parched, burnt, cracked, lifeless desert—until, emboldened, as it were, by sheltering cypress and olive groves, it makes bold to scale the height in swinging serpentines to demand admission at the gates.

From the plain to the heights, be they Alps or Apennine, the sequence leads from luxuriant orchards and gardens to chestnut-clad slopes, then to the region of pine and larch. Then follows the sparse dwarf pine, the grassy alp, and finally the lifeless rocky summit. But here, after the harvesting of the wheat and oats in the month of May, the relentless fury of the sun turns the fertile plain into an arid desert, changing the humid brown of the earth into stony grey and pale rust, transforming the clots of the ploughed fields into rocky debris. From the sultry heat of this cracked, arid zone, you rise to the line of vegetation, indicated by a few stunted cypresses along the road. They grow in height and fullness of foliage until they form a stately avenue leading

to a silvery olive grove. Then follows the rich green of the vine, the luxuriance of well-stocked gardens and orchards that reach well beyond the Etruscan, and to the foot of the mediæval, walls. You have arrived in a new world, isolated from all that spells modern progress. If Martian invaders were to land suddenly on our planet, their sensations would probably be something like ours when we stopped at the Albergo Nazionale.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Lucca . . . . .	63	...	...
Bagni S. Giuliano .	33	16	16
Pisa . . . . .	10	7	23
Cascina . . . . .	19	7	30
Pontedera . . . . .	46	13	43
Ponsacco . . . . .	79	5	48
Capannoli . . . . .	98	6	54
Osteria di Bacchet- toncina . . . . .	556	27	81
Volterra . . . . .	1741	10	91

## CHAPTER VI

### RUSTY VOLTERRA



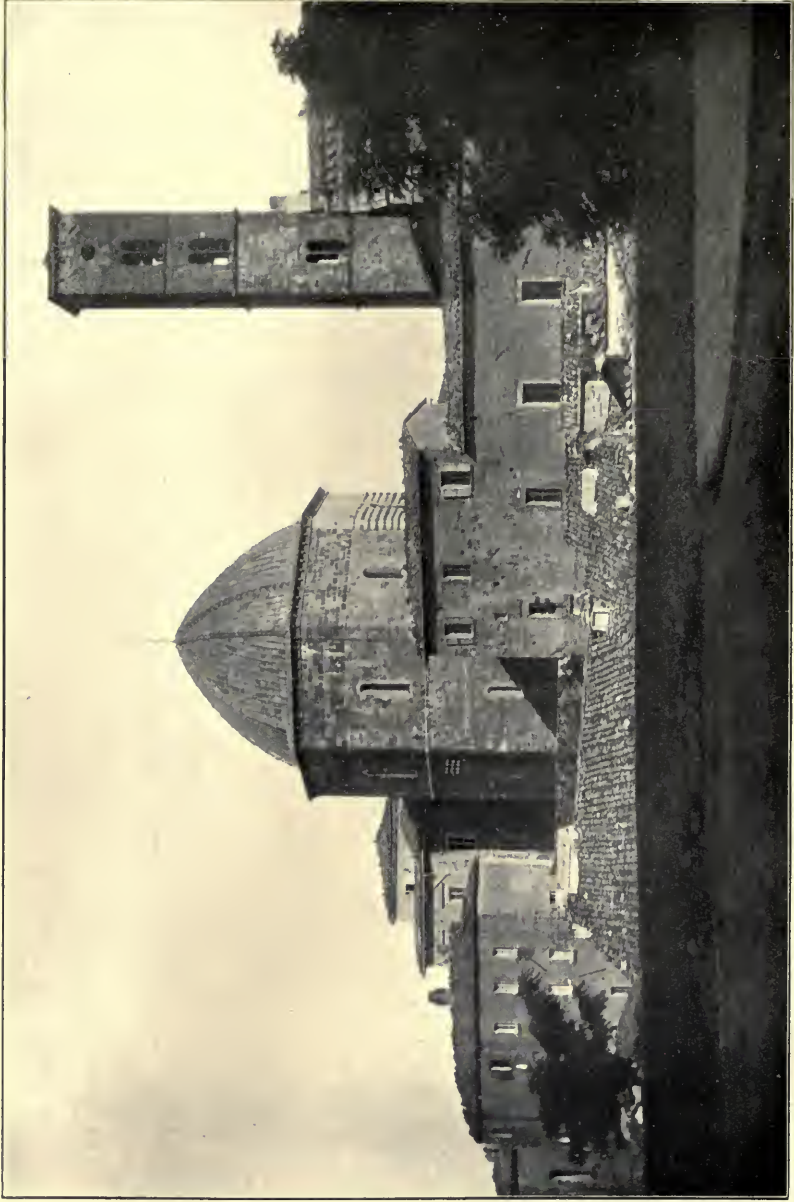
VOLTERRA is surely the most inaccessible town of any importance in Europe. It has a railway station, to be sure ; but the station is six miles from the town—six miles of steep climbing which the powerful horses of the district cannot do in less than two hours. Besides—the railway only takes you to or from Leghorn (fifty miles in a little under four hours !), and Leghorn itself is rarely included in the tourist's itinerary. You can also reach Volterra via Colle from Florence or Siena, by a combination of slow railway and diligence or carriage. The distance is nothing, but it takes a whole day. It is when you are bent upon visiting such places as Volterra, or indeed most of the hill-towns of Tuscany and Umbria, that you thank Providence for allowing you to live in the age of the motor-car.

And yet, when you have swung round the last curve of the mountain, past the mediæval fortress into the little piazza which holds the only possible hotel in this city of close on six thousand souls, you feel almost ashamed at being responsible for so glaring an anachronism as the precipitation of a complicated

piece of twentieth-century mechanism into the Middle Ages. To the Volterrano, if he have any consciousness of the real significance of his city—a self-contained piece of an ancient world preserved intact and sluggishly alive through the centuries, thanks to the forbidding belt of inferno which divides it from modern progress—this intrusion of materialised speed should be as uncanny as is to the master of this speed the progress through a land where the natural order of things is so strikingly reversed.

Such isolation as that of Volterra cannot be realised until one has stood by the parapet of the Piazza dei Ponti, and looked over the parched, billowy, and almost uninhabited land below. There is scarcely a building, except the domed Bramantesque Renaissance church, which is inevitably placed in the valley below the wall-girt hill-towns—at Montepulciano, Orvieto, Todi, Assisi, among the towns visited on our tour. The very type of the people of Volterra, serious, strong, thick-set, is different from the rest of Italy, and testifies to many centuries of almost complete isolation. Perhaps they are the direct descendants of the Etruscan builders of those cyclopean walls, now only left in fragments, which in pre-Roman days formed a girdle of giant stones, close on five miles in circumference, forty feet in height, and twelve feet in thickness. Velathri, the city of a hundred thousand souls, stood defiantly upon her mountain height a thousand years before Romulus's plough furrowed the line that was to enclose Rome. But even cyclopean walls could not resist the onrush of the Roman legions, and Velathri





The Cathedral and Baptistery, Volterra



became the Roman city Volaterræ. In the Middle Ages, wedged in between the rival republics of Florence, Siena, and Pisa, Volterra, reduced to a third of her former size, maintained her independence by means of skilful diplomacy until, in 1472, Lorenzo the Magnificent deprived her of the last vestige of autonomous rule. Henceforth the history of Volterra was that of Florence, and the life and art of Volterra fell into stagnation, as though the loss of liberty had drugged the community into deep slumber.

The spoil of the tombs—rich spoil that makes the museum of Volterra invaluable to students of archæology—proves that in Etruscan and Roman days the plastic genius of the Volterrans found expression in alabaster. Alabaster carving has remained the one great industry of this sleeping city to the present day. Thousands of hands are busy at Volterra with the shaping of alabaster articles, but alas! the material is put to the basest uses. The Cathedral and Baptistery and other churches that have escaped the plundering greed of the Florentine conquerors still contain many a miracle of the sculptor's art—a pulpit that predates and heralds in its exquisite forms the master-work of Niccolo Pisano, a pair of adorable candle-bearing angels by Mino da Fiesole, and a tabernacle on which Donatello's great pupil expended the whole wealth of his decorative invention; the magnificent Renaissance sarcophagus of St. Octavian by Raffaele Cioli; and many another priceless record of the time when art and craft were one. The Volterran alabaster worker, however, is heedless of their lesson. The result of

his labour can only be described as sordid and vile. I suspect him of being responsible for the dreadful souvenirs of the Baptistery and Leaning Tower, whose ubiquitous obtrusiveness is the despair of the art pilgrim at Pisa. And I found him guilty of even worse things.

The alabaster industry affords a means of livelihood for two-thirds of the population of Volterra. The other third would appear to lie in wait for unwary motorists, whose arrival is heralded by the rattling and groaning of the machine on the stiff uphill work. Sound carries well at that height, and distances are short, so that scores of hands are ready at the door of the only inn to help with the luggage, and readier to receive the solicited reward. Yet automobiles must be a rare sight at Volterra, since the only accommodation provided for them is a narrow dark shed, capable of holding at the most two cars, and filled to overflowing with the noisome odour of refuse and rotten straw; and no steam car had, for a certainty, ever climbed that mountain, if conclusions could be drawn from the surprise and terror caused among the natives by the letting off of the steam.

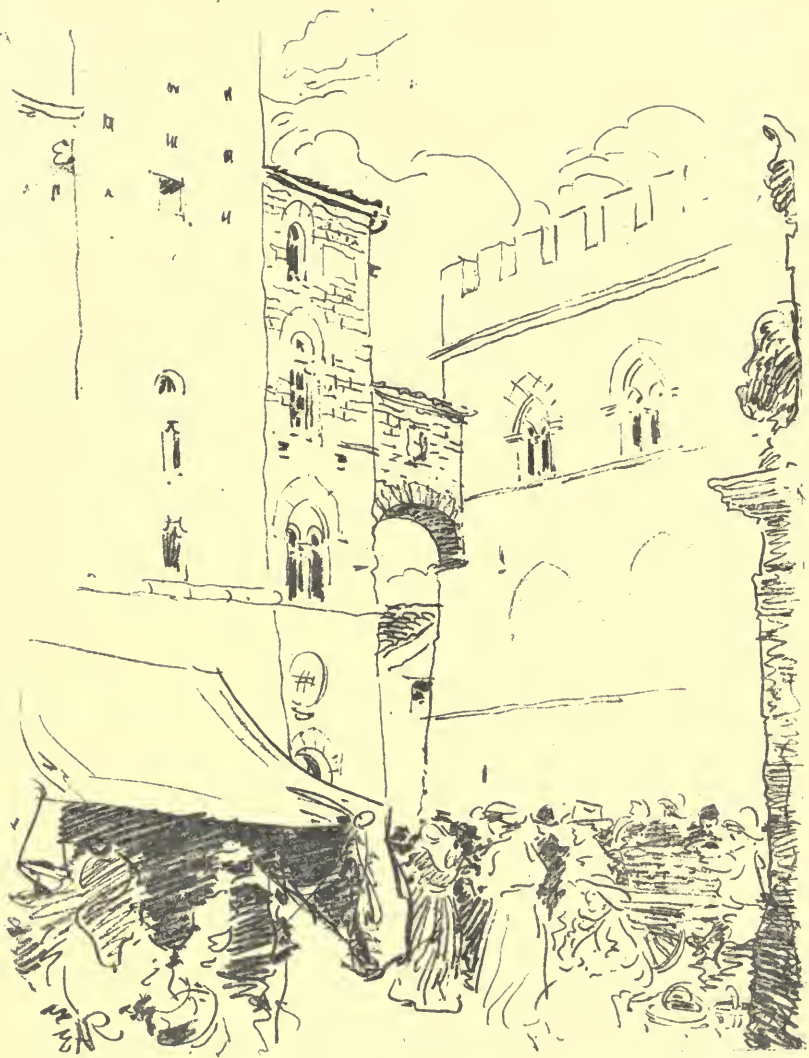
If Volterra, architecturally and otherwise, is mediæval—a city of rude stone fortresses of rusty hue—the hostelry and the spirit that presides over it are pure eighteenth century. No liveried hall-porters and swallow-tailed waiters! The landlady who rescued us from the besieging host seemed to have stepped out from a page of Goldoni's: "La Locandiera"

called to life again, buxom, pretty, smiling, trim, active, with a witty repartee for every joke, and a sharp rebuff for undue familiarity. The whole establishment is run by her and her family, without any visible outside help. Of luxuries there are none at the Albergo Nazionale, but the dazzling white, fresh, scented bed-linen at once inspired confidence, and the quaint meal, the menu of which we left to the discretion of our attentive hostess, was as tasteful as it was wholesome. White truffles played a leading part in it, and it was only when we had quite finished that Dan made the surprising discovery that we had been put on a strictly vegetarian diet.

Before dinner, indeed immediately on our arrival, I had inquired whether there was any possibility to get my camera put in order, and was given the address of a shop whose owner might perhaps be induced to undertake the job. Now Volterra has no Corso with elegant shops. Dealers in costly antiques and jewellery and articles *de luxe* are as unknown as fashionable milliners and outfitters. Of this I became quickly aware as I hurried through the main street and grand piazza to my destination. Yet I thought I must have been misdirected when at the given address I found a dingy little store for the sale of cheese, salami, cheap watches, cigars, and picture post-cards! I scarcely dared to explain what I wanted for fear of being laughed at, but found the man quite sympathetic and willing to do his best. At nine o'clock next morning the camera would be ready,

though he would not guarantee his ability to put it right.

The little walk through the very heart of Volterra gave me a fair idea of the stern, stony grandeur of the town. No words can describe the impression produced by the imposing scale, the grim strength, the noble simplicity, that mark the architectural character of the Piazza Maggiore, and indeed of the whole town. Imagine a large square surrounded by buildings of the same type as the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, with never a modern house to destroy its unity, and you will get an approximate idea of this piazza, the like of which is not to be seen in any other Italian town. Volterra is rich in pictures and monuments, though her most precious treasures have been carted away from that fateful day in 1472, when Federigo of Urbino's Florentine mercenaries sacked the conquered city, until twelve years ago, when the famous Inghirami Raphael was exchanged for an American collector's tempting gold; but her chief appeal rests upon her architecture. And this architecture received its stamp in the thirteenth century, when the mighty Palazzo dei Priori was built. There are many reconstructions, many later buildings, but the character remains mediæval throughout. The city of rust-coloured, massive panchina-stone walls—the very pavement is of the same material—is mediæval to the core. Here everything makes for strength, not grace. The ornamentation of the huge towering façades that line the narrow streets is almost entirely



THE PIAZZA MAGGIORE AT VOLTERRA.





confined to the effective use of rustication, the bronze and iron standard and torch-holders that project threateningly from the walls, the iron window-grilles, and the carved stone or coloured terra-cotta coats-of-arms that spell history to those who are acquainted with the chronicles of Volterra. Every street, every square takes you back to the feudal age; the sudden apparition of a troop of horsemen in burnished steel armour and with fluttering banners under one of the giant arches that span the narrow streets would cause no surprise. And no touch of modernity destroys the completeness of the illusion.

No town had ever thrilled me at first sight like Volterra. My futile attempts to describe over our vegetarian dinner what I had seen at first amused Pomponius, and then made him regret that he had let me steal a march on him. He was for starting on a tour of inspection immediately after dinner; but our plans were changed when our delightful *padrona*, placing a steaming dish of risotto on the table, inquired if the Signori were going to the opera to-night. Because, if so, it would be advisable to make sure of seats, as the palchi had all gone, and there was sure to be a great rush.

"An opera here, at Volterra?" exclaimed Pomponius; "*do* let's go! We mustn't miss that—it ought to be great fun. What are they giving, anyway?"

It was Giordano's "Fedora," and the hostess volunteered to send for tickets. Half-an-hour later, provided with four vouchers for stalls, we were on our

way to the Teatro Persio Flacco, situated in the former Palazzo Incontri, one of the few late Renaissance, or rather early barocco buildings of the town. We were later than the hour fixed for the beginning, but punctuality is not one of the virtues of Italian theatre management, and we had a good half-hour to inspect the bright and surprisingly spacious auditorium which would not have disgraced a city of far greater pretensions. Whoever had any claim to social distinction in Volterra seemed to be present, the women dressed in their best gaily-coloured, high-necked and long-sleeved silk blouses, youth and beauty being distinguished by bits of riband or a flower stuck coquettishly in the hair; the men—well, not in their working-smocks, and with shirt collars of varying degrees of cleanness. If the air of the vestibule had been made unbreathable by the smoke of scores of cheap Virginia and Toscana cigars, how can mere description do justice to the atmosphere in the house! The heat—the odours! The air was, as it were, composed of floating strata of smells, each more unpleasant than its neighbour, perspiration and saliminous breath fighting for supremacy. I think if a match had been struck, there would have been a disastrous explosion.

However, Volterra had come to enjoy itself; and it did so whole-heartedly and with an enthusiasm worthy of a better cause, for—let it be said at once—the performance was not exactly up to Covent Garden pitch. The orchestra looked as if it were composed of native talent, and sounded as if the



EAR  
The Tenor

AT THE OPERA, VOLTERRA.



musicians were more accustomed to the alabaster worker's chisel and mallet than to string and wind instruments, though the trombone was powerful and magnificent and triumphed easily over all competition. Some of the voices, especially the tenor's, were tolerable, but Caruso himself would only have wasted his effort in a struggle with the grating noise of instrumental cacophony; and the shortcomings of the theatre wardrobe led to such grotesque stage-pictures that the most harrowing tragedy would have been turned into farce. The tenor's dress suit brought tears to our eyes, and the most tragic moments of the opera found us choking and rocking with suppressed laughter.

These tragic moments were invariably ushered in by a postman, whose delivery of a letter never failed to be fraught with terrible consequences. It was, however, not before the closing scene that our effort to keep up a seemly behaviour broke down hopelessly before the irresistible unconscious humour of the goings-on on the stage; the distracted lover discovering that the heroine has taken poison, sends for the doctor, who is, of course, ready at hand, and whilst Fedora writhes on the ground and sings away her last breath, the two—doctor and lover—weep in each other's arms and prevent each other effectively from rendering her any assistance. It was too much. Pomponius was the first to lose control of himself, and when Pomponius explodes in laughter there is no help but to follow. His neighbour on the right, whose dirty and disreputable appearance made his

presence in the stalls a mystery, even though the price of a stall at the Persio Flacco is the Italian equivalent of half-a-crown, shot indignant glances at us. He was quite unable to grasp the reason for our hilarity. His arms and horny hands had been flying round like windmills and producing a deafening noise whenever in the course of the evening the tenor or the soprano had lingered unduly on a loud top-note, and each rapid movement was a threat of some unwelcome parasites being shaken out of his greasy sleeve. The mere thought of it was enough to set up an irritation of the skin, and before the evening was over some of us had gained the certain knowledge that imagination was not altogether responsible for the discomfort. The scrupulous cleanliness of the beds at the Albergo Nazionale was of no avail after an evening at the opera of democratic Volterra.

We met the walking flea-hive again next morning. He showed no trace of resentment at our unseemly behaviour at the theatre. In fact, he was humility personified. He sat at the gate of the Baptistery and held out his hat to us for a *piccola carità!*

The performance was not over much before midnight, and what inclination any of us may have felt, either to study the night life of Volterra or to fill our lungs with unpoisoned air before going to bed, was soon nipped in the bud when we stepped out from the overheated theatre into a sea of cold, damp, clammy fog. It was the last thing one would have expected after the sultry heat of the earlier evening.



Outside the Albergo, Volterra



"Reading the Morning's News," Volterra





We were not provided with overcoats, and hurried back to the inn as fast as our legs would carry us. And for the first time we had to sleep with closed windows, and were thankful for the warm blankets.

I awoke with the sun next morning, all eagerness to make the best of the few hours before our departure for San Gimignano. Long before breakfast I went to recover my Kodak from the Volterrano Whiteley. He had done his best, and with a good deal of coaxing and pulling it was just possible to slide the "concertina" on the metal rails. The man was very apologetic about his failure to do justice to the job, and would not hear of being paid for his trouble. On my way back across that wonderful rust-coloured piazza with its crenellated skyline, I noticed, a little set back and adjoining the austere Palazzo dei Priori, the marble-clad wall of a portion of the Cathedral, with a door leading to a side-entrance of the choir. In the midst of the surrounding rough-hewn panchino masonry, the incrustation in alternating courses of black and white marble—the black toned down by time into a warm brownish-grey, the white to the soft colour of stained parchment—assumed an extraordinary precious, jewel-like effect. The mellowness of the tone was enhanced by the contrasting strength of absolute black and white, introduced by the figure of a corpulent priest in an ample black cassock, who moved slowly towards the door whilst he was reading the morning's news from his journal. The whole ensemble made a picture perfect in colour and com-

position, on which I could not resist trying my still somewhat intractable camera.

In the piazza the market was in full swing, the fruit and vegetable stalls and the canvas roofs and umbrellas, together with the Della Robbia armorial glazed terra-cotta reliefs on the façade of the Palazzo dei Priori, lending an enlivening touch of gay colour to the scene. Opposite the slender tower of the Palazzo dei Priori, which is next-of-kin to the one that rises from the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, jutting out from another tower, more massive and fortress-like, a projecting bracket supporting a strange beast carved in stone aroused my curiosity. On closer examination and inquiry it proved to be the famous *porcellino*, or sucking-pig of Volterra, about the exact significance of which, however, I was unable to obtain any information.

After breakfast our little party separated and arranged to meet at a fixed hour in the Baptistery. Dan sailed forth with his camera, Pomponius with his sketch-book; Belle had a little packing to do, and I was anxious to find out what treasures of pictorial art were to be seen in the town.

Unlike most of the other centres of Tuscany and Umbria, Volterra never had a local school of painting. None of her artists rose to great eminence, and those whose names have been preserved were merely followers of "foreign" masters. Greatest among them all in Daniele Ricciarelli, better known as Daniele da Volterra, whose vigorous talent lost its liberty to the conquering genius of Michelangelo.

The house, which to this day bears the name of his family, still contains two admirable examples of his imitative art.

For the rest Volterra had to fall back upon the painters of the surrounding centres, whom she patronised with lordly lavishness. The municipal gallery still contains important works by the Sienese Taddeo di Bartolo and Benvenuto di Giovanni—the latter with a delicious predella that suggests the hand of Benozzo Gozzoli—a Ghirlandaio, and two sadly decayed and repainted Luca Signorellis; the Cathedral an *Annunciation* by Mariotto Albertinelli, and a terracotta *Adoration*, with a *Procession of the Magi* in the background, painted in fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli, and the Inghirami Palace, once the home of a famous Raphael, a graceful *Marriage of St. Catherine* by Sodoma. Nothing else is of much account.

Somehow elegant exterior architectural decoration of the Pisan type would seem out of place if applied to the churches of this rust-coloured city. It is therefore only right that the stately group of buildings formed by the Cathedral, the Baptistery, the Campanile, and the Bishop's Palace should please by perfect proportion and a lively skyline rather than by ornamental details. Still, what details there are—the arcaded gallery on the pediment of the Cathedral nave, the delicate carvings on the porches of Duomo and Baptistery, the mullioned Romanesque windows of the Campanile, and the delicate mouldings on all the buildings, gain immeasurably in value from sheer force of contrast with the plainness of the panchina-

stone masonry. The Baptistery, held by local tradition to be based on a Roman temple, though evidence is not lacking of its thirteenth-century origin, was probably intended to be entirely cased in marble, but only one facet of the octagonal building—the one facing the Duomo—has been thus incrustated. Local tradition, again, supported by Vasari, assigns the façade of the Cathedral to Niccolo Pisano. Of evidence to that effect there is none, though there can be no doubt that both the façade and the beautiful interior in its present form are the production of Pisan builders of the thirteenth century, however extensive may have been the restorations and changes carried out in the sixteenth century.

Of the remarkable works of plastic art contained in these buildings I have already spoken. The marble pulpit is certainly one of the most important monuments of its kind in Italy, in so far as it reveals the first traces of that classic influence which was to triumph soon in the art of Niccolo Pisano. Very striking, too, is the Gothic tracery of the choir stools in the Duomo and panelling of the sacristy.

In the Baptistery, where the scattered units of our little party became re-united at the appointed hour, life in its most charming form drew our attention from the exquisiteness of the carving on Balsimello da Settignano's altar-niche, and from the flowing lines of the relief figures on Andrea Sansovino's font to the other comparatively modern baptismal font, where the youngest citizen of Volterra, surrounded by his proud parents and relatives, received the first Sacra-

ment by immersion of his diminutive body into the font. A streak of dancing sun-dust fell from one of the narrow windows upon the central group, as the priest dipped the tiny mite into the baptismal font, and added appreciably to the festive solemnity of the rite. There was something infinitely touching in the tender care with which the priest handled his charge, and in the devout attention with which the witnesses listened to his Latin mumbling, the baby's gurgling and cooing mingling with the bass of his voice.

It would have been futile to attempt a time exposure of the pretty scene in the twilight under the lofty dome, but when the christening party issued forth into the open space before the Baptistery, the baby, now in his tall, handsome mother's arms, swathed up just like Andrea della Robbia's delicious *bambini* of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence, not much persuasion was needed to make grandfather, father, mother, and child draw up in line before Dan's camera. We were then told that the baby was not a week old—and yet the mother was present at the ceremony and carried her precious burden without any sign of weakness or suffering.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CITY OF THE BEAUTIFUL TOWERS



MEANWHILE the hour at which Ryder was to be ready with the car had arrived. We climbed up the steep street to the inn, which appeared to be besieged by a crowd. We thought at first that some mishap had befallen the Cricket; but it was nothing—merely the usual gathering of inquisitive idlers attracted by the presence of a car probably larger and smarter than most of the automobiles that find their way from time to time to this rarely visited place. San Gimignano “of the beautiful towers,” for which we were bound next, is also somewhat off the beaten track, but for every hundred tourists or art-lovers attracted by her unspoilt romantic mediævalism, there is scarcely one that will stray as far afield as Volterra.

To get to San Gimignano by the most direct route we should have left Volterra by the same gate through which we had entered, and then taken the main road to Colle. As this would have meant missing altogether the supremely interesting northern quarter of the town, or rather what is left of it after the swallowing up of a whole district by erosion of the

ground, I made careful inquiries whether it was not possible to go by the Porta S. Francesco and thus to get a glimpse of *Le Balze*, by which name is known the deep ravine which is steadily extending by erosion and threatens some day in the distant future to reduce Volterra to a gigantic heap of debris. Opinions were conflicting. Some thought we could go that way, others did not know, or maintained that we could not, until they were silenced by a particularly well-informed Volterran, who, in a torrent of rapid speech, gave the fullest possible directions, mentioning every landmark, every farmhouse, every cross-road we should have to pass. He might have saved his breath, for his voluble talk might as well have been addressed to deaf ears for all that I could understand. The one point that I could gather by listening with strained attention was that we should have to make for a farmhouse or village named *Castagno*. And so I kept a keen look-out for the large chestnut tree, which presumably gave the place its name, and trusted to chance for the rest.

And it was very much a matter of chance; for not only was the road not properly marked on my entirely inadequate road-map, but there was never a milestone or sign-post to give the slightest clue as to distance or direction. Chestnut trees were so abundant on the slopes of the hills in the region through which we had to pass, that the special example from which the *Fattoria del Castagno* took its name could not very well be depended upon as a landmark. Nor was there much chance of getting directions from the

country folk in a district where one could move along for miles without encountering a single human being. At the first point where we risked embarking on the wrong road luck was with us, for at the critical moment we ran across a man on horseback. I doubt, though, whether he took the same optimistic view. His mare, a fine animal of the strong breed needed for the uphill work in this wild part of the country, shied at the car, although we had slowed down and glided along noiselessly. It reared and kicked, and then with a bound, that made us hold our breath in fear of an awful accident, jumped from the side of the road down the little slope leading to another road below. Fortunately its rider was a fine exponent of Tuscan horsemanship, and to our relief horse and man landed safely on the lower level. Meanwhile we had come to a stop. The man looked up, smiled, and took off his hat with an ample flourish. His exquisite courtesy in such trying conditions emboldened us to ask him for the needed information, which he gave without betraying in his voice the slightest sign of excitement at the danger he had just escaped. With another flourish of his hat, and without waiting for us to pass, he set the spurs to his horse and galloped past us towards the city on the hill.

It was a wonderful and awe-inspiring sight that hill, cleft and rent in every direction by deep ravines. For centuries human pigmies have vainly tried to measure their strength with the relentlessly destructive forces of nature. In sight of that fine figure of a



daring horseman disappearing in the direction of the yawning abyss of *Le Balze*, one could not help thinking of the legendary days of ancient Rome, when a similar malign force had to be pacified by the patriotic self-sacrifice of a human being. Perhaps the *Balze*, too, would miraculously close over the mangled body of the chivalrous rider, if he were, like Marcus Curtius, to spur his horse to the fatal jump.

Notwithstanding the threatening grandeur of *Le Balze*, the country north of Volterra is far less arid and forbidding than the tract of land to the east, which we had traversed the preceding afternoon. Indeed, soon after we had passed the Badia and S. Cipriano, we entered a smiling district of alternating agricultural and wooded land, in which the silvery grey and black of olive and cypress was varied by the juicy green of the chestnut. The day was ideal, and the trio in the body of the car behind me abandoned themselves to the full enjoyment of the balmy air and the lovely Tuscan landscape with the never-ceasing wonder of the light silvery glitter of the olive leaves against the sated deep blue of the cloudless sky. Everything around us encouraged light-hearted happiness and forgetfulness of all worries and cares. It would have been perfect bliss, had I not been weighed down by my responsibility as guide. All the others had come to place implicit confidence in my ability as pathfinder, and took it for granted that we could not go wrong while I was in the front seat. Nor did I communicate to them my doubts and misgivings as we tore along

up hill and down dale, heaven only knows in what direction of the compass. To this day I regard it as a miracle that we ever arrived at that coveted Castagno farm some time after having crossed the little river Era and climbed a very steep hill beyond the bridge. I can say nothing of distances and heights. I doubt even that we went more than a few miles on the right road. In the most reckless way, trusting to luck and to such information as could be gleaned from one or two stray carters or contadini, we twisted around the hills, turning indiscriminately towards east, or west, or north, sometimes even forced to double back in the direction from which we had come. But we got to Castagno, and nobody hesitated to ascribe this success to an abnormally developed bump of locality with which I was supposed to be equipped. Nor did I do ought to disabuse my friends either on this or on the not infrequent later occasions when that wonderful bump failed me. It was easy enough to retain their confidence by never turning back, but making for the lost road by some circuitous route, and explaining that we had taken a "short cut."

Considering that we were all the time on the byways rather than on the highways, on communal and not on national roads, there was little ground for discontent; surprisingly little dust, and on the whole an excellent surface, the chief fault being the "humpy" construction of the road, which merely followed the natural accidents of the ground, without any attempt at cutting and levelling. A little east

of Castagno my anxiety was allayed by the appearance of the famous towers of San Gimignano on the crest of a distant hill. The jagged sky-line was familiar to me from countless paintings and photographs, but the romantic reality far exceeded all expectations. In this inexhaustible country every town, almost every village, has an entirely individual character. San Gimignano is barely ten miles from Volterra, as the crow flies, with not a village intervening. It is essentially mediæval, and belongs, in so far as its outstanding architectural features are concerned, to the same period as the larger rival city which had taken the place of Etruscan and Roman Volterra. The position is similar. Like Volterra it is encircled by a picturesque ring of mediæval walls with narrow gates; like Volterra its dominating note is defiant strength. Yet it does not strike terror; it does not frown and threaten like its rival. Its ruggedness is not without grace and elegance. It does not tower on a mighty height over a desert, but rises gently from the soft bed of an olive-clad slope.

There is in the Duomo of Pisa an intarsia panel showing what a war-like Italian city looked like in the twelfth or thirteenth century: practically the whole area covered by tall square towers in effect not unlike the line of sky-scrapers that greets the stranger on arriving at New York, or, in the less prosaic language of a mediæval chronicler, "like a sheaf of corn bound together by its walls." If Pisa actually boasted between 10,000 and 16,000 such towers, as has been vari-

ously stated by early historians, it must indeed have presented a weird sight—a thousand towers for every single one of the thirteen that are still the pride of San Gimignano. Internecine strife led to the demolition of these private fortresses in Pisa, and Florence, and many other ancient towns of Italy. At San Gimignano a wise local government ordained, as far back as 1602, that the owners of tower-houses should have to keep their sky-scrapers in good repair, and that those who had allowed them to deteriorate would have to look after their restoration. To this wise foresight and justifiable pride in the tangible symbols of past might, San Gimignano owes its present fame as the most romantic city of Italy, and, together with Rothenburg-on-the-Tauber, as the most perfect survival of mediævalism in twentieth-century Europe. This thinned-out forest of towers is the chief source of revenue for San Gimignano, an attraction more magnetic than the series of frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli, Barna, Bartolo di Fredi, and Ghirlandaio, and other masterpieces of pictorial art preserved within her reddish walls.

The fascination of the place is truly extraordinary. And yet to me San Gimignano did not seem as homogeneous, as completely intact, as other-worldly and haunting as Volterra, where the hand of the moderniser has been less destructive and less reckless in improving away the true character of the place. Severe simplicity distinguishes the old buildings of the town. The beauty of the street vistas lies in picturesque irregularity; strong play of light and



A Gate of San Gimignano



A domestic group in a street of San Gimignano



shade ; the colour and variety of the building material—*travertino* and *macigno* (a kind of hard brownish-red sandstone) for the lower courses, and brick for the upper stories ; the clearly marked joints of the masonry ; the use of bold arches for gates and doorways, or merely to connect the walls at either side of lane or street ; and the preciousness given to the rare decorative features by the unadorned plainness of the setting.

There are restorations that may offend the eye by their aggressive newness, but that are necessitated either by imminent decay or by hygienic requirements. Perhaps it was necessary to provide the Collegiata Church with a new façade, and to repave the piazza in front of that building at the end of the eighteenth century. But what excuse can be pleaded for the abominable modern battlements and cornice on the Palazzo del Comune? What reason can there be for hiding the innate beauty of rose-coloured stone and brick under coats of whitewash and cold grey paint?

In one respect—apart from her mighty towers—San Gimignano has the pull over Volterra: the striking beauty of its women, which Pomponius was first to discover on our way from the northern gate to the Albergo Centrale in the Piazza della Cisterna, now renamed Piazza Cavour, since the modernising mania of young Italy cannot even leave the picturesque old names in peace. The streets were pretty well deserted in the intense noonday heat. But as Pomponius's expert eye fixed upon the dainty form of a cusped Gothic window, he gave one of

his sudden shrieks: "Oh, look!" and directed our attention to a smiling, bronzed face, framed by Titian-red hair, and poised on a column-like bare neck rising from the bust of a Raphael Madonna. She was truly a gorgeous creature, with a beauty not diminished by the provocative boldness of her laughing eyes and the generous fullness of her red lips. A little later, on our ramble through the narrow streets, we gained the knowledge that San Gimignano was rich in beauties of similar type, though none could match the golden red tresses of the apparition in the Gothic window.

The Albergo, as up-to-date as may be expected in a town as much visited by tourists of every nationality as is San Gimignano, had not entirely lost its old-world charm, nor sacrificed the tastiness and wholesomeness of real Italian cooking to that abominable compromise between the culinary tastes of many nations, that has resulted in the colourless, monotonous menu of the Swiss-cosmopolitan hotel table d'hôte. After the malodorous recess which had to serve as garage at Volterra, the cellar-like shelter with groined vaulting set aside for this purpose at the *Centrale* was certainly quite luxurious.

I can well imagine that a week would scarcely be enough to exhaust the attractions of San Gimignano. For our purpose, however, we were quite content with visiting, without undue haste, the Duomo or *Collegiata*, the Church of Sant' Agostino, and the Palazzo Pubblico, which contains the little picture-gallery. The two eternal rivals, Florence and Siena, have





THE "GARAGE" AT SAN GIMIGNANO.



contributed towards decorating the interior of the Collegiata with a series of frescoes which, whatever may be thought of the individual merit of the paintings, help to produce an unbroken harmony of mellow colour, such as will be found in few churches even in Tuscany. Two vast cycles of frescoes fill the walls of the aisles, two long rows of pictures on each side being surmounted by a series of lunettes. Those in the north aisle represent scenes of the Old Testament, and are from the brush of Bartolo di Maestro Fredi; whilst the ones opposite, which deal in similar fashion with the New Testament, are the work of Barna, or Barna. Both Bartolo and Barna belong to the declining Sienese school of the second half of the fourteenth century. They follow the tradition of Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti, but are as far below their exemplars as the Giottesque painters of Florence are below the great founder of their school. Looked at in detail, all these frescoes are crude, coarse, stiff, and ill-designed; and these faults are considerably accentuated by the clumsiness of later restorers. Yet the effect of the ensemble is rich and harmonious; and from the point of view of telling their stories in clear, unmistakable language—which, after all, was their chief object in those distant days when the frescoed church wall fulfilled the function of our printed books—they leave little to be desired. Barna is said to have died from the effects of a fall from the scaffolding while working on these very frescoes.

An artist of far greater power, though by no

means a master of the first rank, is Taddeo de Bartoli, who painted, in 1393, according to the well-preserved inscription, the *Last Judgment*, the *Paradise*, and the *Inferno* on the entrance wall. His position in Sienese art may be compared with Orcagna's in that of Florence. His painting is a last flaring-up of the Gothic spirit of the Lorenzetti. With his pupil Domenico di Bartolo, the Renaissance enters into Sienese art. But it is the beautiful fresco of the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* by the Florentine Benozzo Gozzoli, and not the work of Taddeo, that attracts one's attention to this entrance wall—a beautifully balanced, formal composition, with admirable motifs of movement in the bowmen, who, however, display no more emotion than the competitors in some arrow-shooting contest. What spiritual ardour there is in this painting by the worldly pupil of the angelic Fra Giovanni, is reserved for the Virgin and Saviour in a flaming glory above the bearded and unconcerned saint.

The chief treasure of the Collegiata is, however, the little Santa Fina Chapel. The architect, Giuliano da Majano, the sculptor, Benedetto da Majano, and the painter, Domenico Ghirlandaio, have here united their efforts to produce one of the most completely satisfying monuments of the Renaissance period. The two frescoes of the *Death* and the *Burial* of Sta. Fina, the lovable girl-saint of San Gimignano, are among Ghirlandaio's earliest works, but contain in germ all the great qualities which distinguish that master's later frescoes at Sta. Trinità and Sta.

Maria Novella in Florence. Nothing could be more touching than the virgin purity of the saint, whose renouncement of worldly riches and espousal of voluntary poverty are happily suggested by the austere simplicity of her room in the sumptuous architectural setting. This at least is the obvious reading of the artist's intention, even if one is in complete ignorance concerning the life of Sta. Fina. In the groups at the head and foot of the saint's bier, Ghirlandaio already shows his power of characterisation and portraiture. In the background of the Funeral, the slender towers rising at both sides of the composition are presumably a faithful representation of San Gimignano in the fifteenth century. The collaboration in this chapel of Domenico, almost at the beginning of his career, with Benedetto da Majano, may account for the very marked influence exercised by the sculptor upon the painter, or, as is more generally believed, by the painter upon the sculptor.

From the majestic flight of steps in front of the Collegiata is to be obtained one of the best views of the famous towers, with the quaintly named *La Rognosa* (the Scurvy) straight in front. This tower of the Palazzo del Podestà, rising to a height of 167 feet, indicated in the days of San Gimignano's splendour the extreme limit to which private ambition was allowed to scale towards heaven. The renovator's hand, that has wrought such sad havoc upon the façade of the Palazzo del Comune, has left the interior passages, staircases, courtyards, loggia, and apartments fairly undisturbed in their mediæval

strength and simplicity. The building is full of romantic and picturesque corners, and contains in the Sala del Consiglio an important and well-preserved *Maesta* fresco by Lippo Memmi—well preserved, at least since the day when its restoration was completed by Benozzo Gozzoli, and when he proudly inscribed upon it the words: BENOTIVS FLORENTINVS PICTOR RESTAVRAVIT ANNO DOMINI MCCCCLXVII. The saintly assemblage that witnesses the introduction of the kneeling donor, Mino de' Tolomei (by whose order the fresco was painted in 1317), to the enthroned Virgin and Child, consists of twenty-eight angels and saints, and is treated like an illuminated miniature on a gigantic scale.

The little Pinacoteca on the first floor has a number of primitive Sienese panels that are of no particular interest except for the specialist student of that school; a superb Madonna in a mandorla with winged cherubs, floating among the clouds over an exquisitely painted peaceful Umbrian landscape, with SS. Gregory and Bernard kneeling in the foreground, and two *tondi* of the *Angel of the Annunciation* and the *Virgin Annunciate*, which are traditionally ascribed to Filippino Lippi, and unquestionably have certain of his mannerisms, like the spreading out of the draperies in angular folds on the ground, but are nevertheless not from the master's own brush. They are good school pictures, perhaps by Raffaellino del Garbo or some other follower of Filippino's.

The shell of S. Agostino, almost ugly in its

featureless plainness and lack of articulation, does not in any way suggest the wealth of pictorial decoration to be found within its walls. Here Benozzo Gozzoli's supremacy is undisputed. The cycle of frescoes with which he has adorned the choir are held by many to be the finest mural decorations executed by this prolific fresco-painter. These scenes from the Life of St. Augustine have again suffered terribly from the indiscretion of a restorer who retouched and repainted them in oil-colours in 1800, so that it is impossible now to distinguish Gozzoli's own work from that of his assistant, Giusto d'Andrea. Gozzoli's faults are much in evidence: bad drawing of the legs and lack of stability in the poses. There is also the usual absence of that deep religious feeling which invariably distinguished the work of his master, Fra Angelico. On the other hand, the series contains all the lovable qualities of Benozzo's art: his complicated perspectives of Renaissance palaces and graceful arcades; the intimate genre-like treatment which brings the beholder into closer touch with fifteenth-century Italian life than does the work of many a nobler master; and above all the inexhaustible naïve charm of the children whom he painted with deeper sympathy and more profound understanding of their nature than any of his contemporaries. The school scene in the very first chapter of the series is particularly delightful in that respect.

Altogether Benozzo appears far more interested in these genre incidents, in little subsidiary episodes in

which children and animals are the protagonists, than in the doings of his saint. In the first scene it is the spanking of a naughty boy that attracts more attention than the handing over of little St. Augustine to the schoolmaster on the extreme left of the composition. In *The Saint teaching in Rome*, the centre of the empty foreground is solemnly occupied by a little dog. In the *Death of St. Monica*, the winsome grace of the two nude children playing with a dog, and of another diminutive mite clinging to the arm of a seated female attendant, is such as altogether to destroy the solemn pathos of the death scene. Quite delicious again in their variety of movement are the plump forms of the amorini painted in imitation of relief-carving on the pilasters that separate the different incidents. The landscape backgrounds in the few scenes which have not a purely architectural setting are an exact representation of the scenery through which we had run in the morning, and which we had to traverse presently between San Gimignano and Siena.

The marble altar by Benedetto da Maiano in the Chapel of S. Bartolo is very similar in design and in detail to the same master's S. Fina altar in the Collegiata, which it exceeds in beauty of proportions. The use of a row of winged cherubs' heads as a frieze, and of scenes from the life of the saint in relief as a kind of predella, is certainly more logical than the reverse order employed for the S. Fina altar. In the same chapel are some frescoes by Ghirlandaio's pupil and imitator, Bastiano Mainardi, whose derivative work





The Towers of San Gimignano



The Cricket outside the gates of San Gimignano



is the chief contribution made by San Gimignano to Italian art.

There is something intensely stimulating in the suddenness of the contrast between the treeless narrow steep streets of these mediæval hill-towns and the essentially rural character of the land immediately surrounding the city walls, without an intervening region of "garden-suburbs," or any sign of growth of the town into the country. It is as though human energy, at war with nature, had annexed a high plot of ground, laid it waste, and surrounded it with powerful stone-walls, within which it has built for itself a new world of stone, strong enough to ward off any intrusion on the part of the besieging green host which presses close to the gates. The moment you pass out of these gates you are in a different world, where you find only at long intervals some isolated outposts placed there by the wall-encircled community.

So rare, indeed, are these outposts that, for the road traveller from a distant land, it is imperative to gather what information he can before he loses sight of the thirteen towers among the miles of vineyards that extend between San Gimignano and Colle di Val d'Elsa. For such information I applied to a merry-looking contadino who, having watched us pass a gate just wide enough to allow the car to get through, greeted us with a friendly *buon viaggio!*

"The road to Colle—ah! you will have some difficulty. There are so many windings and branch-roads to right and left. But if the Signorino will let me sit there by his feet I shall direct him to the main

road near Colle. How far? Oh, not more than ten kilometres."

I had always found the Tuscan contadini courteous and obliging, but this offer to conduct us for six miles and then to tramp back in the afternoon heat was really too generous to be accepted without remonstrance. The serious mien with which the man had explained the difficulties we were likely to experience immediately gave way to a sly smile.

"I have some relations near Colle, and I am going to stay with them over-night."

One could not very well refuse after this honest admission. The man, who had never been in a car before, was as happy and excited as a child, though at first he was not a little frightened at the unaccustomed speed. And he did his best to justify his presence as a guide by pointing out and warning us against every little side-path or narrow lane through the vineyards, which we felt not the slightest inclination to test. When the inevitable happened, and the back-tyre had to be changed—a day without at least one puncture was by now beyond our boldest hopes—our passenger disappeared for a minute or two in the vineyard by the roadside, and returned laden with bunches of luscious muscat-grapes, which stolen fruit he offered us with all the assurance of legitimate proprietorship. And when the sadly-worn rim was again on the wheel, he insisted on conducting the pumping operation single-handed. Nor was his conscience quite at rest even after he had thus honestly worked his passage, for, when he took his leave from

us where our road merged in the high road between Volterra and Colle, nothing would induce him to accept payment for his services as a guide. He was almost offended at being offered a tip. I almost think he would have offered to pay his fare had he not been forestalled by this indignantly rejected *buona mano*.

At Colle we had to descend a paved street of truly alarming steepness which connects the mediæval city on the hill with the modern manufacturing town on the banks of the Elsa. The gradient is at least one in five, and is followed by an almost equally steep climb on the opposite bank of the river, whence a superb view is obtained of Colle and all the surrounding hill-land. The country between Colle and the point below Monteriggioni where we joined the main artery between Florence and Siena, and from that junction to Siena, recalled again and again the exquisite landscape backgrounds of Benozzo Gozzoli, which only an hour or two ago we had admired in the churches of San Gimignano. The grey tonality of the softly outlined hills is broken now and then by the dark accents of rows of slender cypresses leading to some castle-like farm building, or by the warm high lights of some whitewashed church or chapel exposed to the glow of the afternoon sun on the crest of a hill. Beyond Monteriggioni the road ascends a steep hill or two covered with a dense growth of oak trees, which actually harbour quite a quantity of game and singing birds—rare guests in a country where every man appears to be armed with a gun and bent upon the extermination of every bird

that comes within range. From the last of these eminences, which rises to a height of 1086 feet, the glorious panorama of Siena perched upon her three hills, and dominated by the elegant stems of the striped Campanile and the embattled Mangia tower, arose before our astonished eyes; and before long we flew past the beautiful brick façade of the Palazzo dei Diavoli towards the Porta Camollia.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Volterra . . . . .	1741	...	...
Bridge across Era . .	321	10	10
Castagno . . . . .	1512	11	21
San Gimignano . . .	1180	11	32
Colle di Val d'Elsa .	439	14	46
Fork to Poggibonsi .	640	10	56
Siena . . . . .	1050	14	70



ER

Basnet

ER



TYPES OF FOUR COUNTRIES.  
(Germany, Tyrol, France & Italy).





## CHAPTER VIII

### A SUNDAY IN SIENA



HERE was much to do for us at Siena before we could think of starting on that first stroll through the main streets and squares, to which we had looked forward eagerly from the moment the city was stretched out before our eyes in all its loveliness. Civilisation claimed its toll. From the moment we crossed the threshold of the Hotel Continental in the Via Cavour, we felt that we had arrived once again in Cosmopolis, and that our creased and crumpled dinner-jackets would have to be pressed into service for the evening. It was like returning to slavery after a long spell of unconstrained liberty: fixed hours for meals, hushed voices, bottled wines, the iron rule of the cosmopolitan table d'hôte with its unalterable sequence of courses, and above all the tyranny of a liveried and swallow-tailed *personnel*, ineffectively concealed under a veneer of servility.

Yes, there was much to do for all of us. First of all, the luggage having been unstrapped, dusted, and sent to our rooms, Ryder had to be despatched under efficient guidance to a distant garage. A

complete change of garments had to be effected before we could face the scrutiny of the other visitors in the lounge, and our evening clothes had to be spread out to assume something approaching their normal shape. Then it was necessary to establish telephonic communication with the garage to find out whether a Dunlop tyre was obtainable in Siena. It was not, and had to be ordered by telephone from Florence, whence it would arrive by rail next morning. Then Dan's negatives and my spools of films had to be taken to a photographer to be developed, as we had so far been working altogether in the dark as regards length of exposure, and were anxious to know the results for future guidance. The post office would have to be invaded next for *poste restante* letters, and finally the barber, whose services were badly needed by Pomponius and myself.

At the photographer's Dan and I wasted a good half-hour in persuading the man to break the Sabbath. For a long time a monotonously reiterated *impossibile!* was the only response evoked by our pleading. There were many scores of negatives and films. They could not be developed in the evening, and to-morrow was Sunday. Besides, they would never get dry in time. However, the impossible was made possible by the promise of something like double pay. We left the shop with the promise that everything would be ready early on Monday morning.

If the photographer was un-Tuscan in speech and manner, the barber was a perfect specimen of Tuscan and Sienese courtesy and refinement. Sienese he was



Siena



to the core—and therefore anti-Florentine. The two great centres of Tuscan power, culture and art ceased to be at war when Grand Duke Cosimo I. finally subjugated Siena in 1555, but the spirit of rivalry is as keen, and at times as bitter, as it was in the Middle Ages. Though Florence and Siena wrangle no longer over possession of Montepulciano or other fortresses, they have transferred the eternal feuds to other fields, such as, for instance, the question of the authorship of the Rucellai Madonna, which Florence has since the days of Vasari claimed for Cimabue, whilst whole volumes have been written by the champions of Siena to prove that it is the work of the Sienese Duccio di Buoninsegna. And so the patriotic barber only wanted the slightest lead to embark on a tirade against Florence. He had his chance when I innocently asked him whether there were any mosquitoes in Siena.

“Sansare!” he began in his pleasant Tuscan accent, the chief peculiarity of which is the treatment of the letter “c” as an aspirate—*haldo* instead of *caldo*, *hasa* for *casa*, and so forth. “Sansare! Now they must have told you that in Florence. We *never* have sansare here in Siena. We have no swamps, and it is altogether too high and airy for them. But in Florence—*ah, altro!* I had a signore here this morning who had come from Florence. His face was a sight! I scarcely knew how to shave him. Of course, they always say nasty things about us in Florence. The razor all right, Sir? Last year there was an invasion of grasshoppers—lucusts blown over from

*Afriha*. They never came near us, but they devastated whole acres of land round Florence, and were a regular plague to the city. Sansare, indeed! They always say things about us. They put into their papers that we had an earthquake here in Siena. Nothing of the sort! Never a vibration! But in Florence, they *did* have an earthquake which made the *hampanile* and the tower of the *Palazzo Vehio* sway. Of course, they tried to hush it up. Shampoo, Sir?" And he continued, with an oratorical emphasis which delighted Pomponius beyond measure, to enumerate the sins of Florence and the virtues of Siena.

By the time we were ready to wrestle with the sights of Siena, the hour was too far advanced for anything but a scouting expedition to the Piazza del Campo, through the main streets of palaces and to the Duomo, so as to get a general idea of the character of the town and of the work that would have to be done next morning.

That Siena has a character and beauty entirely her own goes without saying. To define her peculiar charm is, however, not an easy matter. The chief points are the topographical conditions of the site, the deliberate use made of these conditions for the picturesque planning of the town, the fine preservation of the mediæval, and the inoffensiveness of the modern architectural features. The ups and downs and ramifications of the hills on which the city is built are such that the contour of Siena is not a compact circle or polygon, like most of the other walled cities, but rather like a kind of octopus with

thin wriggling arms extended in every direction of the compass. With the exception of part of the main artery between Porta Camollia in the north and Porta Romana in the south, there is scarcely a level street in the whole town, which, with the systematic curving and twisting of the street fronts, adds immeasurably to the picturesqueness and variety of the vistas.

Pomponius, in the course of a protracted, fierce argument concerning the relative merits of the irregular and unexpected in street-planning, and the perfect rhythm and symmetry of a monumental scheme like the marvellous Place Stanislas at Nancy, refused to believe in the deliberate intention of the early Italian builders. "What beauty there is in these curves and broken sky-lines and unexpected accents is merely accidental, and never calculated," he maintained. Proof to the contrary was not readily obtainable, although some weeks later, after our return, I was able to produce the documentary evidence quoted by Burckhardt in his *History of the Renaissance in Italy*, to the effect that in mediæval Siena at least, and probably in many other towns, a special committee was entrusted with the task of looking after the artistic exigencies of "street corrections."

Nowhere else perhaps did the citizens take such keen interest and justifiable pride in their fine buildings, and numerous are the petitions from the early fourteenth to the sixteenth century about the completion of unfinished monuments "for the glory of

the city." When towards the end of the thirteenth century the Palazzo della Signoria was built in its present form, it was made compulsory for every other future buildings in the Piazza del Campo to have Gothic cusped windows. Indeed, the Palazzo Pubblico became the prototype for the majority of the large private palaces in Siena, which city is richer in Gothic buildings than any other town in Italy except Venice, the chief building material being not the excellent varieties of building stone which abound in the neighbourhood, but rich-coloured brick, stone being reserved for the ground-floor only, if used at all. Even the pavement of the semicircular piazza is laid out in bricks in a fan-shaped design of concentric lines of travertine slabs running down the gentle slope towards the Palazzo Pubblico. The ensemble of this noble three-winged building, with the elegantly machicolated and crenellated Mangia Tower and the dainty loggia at its foot, the radiating pavement, the Gothic palazzi all round, and the reconstructed copy of Jacopo della Quercia's masterpiece, the Fonte Gaja, at the higher end, is surely one of the most impressive sights in this country of artistic miracles.

One cannot but feel thankful that the plan conceived in 1508 to provide the half-circle of the piazza with a colonnade was never carried into execution. Quite apart from all æsthetic considerations, such a change would have interfered considerably with the use of the piazza as a racecourse, where the annual *Palio* is run.



If the forest of mediæval towers which once adorned the city was partly sacrificed to the assurance of civic peace and partly destroyed by successive earthquakes, the Sienese never allowed their noble architectural monuments to fall into decay. And thus Siena has kept much of her mediæval character, though not in crumbling ruins or incongruous patchwork, but just as it must have been in the time of her splendour. This splendour, which accompanied her political independence, practically ceased in the golden days of the Renaissance. The few dainty loggie and some half-dozen palazzi in early Renaissance style did not appreciably alter the physiognomy of the city. Of these buildings honour of place must be given to the beautifully proportioned Palazzo Spannocchi, a replica on a smaller scale in certain respects of the far-famed Palazzo Strozzi in Florence—the same type of windows and character of masonry, and a similar bold classic cornice, the chief difference being in the ground-floor, where a series of arches takes the place of the central arch and lateral small square windows of the Strozzi.

Severe simplicity distinguishes the Renaissance palaces of Siena, which town remained singularly free from the excessive ornamentation of the period of decline. Simplicity is again the key-note of the building activity of modern Siena, and if the last decades of progress have added nothing that deserves a moment's notice, to the architecture of the town, they have not spoilt the general harmony by pretentious tastelessness. The new does not try to rival

the old, but acts as a foil to it. The one instance of offensively bad taste is not likely to come to the notice of those who, like ourselves, enter Siena by the high road. It is the hideous iron gate, or *Barriera*, through which the traveller arriving by rail has to make his entry. But then the railway traveller is accustomed to disappointing first impressions. Iron sheds, smoke, warehouses, and coal depots are not apt to reveal the real significance of the position, and the natural growth of a town, whereas the approach by road is as instructive as the preliminary chapters of a book dealing with its history.

Although Siena gave to Italy one of her greatest sculptors in the person of Jacopo della Quercia, her contribution to the history of Italian art belongs to the sphere of painting rather than of sculpture. Long before Giotto gave the great impulse to Florentine painting, even before the half-mythical Cimabue led from the stereotyped forms of Byzantinism to the beginnings of "modern" art, the painters of Siena had already formed a flourishing school and passed from the hieratic to the emotional. It is scarcely surprising that the treasures of pictorial art stored up in Siena are generally considered the city's principal attraction. Unfortunately, as we learnt to our infinite regret, Sunday is not the day to do them justice. The great *Istituto delle Belle Arti* was closed, and our attempt to coax the *custode* to grant us admission was foiled by our inability to get any response to our furious ringing at his private door. Nor could, later

in the afternoon, our persuasive powers and tempting silver induce the guardian of the Palazzo Pubblico to let us have a glimpse of the frescoed allegories of *The Good and Bad Government* in the Sala della Pace. Thanks to these rebuffs, we had to find consolation in the masterpieces of plastic art in the Duomo and San Giovanni, although Sodoma's frescoes in the Chapel of St. Catharine at S. Domenico, unsatisfying in many respects, like most of that facile master's works, delighted us by some passages of profound beauty, like the group of three women in *The Swooning of St. Catharine*, the perfection of which atones for the jarring note of the over-decorated pilaster in the very middle of the composition. As a complete decorative scheme, in which the connecting links—the pilasters, the garland-carrying putti, and so forth—are thought out and executed with as much attention as the actual panels—the chapel was as effective as any that we had so far seen on our journey.

There are many other altar-pieces and frescoes by Sienese masters at S. Domenico, and on the pavement a representation of the myth of Narcissus in vari-coloured marbles by Beccafumi—one of those strange instances of misapplied skill of which Siena made a speciality in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Could anything be more illogical, more at variance with the sense of decorative fitness, than the composing of more or less realistic figure-subjects in marble to be trampled on by human feet! However, be this as it may, all that art has

created at S. Domenico is put to shame by the superb picture of Siena with her striped Cathedral and Campanile, framed by the window behind the high altar. Not even the panorama of the city from the ramparts of the Lizza, the public promenade by the fortress, which held us spellbound for an hour later in the afternoon, could compare with this sudden glimpse of the heart of the town, so cunningly set, as it were, in its dark frame, which gave increased value to the dazzling brilliance of its colour, lightening the shadow-tones by force of contrast with the deeper shadow that prevailed within the sombre building. It was just like one of those delicious luminous glimpses of town or landscape that many of the Primitives and Early Renaissance painters loved to show through the window openings or colonnades of their lower-toned architectural foregrounds.

Needless to say, we climbed the steep hill to the Piazza del Duomo; saw the gigantic unfinished skeleton wall that stands as witness to that excessive patriotic ambition which would outdo Florence, or indeed the whole of the mediæval world, in extending the Duomo to a scale of impossible magnificence, by making the present gigantic nave the apse of a new building that was to be, but never came to be; saw, and unanimously condemned, the shapeless and gaudy, over-coloured and over-decorated façade of the Duomo, with its three triangular gables and hideous modern mosaics; wondered to what qualities this architectural monstrosity owes its universal fame,

and wondered no longer that the Italians of the Renaissance used the term *Gothic* as an opprobrium.

High Mass was in progress as we entered, and the vast interior was filled with organ-sound and incense. What unexpected wealth in sculpture is held by this interior! from the antique *Three Graces* in the Piccolomini Library, which served the youthful Raphael as model for his Chantilly picture, to Niccolo Pisano and Donatello and to Bernini. Niccolo's marble pulpit is a work of wondrous beauty, of later date than the one in Pisa and more mature in style, yet less completely satisfying than the Pisan marvel. Quite apart from Riccio's Renaissance flight of steps—a design of great refinement in itself, but ill-suited to the Gothic pulpit to which it is attached—there is a tendency to over-decoration which interferes with the clear articulation of the structure. The relief panels have far more life and movement than those at Pisa, but the place of the dividing pilasters is taken by large corner figures which, like the somewhat overcrowded reliefs themselves, suggest that Niccolo must by that time have passed through the influence of classic Roman sculpture, to that of the Gothic north, and especially of the French cathedral builders.

The mere enumeration of the art treasures collected in the course of centuries in the Cathedral would require a chapter to itself. And as it is not my intention to compete with the compilers of guide-books, and still less with the art-historians whose writings on Siena would fill a library of respectable

size, I must content myself with merely mentioning the one work which thrilled us all with its mingling of realistic and spiritual fervour: the fakir-like, emaciated figure of St. John the Baptist by Donatello in the Chapel of S. Giovanni Battista. The St. John is not the only work by Donatello in the Duomo. There is let into the floor of the chapel, to the left of the choir, the magnificent bronze relief which marks the tomb of Giovanni Pecci; and outside the transept door a *tondo* of the Madonna and Child in high relief, with the head and nimbus of the Madonna projecting in front of a domed coffered ceiling in perspective, the whole so well preserved as almost to justify doubts as to whether the *tondo* is actually the handiwork of Donatello or a copy of later date.

Music and incense, subdued richness of colour, and the haziness of lofty space exercised their simultaneous appeal upon the senses of those who had come to attend mass in the Duomo, and also upon the crowds of those who had come in a less reverent spirit in obedience to the commands of Baedeker and Murray. Everything helped in this union of sound, colour, form, and smell to suggest infinity, and to stir the emotions to spiritual exaltation. The spell was only broken when we stepped across the threshold of the Cathedral Library, and found ourselves unexpectedly and all of a sudden transplanted into an atmosphere of smiling worldliness. This Library, built by order of Pius III., and decorated by Pinturicchio with a series of frescoes depicting incidents in the brilliant career of Æneas Sylvius

Piccolomini (Pope Pius II.), is perhaps the best preserved and most remarkable illustration left to us of the half-Christian, half-pagan spirit that permeated not only the secular but also the clerical life of the Renaissance period.

The Library is as much part of the Cathedral as any chapel or sacristy, but the sumptuous splendour of the ten panels by the Umbrian master has not for its objects the glory of God or of the saints and martyrs, but of a man who, notwithstanding his papal rank, was essentially worldly in his classic learning, tastes, and literary activity. Each scene is framed by a Renaissance arch, decorated with grotesques, and at the foot of each arch stand delicious winged cupids in attitudes suggestive of tiny showmen explaining to the audience the meaning of the different tableaux. Through the arches are displayed vistas of landscape or architecture, with scenes of gay pageantry or assemblies of clerical and worldly dignitaries, beginning with the splendid cavalcade of Æneas Piccolomini on his way to the Council at Basle, and ending with the Death of Pius II. at Ancona.

Each scene is like a glimpse through an open door or window, and the *trompe l'œil* is so perfect that one feels inclined to forgive the master's defiance of the first and fundamental rule for mural painting: that it should not aim at plastic reality; that it should accentuate rather than disguise the flatness of the wall surface. Did Raphael, as has been affirmed by Vasari, have a share in the painting of these frescoes?

Internal evidence speaks against this theory, which has been dismissed as a fable by many of the most competent modern critics. Yet there is one point that deserves the most serious consideration. There are in several European museums some preliminary studies for these frescoes which bear the closest analogy with Raphael's early works, and wherever the finished frescoes depart from these drawings, the changes are far from being an improvement; from which one may arrive at the reasonable deduction, that some of the sketch designs may have been supplied by Raphael and subsequently modified by Pinturicchio and his assistants.

Most characteristic of the spirit which animated the higher clergy of Renaissance days is the placing in the Cathedral Library of the classic group of the *Three Graces*—the seductive materialisation of heathen ideas and ideals in the annexe to a Christian temple of worship, and amidst rows of gloriously illuminated missals by Liberale da Verona, Sano di Pietro, and who knows what fervently religious monkish scribes!

We spent more time in the Cathedral than had been our intention—imprisoned by a heavy downpour of rain, against which we had omitted to arm ourselves. Several times I peeped out to see if the rain had ceased, or if there was a cab in the *piazza*; and each time we resumed our inspection of the inexhaustible treasures of the Duomo. At last I was able to report that the sun had conquered again, so that we could proceed to the old Baptistery, now the church of S. Giovanni, which, though on a lower



level than the Duomo and approachable only from the little Piazza San Giovanni, is really a kind of crypt under the apse of the Cathedral, of which it forms structurally a part.

As we left the Cathedral a large car drew up before the gates, and out of it stepped the director of a well-known art gallery in the British Isles, and an equally famous South African financier with his wife and daughter. Up to now we had often been quietly amused at our hustling methods, but the reply given to my questions as to the whence and whither of the new arrivals reconciled even Pomponius to having missed so many good things for which we could not spare the time. The car with its occupants had left Florence in the morning, and was due at Rome the same evening. Three hundred kilometres across invariably hilly country, through towns like Siena and Viterbo, and a dozen other places of historical and artistic interest, through a stretch of country that it would be difficult to match for loveliness in any other part of the world. And to race through it in one day at a speed which debars you from using your eyes!

Quite satisfied now with the leisurely ease of our own progress, we bid them God speed on their mad career, and strolled down San Giovanni. From the moment one's eyes become attuned to the semi-obscurity of the interior, and from a distance at which it is impossible to do justice to the details of the marble and bronze font in the centre of the building, one cannot but feel that nothing else here is of any

consequence but this noble masterpiece, in the making of which the best talent of Florence and Siena joined in friendly rivalry. Designed by Jacopo della Quercia, the font is the joint production of that master himself, of Donatello, Ghiberti, Neroccio, and the Turini. Jacopo wrought the crowning figure of the Baptist, the four Prophets, and the bronze relief of the Angel appearing to Zacharias; Donatello the finest of all the reliefs, the Feast of Herod, and the delicious putti dancing on the corners of the tabernacle; Ghiberti, the Baptism of Christ, and the Baptist brought before Herod.

The font affords the best illustration of Jacopo della Quercia's position as a link between the Gothic period and the Renaissance. Gothic forms still prevail in the hexagonal basin, especially in the niches with the figures which divide the bronze reliefs let into the sides. But the tabernacle that rises from the centre is already of pure Renaissance design, with classic pediments and mouldings, niches of shell-design, and a domed top. Yet there is nothing incongruous in the combination, and the font, in general design and in detail, stands as one of the most perfect monuments created by Italian glyptic art. The frescoes on the walls by Vecchietta and Benvenuto di Giovanni serve their purpose well enough to create a general harmony of tone and to break the monotony of bare walls, but are singularly unattractive when closely examined.

Our backs and eyes were aching with sight-seeing. We felt no inclination to spend the afternoon wan-



The Mangia Tower and Palazzo Pubblico from the back, Siena



dering from church to church, and preferred to join the quietly festive, well-behaved throng of idlers in the Lizza, the Piazza del Campo, and the Via Cavour. That we had come at the wrong time for the great Palio caused us many regrets, which were intensified when the picturesqueness of the great Sienese festa was brought home to us by a little procession of men in the mediæval costume retained by the participators in the annual sports—a few youths in gaily-coloured striped hose, who moved with the swaggering gait of the figures in Signorelli's frescoes, and whirled their flags about, and threw them high into the air, and caught them again with indefatigable energy and with the acrobatic skill of a Cinquevalli.

The intervals between our walks and meals and sight-seeing I spent in consultations with a not over-intelligent hall-porter and anxious inquiries by telephone concerning the Dunlop tyre, which ought to have come from Florence in the morning. There was no Sunday delivery. I sent two or three times to the station, but it had not arrived. Florence was rung up again, and assured the hall-porter that the tyre had been despatched. It was probably resting somewhere on a railway siding. There was nothing to be done but to wait till next morning. "Next morning" brought no better luck, and we had to content ourselves with a Michelin, which was perhaps for the best, for we had no further trouble with that particular wheel, whilst henceforth the other back-wheel became the source of endless heart-breaking delays.

The photographer was as good as his word—and far better than my maiden efforts with the Kodak. Nearly all the films on which I had expended special care and consulted the tables to ascertain the correct exposure had turned out failures. The few exciting incidents, to which I attached particular importance, were taken in pairs on the same films, others were not exposed at all; but there was a fair proportion of serviceable results. For the rest of the tour I snapped blindly and thoughtlessly at anything that I thought worthy of being recorded—and with far better luck than had attended my deliberate calculations.

## CHAPTER IX

### ROUGHING IT AT MONTE OLIVETO



HERE are few places in Italy more difficult of access and yet more tempting to the art-lover than the old monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. Had we been dependent on railways and horses, we should probably never have contemplated the possibility of including that secluded spot in our itinerary. With a powerful car at our disposal it would have been nothing short of a crime to miss, for the sake of saving a few miles, as rare an artistic treat as the great cloisters frescoed by Signorelli and Sodoma. The question was how to get there, for our *Carte Taride* was no help—it did not even show the name of the monastery, and the information to be gathered at Siena was of the vaguest. There were several ways apparently, the best of which, I gathered, was to pass through Porta Romana and to follow the old road to Viterbo and Rome for about fifteen miles to Buonconvento, whence a run of about five miles in a north-easterly direction leads to Monte Oliveto. Or we could start by the same road, and, turning off eastwards after eight miles at Monteroni, make for Asciano, and thence to the monastery. Or

we could leave by the Porta Pispini and proceed direct to Asciano, though this road was more tricky and complicated.

We decided in favour of the second alternative. It had begun to rain just before we started after eleven o'clock, so that we had to put up the hood, which always made it difficult to look out for signposts and other landmarks, or to ask for directions en route. Our first blunder was that we missed the Porta Romano, and went out by the Porta Pispini, of which mistake I only became aware when we crossed the railway, a mile from the city gate, since the road-map showed no railway crossing between Siena and Monteroni. Still, there was no need to turn back; we had, against our will, taken the short cut to Asciano. A short cut, to be sure, but scarcely a saving of time, since there were endless windings and cross-roads, and neither milestones nor signposts where they were most needed. What with the rain and our uncertainty and my questioning of every chance passer-by, we took nearly half-an-hour to cover the five miles to the Arbia Bridge (590 feet), beyond which another level crossing, followed immediately by the junction with the high road to Rapolano and Sinalunga, proved us on reference to the map to be on the right road.

Up to now we had steadily descended some 460 feet. The road now continued fairly level and straight to the bridge over the Borro di Leonina, and in the next four miles rose again to a height of 112 feet. A few more ups and downs and we were



within sight of Asciano. It was past twelve o'clock when we reached the point before the gates of Asciano, where we should have to turn to the right for our monastery. We had only done eighteen miles, presumably through exquisitely beautiful country, though I had had no leisure to enjoy the landscape through the veil of fine rain. But now the sun broke through the clouds again, and whilst we took down our rain-shelter, we discussed our plan of campaign. I was in favour of entering Asciano, and of having a look at the picturesque fourteenth-century Siense fortifications and at Sassetta's adorable painting of the *Birth of the Virgin* in the Collegiata Church, which I knew from photographic reproductions to be one of the most entrancing masterpieces of the Siense School. But Pomponius mentioned the word "lunch," and having assumed the responsibility for the comfort of our little party, I had to banish Sassetta from my mind, and to push on towards the wilderness of Monte Oliveto.

I did not communicate to anybody my reason for this sudden change of front. It was of a very prosaic nature, and closely connected with Pomponius's innocent mention of the word "lunch," coupled with the questions "where" and "when." The famous Benedictine convent, now suppressed, has been converted into a public monument, which is looked after by three monks. Its remote and isolated position keeps it safe from the intrusion of all but a few enthusiastic art-students who, if they wish to stay a night or to obtain a meal, have to give two days' notice in writing.

From that invaluable source of information, Baedeker's *Central Italy*, I had gathered that those who have not time to send this notice two days in advance should provide themselves with provisions for one day, a precaution which I had neglected in the proud consciousness of the capacity of the Cricket, which I depended upon to take us to Montepulciano in time for a belated luncheon. And as we had lost considerable time, owing to the rain and the difficulty of finding our way, any additional delay would have interfered seriously with our prospects of a meal at a reasonable hour. I should willingly have suffered the pangs of hunger, but I shrank from the responsibility of upsetting Pomponius's digestion and from his wrath thereat.

For a mile or two down to the bridge over the Borro del Bagnaccio we went through a region of verdant orchards of a more sated and luxuriant green than is generally to be found in this land of soft, broken colours; then up a steep hill with a sharp hairpin-corner, through lonely tracts of undulating country with scarce a sign of human life, and not a tree to protect any stray wanderer from the sun, which had by now regained its whole strength—up to a height of 1148 feet to an exposed point, where our road turned south-west at a right angle from the one leading to Montepulciano, and whence we saw a group of buildings on a lofty hill, which we fondly believed to be Monte Oliveto. The labourers in the fields on the slope of the hill were evidently not accustomed to the sight of a touring-car, and watched

us with open-mouthed astonishment as we swiftly glided down the little dip and as swiftly up the hill—not to Monte Oliveto, but to the fortress-like village of Chiusure, a very eagle's nest commanding the whole sad, deserted district. Of all the weird romantic places we had struck, Chiusure—once upon a time no doubt a well-nigh impregnable fortress, but now a poverty-stricken, crumbling, sad remnant of former power—was the most wildly picturesque. The steep, roughly-paved street through which we had to pass from gate to gate was so narrow, and the dirty, decayed houses on either side so tall, that no ray of sunlight could ever dispel the feeling of cold chill, no healthy breeze disperse the evil odours which floated about every threshold. The whole population crowded into the street to watch us pass—sad, serious, wistful faces, as of people that knew nothing of the joy of life, and for whom even so unimportant an event as the passing of a motor-car would be material for a week's talk. So narrow was the street that Ryder had to exercise the utmost caution to avoid scraping against the women and children who were leaning against the grimy walls, and who answered in a shrill chorus, "Si, si, Signore!" when asked whether we were right for Monte Oliveto.

Down we went again a short incline beyond the second gate, and up again to a fairly large building—Monte Oliveto, surely, this time. However, it did not look like a monastery when we came nearer. An old woman leaned out of a first-floor window. A vigorous negation with head and arms, and a

torrent of words in an unintelligible patois answered my shouted inquiry: "Monte Oliveto?" The only words I could catch were "Poggio alle Monache"—presumably the name of the farm. The old woman continued talking, and waved her arms in the direction from which we had come. Yet I had not noticed any other road since we had left Chiusure. I shrugged my shoulders and regaled her to a reiteration of *non capisco!* until she made us signs to wait and disappeared from the window. In a few moments she came out of the house, followed by a strikingly pretty barefooted girl of about fifteen, whom she instructed to put us on the right road. The poor child was for running in front of the car, which was now turned again towards Chiusure. Considerable persuasion was needed to make her join us on the car to conduct us to the invisible cross-roads.

I fear she did not enjoy her ride, for as soon as we put on a little speed she seemed to be overcome with terror. Had she been able to spare a hand from clinging on to the car, she would surely have used it for making the sign of the cross. At any rate, she gave an audible sigh of relief when the narrow road to the convent came in sight, and we slowed down to release our victim. I gave her a lira. A deep flush of pleasure spread over her comely features. Such wealth had probably never come her way. With a whispered *grazie*, she firmly clutched the coin in her little hand, and ran back to the farmhouse as quickly as her legs would carry her.



A "Prehistoric Peep," Monte Oliveto Maggiore



In the distance we now beheld the cypress grove of the "Mount of Olives" beyond a stretch of barren, weird, majestic landscape, that might have been a fitting background for one of Mr. E. T. Reed's prehistoric peeps. It would have been scarcely surprising to see some monster of impossible proportions rise from one of the clefts and crevices that break in every direction the undulating lines of the chalk soil. It was a veritable nightmare landscape, inviting to strange dreams from which we were unpleasantly recalled to reality by the familiar sensation of a rapidly deflating tyre. Another puncture, almost within sight of our objective!

We had miscalculated the time needed for the little excursion. Urged by our eagerness to see that wonderful series of frescoes in the monastery cloisters, by our rapidly swelling appetite, and by Ryder's assurance that he could manage things by himself, we walked through a shady avenue of giant cypresses towards a little bridge and arched gate that seemed to belong to a fortified castle rather than to a peaceful monastic establishment. The only indication of the real nature of the building were the glazed Della Robbia terra-cotta reliefs of the Madonna and Angels on the entrance side and St. Benedict on the other side, over the gate, the exquisite forms and brilliant colour of which are immeasurably enhanced by the severe massiveness of the surrounding plain brickwork. Within the gate another cypress grove on the right, and in front a terraced court-

yard between some outhouses and the convent-church which half screens the monastery proper.

Needless to say, we made straight for the cloisters, to which we were admitted by an amiable Benedictine monk, who discreetly left us alone to enjoy the grand cycle of frescoes, with scenes from the life of St. Benedict, begun by Luca Signorelli in 1497, and completed by Sodoma in 1508.

Eight of these frescoes are by Signorelli, thirty-one by Sodoma. Signorelli's are unequal in merit, improving from the earliest to the latest, as though he had gradually warmed up to his task. They have suffered terribly from deterioration and wretched re-painting (especially in the landscape portions). As space composition they are inferior to several of the panels by Sodoma, who is also more pleasing in harmonies of colour. And yet they have a power of individual as well as collective movement, a mastery of form, a degree of vitality, and energy, and fiery imagination, which place these ruined fragments in an infinitely higher category than Sodoma's frescoes. Especially does this apply to the last two panels of the series, *The Shield-bearer disguised as Totila presenting himself before the Saint*, and *Totila kneeling before St. Benedict*.

After the robust manliness of Signorelli's designs, Sodoma's rather affected mannered grace appears effeminate and verging on prettiness. Still, his frescoes contain passages of entrancing beauty, like the group of women in *The Temptation of the Monks*; and of characteristic portraiture, like the monks who figure





The Outer Gate of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, with a Madonna by Della Robbia



in many of the scenes, and who are obviously painted from the models the master found ready to hand at the monastery. The beauty of his work is sensuous rather than spiritual. How far he himself is responsible for the inferior passages, which are by no means rare, it is practically impossible to judge, since he was assisted in his work by a number of pupils, among whom Vincenzo Tamagni of S. Gimignano is the best known.

Thanks to Vasari's gossipy and highly prejudiced account of Sodoma's life, which is positively malicious in its invention of discreditable incidents, a whole legend has grown round this series of frescoes and the circumstances under which they were produced. Most famous—and most absurd—of all the stories is the one referring to the dancing women in the *Temptation*. This dance, as originally painted, says Vasari, "was altogether offensive, and, as he knew that this would not be permitted, he (Sodoma) refused to let any of the monks see his work while it was in progress. When this story was uncovered, the General at once commanded that it should be instantly destroyed and done away with," whereupon Sodoma added draperies to all the figures in the picture. Had not Vasari been blinded by his dislike for Sodoma, he might have recognised that, if there be any truth at all in the story, it only redounds to the credit of a painter who was conscientious enough to take the trouble to paint the real form of the human figure before covering it with drapery.

Our monk returned to the cloisters, when he thought he had given us enough time to see all there was to be seen, and proposed to take us over the rest of the practically dismantled establishment. "How about lunch?" asked Pomponius, somewhat frightened at the prospect of further delay.

"How about lunch?" I interpreted the question to our monkish guide: "Is it possible to get anything to eat?"

"I am afraid it isn't. We are not prepared for visitors unless we are given notice."

"But surely there must be something! You cannot live without eating. Nor can the contadini I saw outside the building. Anything will do for us—a crust of bread, a few eggs, a little fruit."

The padre raised his hands with a deprecating gesture and smiled: "How are we to get eggs when there are no fowls? Fruit—well, we have some dry walnuts, and there is bread, and cheese, and plenty of good red wine."

"Bravissimo! That's all we want. When you are starving, you don't want your palate tickled by delicacies."

The kindly old man conducted us to the refectory, a room with whitewashed walls and with no furniture but a massive oak table and plain wooden chairs and benches. Whilst we were looking through the window upon the solemn and sad loveliness of the uninhabited country below, he spread upon the bare boards the feast of stale bread, very hard cheese, walnuts, and unripe apples. I begged him to send

word to Ryder to take the car to the gate and to join us at our banquet. The monk promised to do so, and a few minutes later Ryder appeared on the threshold, not a little surprised at the character of the "restaurant" we had chosen, and presumably rather disappointed with the extreme frugality of the repast. Yet I doubt if any of us had ever enjoyed a meal more heartily. In no time the loaf of bread, the brick of cheese, and the two decanters of truly excellent wine had vanished to the delight of our cowed host, who immediately went in search of a new supply. Meanwhile I remembered the despised preserved fruit of Genoa, and the disc of panforte di Siena, safely tucked away in one of the side-pockets of the car, and forgotten by everybody. Nothing else was needed to turn our meal into a feast.

I mumbled an excuse, as I wanted the additions to the menu to come as a complete surprise, and hurried towards the gate. But there was no need to go so far. The car was actually in the outer court of the monastery, which, as I was told by the contadini grouped around it at a respectful distance, had never before been desecrated by so worldly an intrusion. Ryder, in his inability to understand the protests of the peasant messenger sent by the Benedictine, had boldly passed through the gate and run the Cricket to the terrace beside the church. The panforte was an unqualified success. On this occasion, and many times thereafter when we had to spend hours by the roadside far from the habita-

tions of man, we convinced ourselves of its sustaining qualities and of the exquisiteness of its flavour.

We had come with a healthy thirst and with a disinclination to trust the waters of unknown localities. Mineral water was not on the list of luxuries obtainable at Monte Oliveto, and the wine had more strength and body than we had imagined from its taste. Small wonder then that there is a certain haze over my recollections of what we were shown after that enjoyable meal, the payment for which was left to our generosity. The only impression I carried away with me was one of vast emptiness and methodical spoliation, with here and there an artistic relic that for some unknown reason escaped the greed of the plunderers. The air seemed heavy, and the cloistral stillness oppressive. And without was sunshine and the breeze of the open road. We bade farewell to our Benedictine, who seemed to take a real pride in the scant remains of former splendour left in his charge ; and we resumed our journey.

The three decanters of ruby wine had wrought a miraculous change upon the Mount of Olives ; the rugged, sterile, grey and brown desert was transformed into a rose-coloured paradise, bounded on the far horizon by the lovely outline of Mont' Amiata ; the abrupt chasms and gullies into waving billows. Belle and Dan were humming contentedly at the back ; Pomponius had comfortably settled in his corner for a snooze—everybody felt happy and at peace with the world. But ten minutes of cutting through the air at a fair speed soon cleared our



The Cypress Grove of Monte Oliveto





heads; and when, having passed back through Chiusure, we came to a standstill at the very point where we had to turn off to the right towards Montepulciano, unless we wanted to return to Asciano by the same road by which we had come in the morning, we were already restored to our normal condition.

Of course, it was again a puncture. But there was also something else—a mysterious something, about which Ryder was loath to enter into particulars—some trifling repair needed by the engine. A matter of a few minutes, he assured us, after having taken the whole engine to pieces, if only he had the necessary spare parts and tools, which unfortunately did not form part of our equipment. A big stone had to be found to serve as anvil, and then there was half-an-hour's filing and hammering, at the end of which we had got no further.

“Would you mind asking that man how far it is from here to the next village; whether there is a smithy; and whether it is much uphill?” said Ryder at last, when he realised the futility of his attempts. These were ominous questions. But fortunately the answers were entirely satisfactory. The nearest place was S. Giovanni d'Asso, four kilometres further on our road; there *was* a smithy, and the whole distance was downhill. Ryder readjusted the dissected engine, packed his tools into the box, and a few minutes later we halted before the closed door of the smithy at San Giovanni d'Asso.

Closed and locked, and no answer to my ringing

and knocking, which, however, attracted the usual crowd of idle villagers. Where was the blacksmith? Gone to the *osteria* close by. Two or three obliging natives immediately trotted off to fetch him. He did not keep us waiting, and showed the greatest eagerness to help us out of our trouble. His workshop was equipped with all the necessary material. The difficulty was to explain to him what was needed, for our conversational Italian vocabulary did not run to rarely required technical terms. It was no easy matter to explain to him that a thin piston-rod, broken at the very point where it entered the shaft, so that it was impossible to get hold of it, had to be removed and replaced by a new one, which would have to be filed to the exact thickness of the derelict.

However, the blacksmith's keen intelligence and eagerness to help met me half-way. He and Ryder set to work—for half-an-hour at most, Ryder assured us with his cheerful optimism—whilst the rest of us explored San Giovanni d'Asso. There was not much to explore. In three minutes we had walked the whole length of the main street, and had ascertained that the inn was not inviting enough for us to order tea. An old castello, in good preservation and evidently inhabited, was the one picturesque feature of the deadly dull little town. We had two hours to impregnate our memory with the image of that castello and of the unattractive street, where we were hung up. A pleasant diversion was created by the blacksmith's neighbour, who invited us to enter a vault filled with giant casks of red wine—one of the

best brands in the neighbourhood, and better than the far-famed Montepulciano he assured us with justifiable pride, as we ascertained when he handed round the tumblers filled straight from the wood. His hospitality was offered with such grace that, warned by previous experience, we did not venture to suggest paying for the drinks for fear of offending him. All I could do to show our appreciation was to offer him a Havana cigar—an unknown luxury in so out-of-the-way a little country town—which he accepted with effusive thanks and smoked with evident relish.

Meanwhile our little group had been joined by two new arrivals—a tall, handsome, very English-looking man, whose smart, well-cut sporting attire proclaimed him to belong to a different sphere of life than the semi-rustic natives; and an equally well-dressed adolescent, fair-skinned, and with the face of a Botticellian angel. Both had their guns slung over their shoulders, and were accompanied by two fine sporting dogs. The deference with which they were treated marked them out to be the “lord of the manor,” or the owner of the castle, and his son. They evinced the keenest interest in the car, examined the engine with the air of connoisseurs, apologised for the poor aspect of San Giovanni d’Asso, as though they were personally responsible for it, and helped us to while away the hours with their pleasant and interesting conversation. The senior told us of all the objects of artistic and archæological interest in the neigh-

bourhood, and sent his son back to the castle to fetch some picture post-cards made to his order of San Giovanni d'Asso and its ancient Romanesque church, which he handed to us as a souvenir of our chance. What delighted him beyond measure was our enthusiastic appreciation of the artistic patri-mony of his country.

At last the somewhat tricky job was finished. The blacksmith, on being asked to what extent we were indebted to him, considered for a moment, and suggested timidly the sum of one lira, or ten-pence, for his two hours' work! The squire gave us full directions as to our best road. We shook hands all round and departed, accompanied by the usual benedictions. It was long past five o'clock—and I had planned to be at Montepulciano for lunch, and at Orvieto before dusk!

The rest of the day's journey was plain sailing, undisturbed by any further mishap. We crossed the railway and the river Ano immediately after descending the hill to the right of the castle, and then steadily climbed towards the higher ground of the Montepulciano district, reaching an altitude of 1355 feet at Montisi (seven kilometres), and the highest point, 1886 feet, five kilometres further. For another five kilometres the invariably excellent and exceptionally undusty road keeps about the same level, with but slight ups and downs, until Montefallonic appears towering on its hill to the left. Then follows a descent of some 500 feet, and two miles further is the junction with the main road from Pienza, whence

the first view is obtained of the proud outline of the walls and roofs of Montepulciano on a distant height—not as imposing, indeed, as the first glimpse of Volterra, less wild and less warlike, but nevertheless a sight of unforgettable loveliness. Again the approach is not straightforward, but by many a twist and turn along the nine kilometres of road which ascends the hill, not from the west, from which direction the town is approached, but along the walls facing east, and then with a sharp turn through the northern gate, in close proximity to which is situated in a little piazza the Albergo Marzocco, where we had decided to put up for the night.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Siena . . . . .	1050	...	...
Fork to Rapolano . .	600	8	8
Asciano . . . . .	656	18	26
Fork to San Giovanni d'Asso . . . . .	1148	9	35
Chiusure . . . . .	1230	2	37
Monte Oliveto . . .	...	3	40
Chiusure . . . . .	1230	3	43
San Giovanni d'Asso	1056	6	49
Montisi . . . . .	1355	7	56
Highest Point of Road	1886	5	61
Fork to Pienza . .	1624	8	69
Montepulciano . .	1984	9	78

## CHAPTER X

### THE MIRACLE OF ORVIETO



It is scarcely surprising that Montepulciano, high as it must rank among the fascinating hill-towns of Central Italy, is one of the most rarely visited of all. Its situation—seven miles from the railway station that bears its name, and some 1100 feet above the level of that station in the lovely Val de Chiana—protects it from invasion by hordes of tourists. Moreover, tourists are wont to follow the guide-book stars; and the pages devoted to Montepulciano are singularly free from these ornaments, although the city itself deserves to be distinguished by a star of unusual magnitude. The town has given birth to no great painters or sculptors—her glory is the humanist poet and scholar, Angelo Poliziano, the friend of Lorenzo the Magnificent—and no world-famed frescoes, and altar-pieces, and monuments adorn her churches and secular buildings. Montepulciano, in a word, is not a city of sights, but is a grand sight in itself, a city full of personal character, extraordinarily rich in masterpieces of Renaissance architecture, situated on an eminence which commands views of



Palazzo Avignanesi, Montepulciano





unrivalled charm over the luxuriant country around. And, above all, Montepulciano is neither spoilt by aggressive modernity, nor crumbling or decayed from neglect.

At the very beginning of the main street, a column crowned by the *Marzocco*, the shield-bearing lion of Florence, proclaims the final victory of the City of the Lily over her rival Siena in a long-sustained struggle for supremacy over this important stronghold. The Medici *palle* figure on the coats-of-arms of several palaces, and Florentine influences are paramount in the architecture of some of the finest buildings, notably in the grandly proportioned Palazzo Avignanesi, almost opposite the Marzocco Inn. The ground-floor in particular, with the well-accentuated joints of the masonry, the carved lions' heads, and the marble benches at both sides of the rather plain door, the classic pediments and massive iron grilles of the windows, and the projecting armorial shield over the door, is as distinguished a design of combined grace and strength as is to be found in Tuscany.

However, I was not allowed to lose myself in the contemplation of architectural gems. Serious business had to be attended to. First of all the luggage, which was pounced upon by all the loafers of Montepulciano, as soon as we had made sure of our rooms. It was really comical to see the long procession of carriers, each laden with one piece—a portmanteau, or a hat-box, or an overcoat, or some little parcel—though my amusement was slightly

tempered when each individual member of the procession, and presumably one or two who had not really taken part in it, came in single file to my room to demand their tips. When we compared notes later in the evening, it appeared that Dan and Pomponius had fared no better. Our arrival had, for the time being, given work and pay to all the unemployed of Montepulciano; and contact with these unemployed had given us—well, a not altogether unjustifiable suspicion as to the origin of the city's name: Montepulciano—Monte, mountain; pulci, fleas.

My next duty was to find, if possible, a vulcaniser for Ryder. The miserable patchwork of Lucca and Siena had come all to pieces, and we were short of undamaged reserve air-tubes. I consulted the host. There was no garage at Montepulciano, but at an address not far from the albergo I should find a signore who owns a car, and who always does his own repairs. He was very obliging, and was sure to have everything that was needed.

I started off to the motor-owner's palazzo. He was out; at the café, probably. What café? Only just a few minutes up the Via Garibaldi. To the café I hurried, looked around the tables, and boldly addressed the person who seemed to me most likely to be the owner of a palazzo and automobile. "Excuse me, Signore, are you Signore N——?" I had guessed right. He jumped up, raised his hat, and assumed the aspect of a huge sign of interrogation. I explained; he listened with a sad smile of sympathy and fellow-feeling. His garage was at our disposal,

but he had no vulcaniser. If he wanted anything of that kind done, he had to go to Perugia, whither he presumed we were bound. No? Then there was no hope. No one could help us at Orvieto, or at Foligno, or at Assisi. Infinite regrets. *Arrivederle! Buon Viaggio!*

Ryder was less dejected than the occasion warranted when I came back with the sad news. "I daresay we'll be able to manage somehow," was his sole comment, as he departed back to the garage, and I joined the others in the dining-room. After the colourless compromise of the menus at Siena and the semi-fasting at Montepulciano, the strongly flavoured *mortadella*, the white truffles, the *ravioli*, and other well-seasoned national dishes, accompanied by the king of Italian table-wines, the product of the grapes grown on the slopes of the neighbouring hills, constituted a feast to which we did not fail to do justice. To crown it all came with the dessert a bottle of golden *Vino santo*, a wine of perhaps excessive sweetness, in which, however, is imprisoned the very essence of the aroma and flavour of the best muscat-grape. If Montepulciano had no attractions but its *Vino santo*, it would deserve to rank among the world's show-places!

But Montepulciano *has* other attractions, as we found out next morning, though we did not descend to the foot of the hill to the Madonna di San Biagio, Sangallo's famous Bramantesque church, which disputes with the church of Sta. Maria della Consolazione at Todi the claim of being the most perfectly pro-

portioned Renaissance building of this particular type, a Greek cross surmounted by a lofty dome. The view from the bedroom window, which met my eyes when I pulled up the blind in the early morning, was so divinely beautiful that I rubbed my eyes to make sure that I was really awake, though the uncontrolled imagination of a dreaming mind could not conjure up anything half as entrancing as this panorama of the Chiana valley, the three lakes of Montepulciano, Chiusi, and Trasimeno, and the hazy Umbrian mountains beyond in the clear mild light of the morning sun.

For the rest, nothing could be better arranged for the motorist's convenience than the sights of Montepulciano, which you can "do" in about half-an-hour without incurring pangs of conscience at having missed anything worth seeing. The second-rate pictures at the little gallery may be ruled out at once. A slow run by car up the steep Via Garibaldi and its continuation the Via Cavour to the end of the town, then round to the grand Piazza, will reveal the whole long succession of beautiful palaces and churches—the Palazzi Tarugi, Buccelli, Bombagli, Nobile and Contucci; the house in which Poliziano was born; Michelozzo's Church of S. Agostino, with a flight of stairs of very original design leading to the porch, and three admirable terra-cotta figures by Michelozzo over the door; the grand Palazzo Pubblico, crenellated and machicolated, and very similar in style to the one in Florence; and the vast Duomo, with Taddeo Bartoli's glorious ancona of the *Assumption and*



Under the City Walls of Montepulciano



Palazzo Nobile, Montepulciano



*Coronation of the Virgin* over the high altar, to which we were lucky enough to gain access by means of some temporarily placed wooden steps. This vast work, consisting of a large triptych set in a Gothic architectural frame, with a predella in two courses, divided into twenty-one scenes of the *Creation* and *Passion*, pilasters, "castles," and pinnacles, all richly carved and gilt, and decorated with figures of saints and other subjects, is one of the few early altar-pieces of this kind that has been preserved in its completeness and untarnished splendour. It has the sumptuous effect of an enamelled jewel, and at the same time the mellow harmony of tone which can only be given by time. All the loveable qualities of the early Sieneſe painters are embodied in this great work. Yet so little store do those in charge of it set by this treasure, that whilst we were still admiring it, a grimy urchin clambered up the steps and rubbed his dirty hand over one of the predella panels!

I shall not attempt the impossible: a description of the Garden of Eden, of the ever-changing panorama of loveliest scenery in that blessed country between Montepulciano and Orvieto; and the no less beautiful though sterner and grander stretch between Orvieto, and Todi, and Foligno. A mere glance at the first column of the appended "Itinerary," showing the constant successions of ups and downs with differences of over 1000 feet over distances of but a few kilometres, will suggest to the experienced motor tourist the rapid sequence of corresponding changes in the character of the country. Unfortunately I had no such

itinerary for my guidance, and, as on the two preceding days, was at the mercy of chance and of such scraps of information as I could pick up en route, the *Carte Taride* proving more useless than ever. The milestones, where there were any at all, only added to the confusion. Some were marked in kilometres, others in Italian miles, whatever that may be ; few, if any, stated from which point the distance was measured, and showed the same figures on both sides of the stone. Sometimes these figures were accompanied by mysterious letters which conveyed no particular meaning to us. What earthly use could it be for any one trying to find his way from Montepulciano to Orvieto to see a stone that bears on both sides an inscription like "P. 55"? Needless to say, the cross-roads on the early part of the journey, where information was most needed, were not provided with signposts.

At one of these cross-roads beyond Croce di Febe, we were just about to take the wrong turning—the left instead of the right—when we met an old peasant carrying a bundle wrapped up in a red handkerchief. Having given me the needed directions, he held up his bundle and asked whether I wanted to buy any antiques. It was an exciting moment. Was it possible that chance had thrown in my way what had hitherto eluded my search in the antique shops of the old towns—some primitive Sienese master or other treasure stored away for generations in a village that had escaped being ransacked by the antique dealers' scouts? Slowly he undid the knots, and



produced a box with some worthless peasants' rings of the kind that are to be found in every curio shop in Italy, and a genuine Renaissance Venetian glass mirror frame, with twisted bands of glass and exquisite mouldings, very dirty, injured in parts, but still an object of great beauty, and better than anything of the kind that I had seen in shops. I asked the price.

“Fifty lire, Signore.”

“Fifteen?”

“*Va bene!* You may have it.”

It was the quickest and least troublesome bargain I had ever struck in Italy. I was quite prepared for the itinerant curio-dealer to swear by the soul of his father that he had paid thirty lire himself, but that he would take thirty-two lire, or something of that sort. But no! he agreed straight away, and I carefully tucked away my treasure at the back of the hood, and managed to bring it back to England uninjured.

Having negotiated the half-dozen hair-pin corners beyond S. Albino, we left Chianciano on the left, and descended into the green Chiana valley, joining the high road from Arezzo to Orvieto about a mile north-west of Chiusi. Like most of the ancient cities in Lars Porsena's realm, Chiusi is situated on an eminence off the main artery of traffic. Its historic and artistic relics belong mainly to the Etruscan age, and since none of us were particularly interested in Etruscan antiquities, especially when Perugino's birthplace and Signorelli's frescoes at Orvieto beckoned us onwards, we decided to leave Chiusi

on the left, and crossing into Umbria a mile or so beyond that town, to climb forthwith the eight hundred feet to mediæval Città della Pieve.

Although for a main road the traffic on this stretch was by no means excessive, we no longer had the road to ourselves, as we had practically done since leaving Siena; and I was kept fairly busy blowing the increasingly intractable Casale horn to give timely warning to the sleepy drivers in charge of oxen-drawn Sicilian carts, painted in gay red and blue. Almost from the moment of crossing into Umbrian territory I noticed an extraordinary change in the type and costume of the people, and even in the breed of the cattle. The white oxen of the Carrara district and of Tuscany are of a creamy yellow hue when compared with the snowy purity of the white coats of the Umbrian cattle, powerful beasts with enormous twisted horns. If we had up to now found the people courteous and friendly, they now became positively demonstrative in welcoming us everywhere with smiling faces, waving kerchiefs, and loudly shouted exclamations of goodwill and "God-speed." How strangely the types recorded for the delight of all ages by the masters of the quattro and cinquecento have been preserved by the peasantry of Umbria; and how we could, in the course of a morning's run, see this type change from the Peruginisque to that of Raphael's later Madonnas, as we moved towards Orvieto and Rome. Round soft faces, with large dreamy eyes and clearly pencilled arched eyebrows; full, round figures, and statuesque

necks. The faded, mellow colours of the peasant women's attire further north were now replaced by reds, blues and yellows of a vividness which almost amounted to crudeness, but which enlivened the tender tones of the landscape, so well known from the backgrounds of the Umbrian masters, with accents of brilliant effectiveness.

It would have been sinful to race through country of such unrivalled loveliness on a day which made motoring in itself far more enjoyable than sight-seeing; and everybody willingly agreed to curtail the programme of churches and museums so that we might make the most of that stimulating combination of warmest, most generous sunshine and cool air, which constitutes the great joy of motoring in Italy in the summer and early autumn. And it was no effort to tear ourselves away from Città della Pieve, so proudly poised on her hill-top, but so melancholy, so decayed, so mournfully somnolent, when you pass through the quiet streets with their crumbling walls and vestiges of erstwhile splendour. The very people seemed to be affected by the spirit of the place. They had nothing of that unconsciousness of the historic *milieu* which marks the attitude of the inhabitants of most of Italy's ancient towns. They had something of the air of mourners among ruins—mourners who have become resigned to their loss. What we saw of Perugino's art in the churches of the town where he was born, and upon which his fame sheds lustre, only added to the general impression of sadness: a few altar-pieces, careless in

execution, shallow in sentiment, affected in the grace of the poses, and generally in a wretched state of preservation.

Such is Città della Pieve on a day when Nature's greatest artist, the Sun, makes weather-worn stone, and brick, and mortar sparkle in a thousand warm tints, and paints the streets with noble designs of light and shade. What Città della Pieve must be like on a rainy day, when all colour becomes hidden under a coat of grey dampness, I can scarcely imagine.

From the sad reality of living death we returned to the dreamland of the Umbrian hills as soon as we had left the sleeping town behind us. Monteleone d'Orvieto, where the steep and winding descent into the wide Chiani valley begins, has nothing in common with Città della Pieve, save its lofty position. It is as cheerful and prosperous looking as the other is sad and poor. A market, or *fiera*, was in full swing at the village of S. Maria, at the foot of the mountains; and the populace of the whole district for many miles around had flocked into the high road, which was lined with booths, and filled with so dense a crowd of men in their Sunday best, and women dressed in the brightest of colours, that there was scarcely room for them to step aside in order to clear a passage for the car. For the time being our arrival disorganised the whole market, and we seemed to be regarded as a peculiarly attractive side-show. The only remarks we heard from the jostling throng were again the usual friendly greetings—*Buon viaggio! Addio!*—and admiring comments on the



“A Market was in full swing at S. Maria”



car—*Bella, bella!* A cheap-jack laughingly offered us an old coat, another pedlar an enormous green canvas umbrella, large enough to serve as a tent. Glasses with red wine were raised to us, and one merry group actually held out bottle and tumblers with an invitation to help ourselves. Nowhere the slightest sign of ill-feeling, such as we were to find later on similar occasions in Germany.

A straight run of a few miles through the valley, and then another stiff climb to gloriously picturesque, walled and towered Ficulle; and further up to La Croce, where we reached an altitude of 1797 feet, only to descend again on the most perfect of roads, and with Orvieto of her tufa platform always in sight, to the Paglia valley (377 feet), which had to be traversed before we could scale the mountain of Orvieto. Having passed the railway station on the right bank of the river, we attempted to enter Orvieto from the north, but after a mile or so on the winding uphill road, we found the passage blocked by all manner of debris on the road which was under repair, and had to turn back and try to force the western gate.

It was a passage of descriptive writing in d'Annunzio's *Trionfo della Morte* that had given definite shape in my imagination to Orvieto, that ancient stronghold of Papal authority—a passage of exquisite prose, which even in a halting translation retains something of its original musical cadence and evocational suggestion. “Imagine a rock in the middle of a melancholy valley, and on the top of the rock a

city, so deathly silent as to give the impression of being uninhabited—every window closed, grass growing in the dusty grey streets, a Capucin friar crosses a piazza, a priest descends from a closed carriage in front of a hospital, all in black, and with a decrepit old servant to open the door; here a tower against the white, rain-sodden clouds, there a clock slowly striking the hour, and suddenly at the end of the street a miracle—the Duomo.”

Well, such may have been the Orvieto of the days when d’Annunzio wrote his novel, but the description does not altogether tally with the Orvieto of to-day. The rock in the middle of the melancholy valley still rises abruptly some seven hundred feet from the flat country, a vast mass of volcanic tufa with almost perpendicular, ruggedly furrowed sides, that must have proved a powerful protection against the enemy in the days of Guelph and Ghibelline’s strife, restricting the area of defence to the immediate vicinity of the few strong gates that could, and can to this day, only be approached by long miles of skirting, slowly ascending, exposed road. The grass, too, may still be seen shooting up between the flagstones of the pavement, as though the generating forces of nature were breaking through the stony prison to wreak slow but sure vengeance on the tyranny of human energy.

But beyond this and, in the midday hour, the general air of sleepiness which Orvieto shares with so many of the compact walled cities of Central Italy, one should not expect to find the miraculous dream





Medieval Wall and Gate of Orvieto



city of the novelist's description. The rigid lines of a funicular railway leading from the Paglia valley to the city walls proclaim with offensive arrogance the intrusion of modern "progress" into this mediæval world. Along the roadside, as you skirt the tufa cliff to seek admission through one of the mighty western gates, vulgar advertising boards announce in huge letters the advantages of rival hotels and automobile garages, and as you slowly proceed through the narrow streets, eager louts and loafers volunteer with vociferous clamour to conduct you to hotel or Duomo. The lofty, silent, deserted halls of the Grand Hotel delle Belle Arti—not the homely, old-fashioned Italian hostlery, but cosmopolitan and up-to-date—certainly hold a remote suggestion of the Sleeping Beauty's palace, especially in the reading-room, the large table of which is littered with dust-covered travel magazines, hotel pamphlets, and stray copies of the *Financial News* and *London Opinion* of venerable antiquity, left by some stray traveller two or three years ago. In the main street are the usual shops dressed with picture post-cards and tourists' souvenirs, and a book-store with a display of that trashy modern fiction which has become the principal stock-in-trade of most Italian booksellers.

So this was Orvieto! But no—I had almost forgotten. "At the end of the street a miracle—the Duomo." But the long morning's run had sharpened our appetite, and the miracle raised to commemorate that other miracle, to which the Catholic calen-

dar owes the Corpus Christi festival, had to wait until we had partaken of an excellent luncheon, which gave us a welcome opportunity of becoming acquainted with the splendid golden wine of Orvieto. Thus fortified, and eager to see the wonderful fabric, we set out for the Cathedral. A few narrow streets, then a spacious square, and in the midst of it the "magnificent example of the Italian Gothic style"—"the largest and most gorgeous polychrome monument in existence," as Baedeker has it. Large, gorgeous—yes. A miracle—decidedly not! The only miracle is that the country of great artistic traditions could have produced, tolerated, and admired this gaudy, over-decorated piece of wedding-cake architecture—a glorified Albert Memorial, a mass of mosaic incrustation, bronzes, marble carvings, filigree work in stone, and applied decoration of every description.

Four centuries have contributed towards the decoration of this giant screen, which has no logical connection with the architectural design of the disappointing, ill-proportioned interior. It is on this façade, and not in Siena, that one has to study the most exquisite achievement of the fourteenth-century Sienese school of sculpture. Inexhaustible is the wealth of detail, the invention of ornamental and decorative motifs, the jewelled splendour of it all. And yet how strangely unsatisfactory is the total result of so much inimitable detail work—how illogical its application.

Nowhere could be found clearer proof of the

inability of the early Italians to grasp the essential principles of Gothic construction. Nowhere is it more evident that Italian Gothic is a compromise of a period of transition. The Gothic style has been happily defined as "rhythm of movement" as opposed to the "rhythm of masses" of the Renaissance style. The Italians, ever unwilling entirely to sacrifice the rhythm of masses, which was the natural expression of their national genius, attempted an impossible compromise; and the result is the loss of both rhythms; the Gothic detail destroys the rhythm of masses, whilst the massive construction obliterates the rhythm of movement.

Yet Orvieto has its miracle—has it in the Duomo—and owes it to this very spirit of compromise, which insisted upon retaining even in Gothic buildings those large expanses of flat wall surface which gave the great Italian fresco painters such unique opportunities. In the Cappella Nuova of the Duomo has been written, by the master brush of Luca Signorelli, one of the most significant and powerfully impressive chapters of art history. Here Michelangelo found his inspiration, and, more than that, his models for the terrific *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. Here generations of art pilgrims have stood in silent awe before the magic of Luca's genius.

It was Luca Signorelli who, in these Orvieto frescoes, first gave the human body, the nude, its due in pictorial art. But more than that; in him may be found almost the beginning and the end. He was the initiator, the first to demonstrate the

possibilities of the human body in action, the expression of passions and emotions by muscular expansion and contraction ; and he almost exhausted these possibilities in this grand cycle of frescoes. He chose the subjects that gave him the fullest scope for introducing turbulent crowds of figures convulsed by terror, rage, ecstasy ; writhing, struggling in an almost inextricable tangle, and yet arranged with such consummate skill and sense of design in the irregular spaces that had to be filled, that each figure, each movement, tells clearly and strongly, without detaching itself unduly from the whirl of passionate humanity.

*The Resurrection of the Dead, The Punishment of the Condemned, The Preaching and Overthrow of Anti-Christ, and The Signs of the Destruction of the World,* were indeed subjects after Signorelli's own heart. The same master-mind that conceived these grand religious epics in paint knew how to connect these episodes and the spandrils of the vaulted ceiling, some of which had been filled half a century earlier by the brush of Fra Angelico, by a wondrously beautiful pattern of grotesques with medallions in grisaille, the whole scheme harmonising with and accentuating the architectural articulation of the chapel.

A strange whim of chance—that the work begun by the angelic friar, the painter of serene heavenly bliss, of saints and church fathers and music-making angels assembled around the celestial throne, should be continued by the man whose brush let loose all



The Piazza del Duomo, Orvieto





the violent passions that sway the human frame; the painter of peaceful spiritual emotion, who "never took a brush in hand until he had first offered a prayer," by the anatomy student who made naked limbs and muscles tell their dramatic tale. And the wonder is that the combined labour of the two has produced a homogeneous whole of unsurpassed perfection—a result due to the genius of Signorelli, who, in continuing Fra Angelico's unfinished vault, followed the Dominican's design and spirit, improving upon his immature perception of form, and thus bridging the gulf of half a century that divides the "last primitive" from the precursor of Michelangelo.

The Signorelli frescoes at Orvieto were such a climax that we all felt everything else the town had to offer would fall flat. Yet, as we left the Duomo and stepped out into the square, now resplendent again with brilliant sunlight after a brief but heavy shower—there, in the piazza, we had revealed to us something of the soul of Orvieto, of the dead city described by d'Annunzio. On the wet flagstones were mirrored in perfect symmetry the old buildings and towers and the beautiful broken line cut by them into the luminous sky. The vast emptiness of the deserted square was accentuated by what little evidence there was of life—a blue cart with two long-horned white oxen, and three witch-like hags, all in black, with black kerchiefs framing their sad, haggard faces. They came towards us, for their *piccola carità*, in single file with a slow gliding movement that did not disturb either the flowing lines of their black

wraps, or the cloistral stillness of that powerfully impressive scene.

We had no wish to weaken the two great impressions of Orvieto; and, besides, a long journey was before us yet, and the afternoon was advancing. Leaving the town by the Porta Paolina we returned to the station and to the junction of the Chiusi and Todi roads by the same road we had travelled in the morning; and then in a line straight as an arrow flew up a very steep hill over two miles in length—one of the best tests of her hill-climbing capacity which the Cricket had so far had to undergo. The loudly-expressed admiration of the villagers, who had assembled on the top of the hill, indicated that they were not accustomed to seeing cars acquit themselves so well of the task. Beyond the village the road increased in steepness and proceeded in many curves to the *Cantoniera* at the summit of the Capretta (1796 feet), whence we had to descend again some 400 feet to Prodo with the magnificent Castello di Ripe nestling picturesquely in a dip between two hills, and commanding the road to Osa.

Any attempt to describe the beauty of this district in the Umbrian mountains would be utterly futile. As the afternoon wore on, the tender greys and greens which had prevailed in the middle of the day changed into richer hues, the distant hills assumed a deep indigo colour, whilst the sky became tinged with ever-changing notes of apple-green, rose, violet, gold, and other colours to which a painter could do justice only at the risk of being proclaimed insane,



Castello di Ripe, near Prodo

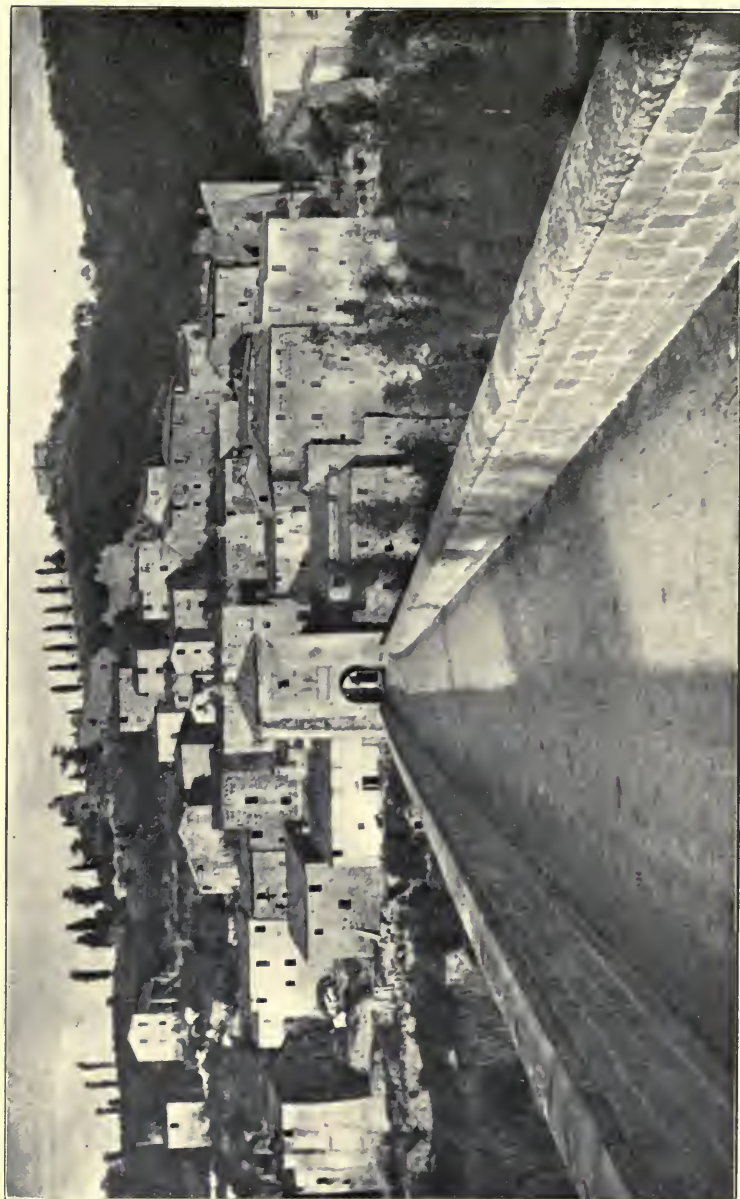


or at least absurdly extravagant. Climbing to the summit of the Apparata (1988 feet), and descending to the Tiber valley, every turn in the road—and there were many of them—revealed a new panorama of gorgeous magnificence, and during the whole run we only passed one or two lonely inns and farms, and few signs of life, save now and then a troop of black pigs and a few huge turkeys, until we came in sight of the Tiber above Ponteculi, the quaintest of compact, flat-roofed mediæval towns, rising in parallel lines of buildings, one upon the other, from the river to the crest of the hill, which is crenellated, as it were, with cypresses planted at regular distances. It was just like a child's toy-town, and more still like the background of some quattrocento picture, except that no campanile or tower broke through the stiff parallelism of the horizontal roof-lines.

Across the long stone bridge over the muddy brownish-yellow Tiber we passed through the narrowest of gates into as narrow a street, then turned to the right and began the steep ascent to Todi—about 1000 feet in three miles. There was really no need for us to pass through the town, which was indeed a little off our direct route; but the ivy-grown old walls, the prospect of much-needed liquid refreshment, and the knowledge that there were no pictorial or plastic masterpieces to detain us too long, induced us to scale the steep hill, past the most perfect of Bramantesque Renaissance churches, Cola di Mateuccio's *Sta. Maria della Consolazione*, into the main street and grand piazza of Todi. The

silhouette of the domes of Sta. Maria against the brilliant late afternoon sky was an unforgettable sight, and justified our architect's ill-suppressed rage at not being allowed time to inspect the interior, which is famed the world over for its perfect proportions. Nothing could soothe his ruffled temper—not the piazza, one of the finest in Italy, with its noble Romanesque Duomo raised on a platform on the top of a flight of stairs extending along the entire width of the front, and the Gothic crenellated Palazzo Comunale with its huge seigneurial outer staircase and graceful cusped windows; not even the *vermouth* at the café, a remedy which so far had never failed to restore his ebbing spirits. Pomponius remained quiet and grumpy for the rest of the day, which was not to pass without a renewal of our earlier tribulations.

All went well for some time. The Cricket had never done better, and went as smoothly and noiselessly as a sledge down towards Massa Martana, but branching off to the left two miles before that town at a point about eleven kilometres from Todi, to start on a new climb through beautiful wooded country to a height of 1518 feet, we abandoned ourselves to the delight of speed. We had forgotten the warning of the car-owner of Montepulciano, who had advised us to make straight for Perugia, forgotten the precarious state of our tyres, and never doubted for a moment that we should reach Foligno before dark. We passed a little chapel and a turkey farm or two, came into a region of thick white fog which



“Ponteculi, the quaintest of compact, flat-roofed medieval towns”





forced us to move along with great caution, as there just happened to be half-a-dozen hair-pin corners; emerged from the fog into the warmth of the rapidly setting sun, and began to talk about dinner, when we were rudely awakened from our feeling of security by a puncture of the back tyre on the right.

That was before seven o'clock in the evening. At half-past ten o'clock we were still on the same spot, and had dined on famine rations of *panforte*. We had gone through our whole stock of spare tyres; none of them were air-proof. The outer cover had become so loose through constant removal and refilling, that one of the tyres actually burst during the process of pumping. Pumping!—our hands became hard and horny that dreadful evening. After the explosion Ryder began the tedious work of patching with rubber solution. When at last the wheels were in working order, we had another hour's delay through vainly trying to make the acetylene lamps work. They flatly refused, and could neither be coaxed nor forced into obedience. Unless we meant to spend the night in the car, we had to make up our minds to proceed at snail-pace through the black night by the light of two wretchedly inadequate oil-lamps.

The scene of our accident was, according to my calculation, not more than ten kilometres from Foligno, and when, soon after our refloating, the cheering lights of a fairly large town appeared far down in the valley on the right, I fondly hoped that in a few minutes we should be at our journey's end. However, we moved away from the lights instead

of approaching them, and a consultation of the map by the light of a match proved the town in the valley to be Montefalco, and that another twenty miles separated us from Foligno. Slowly, and oppressed by the fear of another mishap, we glided down the winding road into Bevagna, gay and lively at this late hour, and so bright with many lamps and sounding with many voices that we were loath to issue forth again into the darkness of the night. Anyhow, we had no further difficulty in finding our way, the road being so straight that it might have been drawn with a giant ruler for six miles across the valley, until it runs into the high road between Perugia and Spoleto. Then a sharp turn to the right, and within five minutes we halted before the gates of Foligno.



A Street at Todi, with Cathedral in distance



## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Montepulciano . . .	1984	...	...
Croce di Febe . . .	1837	3	3
Fork to La Cappella .	1591	1½	4½
Fork to Chianciano .	1442	4½	9
Fork to Chiusi . . .	1082	14½	23½
Stazione di Chiusi .	827	2	25½
Città della Pieve . .	1614	9	34½
Monteleone d'Orvieto	1594	7	41½
Ficulle Station . . .	767	9	50½
S. Cristoforo . . . .	1538	5½	56
Ficulle . . . . .	1493	1½	57½
La Croce . . . . .	1797	2½	60
Fork to Todi . . . .	377	16	76
Orvieto Station . . .	393	1	77
Orvieto Centre . . .	1033	4	81
Orvieto Station . . .	393	4	85
Fork to Chiusi . . .	377	1	86
Cantoniera . . . . .	1796	9½	95½
Prodo . . . . .	1378	6½	102
Summit of Apparita .	1988	9½	111½
Ponteculi . . . . .	499	11	122½
Todi . . . . .	1495	4½	127
Fork to Narni . . . .	1161	6	133
Highest point . . . .	1518	13	146
Osteria del Bastardo .	918	8	154
Osteria la Capannaccia	1276	7	161
Bevagna . . . . .	738	6	167
Foligno . . . . .	767	9	176

## CHAPTER XI

### IN THE LAND OF ST. FRANCIS



WE stopped outside the city gates on the bridge that spans the river or moat—and only just in time, as the restricted circle of dim light spread by our head-lights revealed the altogether unexpected fact that the massive gates were closed. Here was romance indeed, in this survival of a mediæval custom in the twentieth century—a city locked and barred at night and shut off within her walls from the outside world, so that the burghers might sleep in peace.

“Blow! toot!” came the order from the back of the car. If only I had been able to extract a silvery trumpet-sound from my instrument, I should have felt more completely like the herald of the invading host summoning the garrison to surrender, to throw open the gates, and hand over the keys as a sign of submission. As it was, the rasping groan of my horn and the plaintive tuff-tuff of Ryder’s toot were destructive to any such illusion. Moreover, they created no impression whatever upon the gate-keeper. And as we stood waiting and heard the clock strike a quarter past eleven, the prospect of a meal grew

dimmer and dimmer. I got off the car and attacked the massive woodwork of the gates with both my fists, whilst Dan blew away at the horn and the others gave a loud choral war-whoop.

At last the bolts were drawn, the gates swung back slowly, and a very drunken custom-house officer, supporting his unsteady frame against the side of the car, grinned at us with half-closed eyes, and mumbled a string of unintelligible words, all connected with each other, and constituting presumably the Italian equivalent for the inquiry whether we had anything—dutiablwineshpiritshigarsh.

An energetic "niente!" enforced by a negative shaking of head and hand, quite satisfied his curiosity. Pulling himself together he transferred his weight from the car to the gate-post, and signalled to us to move on, which was not to be accomplished without considerable difficulty, since the street was teeming with folk, many of whom were in much the same condition as the *dazio* official. We had happened upon the end of a market-day—a *festa*, or *fiera*—and Foligno was obviously bent upon merrymaking. Large posters announced that there was an opera company performing in Puccini's "La Tosca," and the lively goings-on at the café attached to the charming Albergo della Posta allayed our fear that we should have to go to bed supperless. A more serious question was whether we should be able to go to bed at all, for the hotel was full, the garage overcrowded, and for some minutes the padrone seemed quite helpless. However he managed to find accommodation

for us, partly at the hotel, partly in a house almost opposite, and for the car in some stable a little distance off.

I scarcely dared to ask whether it was possible to get a hot meal. It was too much to expect in a little market-town of some 8000 inhabitants, half-an-hour before midnight, and without previous warning. I remembered how, a few years ago, I had arrived about midnight at the leading hotel in an English town of close on half a million souls, and had been unable to obtain as much as a plate of bread and cheese. Bread and cheese and a little cold meat, with a bottle of red wine, was as much as the most optimistic among us dared look forward to. But matters assumed a different complexion when the padrone inquired *what* we should like to eat for *dinner!* *Pranzo* was certainly the expression used by him for this midnight meal. We were too starved to lose much time over discussing the menu, and left it to the landlord to do the best he could, provided we were not kept waiting too long.

“There won’t be any waiting: it’s all ready!” With which comforting assurance we were ushered into the restaurant. For the first time since we had cut S. Maria della Consolazione, Pomponius brightened up at the sight of the cheerful, well-lighted, and almost elegant dining-room. The antipasti and the delicious fresh river-fish dispelled his last clouds; and as course after course appeared on the table—roast pheasant and zucchette, white truffles, a sweet soufflé and other delicacies—the satisfied gourmet quite con-



quered the injured artist. I cannot say how the guests of the *Posta* at Foligno fare at midnight in normal times: on market-days they need not envy the diners at the Carlton or the Ritz. Or perhaps the *fiera* did not entirely account for so *recherché* a meal being found in readiness at so unconventional an hour. Perhaps it was not wholly disconnected with the startling tableau that suddenly appeared in the door-frame—a gorgeously attired female, sparkling with real or sham jewels like a pantomime fairy-queen; with a hat of such circumference that the rim touched both door-posts; and with a long, be-ribboned staff. “La Tosca!” whispered Pomponius; and there was no mistaking her identity. La Tosca in her stage costume and stage paint, and with her, as unmistakable, though in sober twentieth-century attire, her Cavaradossi and her Scarpia—the whole murdered and self-destroyed trio, and other members of the operatic company, whose supper portions had possibly been cut down for the benefit of four hungry, weary travellers.

To expect a quiet night in a town where you “dine” at midnight would have been unreasonable. But I was so tired that the lively hubbub of voices from the street only had the effect of a soothing cradle-song. I was lulled to sleep by the loud conversation of the noctambulists under my window; and when I awoke before six o’clock, Foligno had either not yet settled to rest or awakened to new activity, for the noise in the street continued undiminished. I dressed quickly, eager to see by daylight the town,

with the former aspect of which I had long been familiarised by the background of Raphael's *Madonna di Foligno*.

It was a glorious morning, with a sky of cloudless blue purity, and sunshine of such intensity, even at the early hour of seven, that I found it difficult to face the glare. I began to realise that for the first time since we had left Lucca we had spent a night in the plain. Foligno had nothing in common with that long succession of hill cities that had delighted us by the picturesque irregularity of their steep, winding streets and unexpected vistas. What beauty there is in her long, straight, flagged streets she owes to the patterning of clearly-marked light and shade and to the warm patina of her old buildings, as mortar and brick and stone sparkle in the generous sunlight. There are few buildings of striking beauty—a few palazzi in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, and the elaborately carved Romanesque marble porch of the Cathedral; but in many streets the ensemble of plain buildings has undeniable beauty, thanks to the kindly sun and to boldly projecting eaves.

The market was in full swing when I strolled through the Via della Fiera to the piazza, though I could scarcely understand what it was that had attracted such crowds into the town, for there was nothing in the booths that was not obtainable in the meanest village shop, the principal objects being apparently brooms and brushes, baskets, enormous green canvas umbrellas, and gaily-coloured kerchiefs.

As an art city, Foligno, once the centre of a



A typical street at Foligno



flourishing school, of which Niccolò Alunno and Mezzastris were the chief masters, is distinctly disappointing. There is nothing in the Cathedral except a horribly modernised, or vulgarised, interior, which comes as a rude disappointment after the promise of the exquisite early thirteenth-century porch. The far-famed frescoes by the Gubbian Ottaviano Nelli in a chapel of the Palazzo Trinci are in so sad a state that they have no message save for the specialising student of the early phases of art in Umbria and the Marche. In the little pinacoteca, and scattered about the other churches, are a few altar-pieces and remnants of frescoes by Mezzastris, whom one may grow to love in spite of his obvious weaknesses, and by the less lovable but more vigorous Niccolò da Foligno—and that is all.

No doubt many a minor treasure may be discovered by those who have the leisure for a systematic search, but with Assisi and Perugia beckoning us onwards, and with the heat becoming ever more unbearable as the day advanced, we felt in no mood for such methodical work. Having settled a bill as surprising in its moderation as the midnight feast had been in variety and excellence—the petrol, by the way, had at last maintained a dead level of 60 centimes a litre since we had crossed the Arno—we took to the road again soon after breakfast, left Foligno by the same gate which had held us at bay the preceding night, and took the straight road for Spello, the ancient Roman Hispellum proudly enthroned on its hill, and visible all along the route. But for the

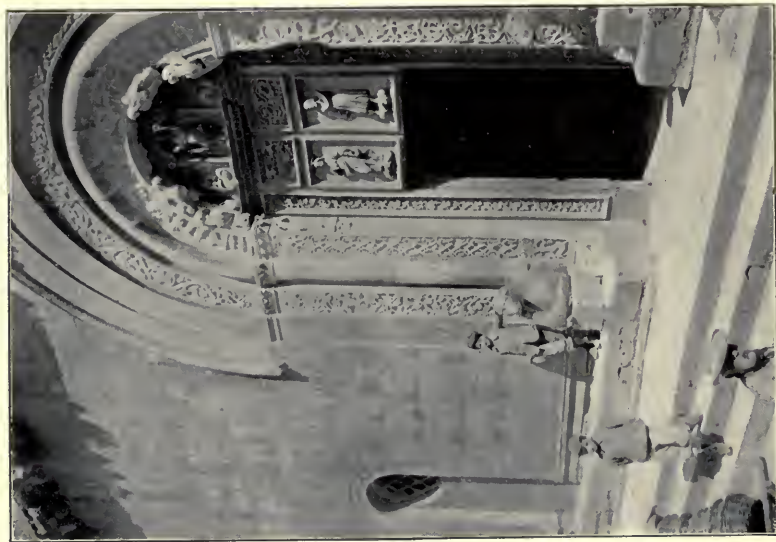
unusual width of the road—some thirty feet—the lively traffic occasioned by the *fiera* at Foligno would have caused us great inconvenience. As it was, we were at the foot of the Spello hill within ten minutes of our start. The town being again, like so many others, off the main road, which skirts the hills until near Assisi it cuts across the wide luxuriant valley in the direction of Perugia, we had to turn up the hill to the right and climb some 300 feet through one of the ancient Roman gates to the little piazza with the Cathedral.

The plainness of the Duomo façade only helps to throw up the elegant forms and charming details of the Renaissance porch. Immediately on entering, a Roman cippus with an equestrian figure in relief, which now does service as a holy water basin, reminds one of the great antiquity of Spello, which is rich in remains of Roman days, notably an amphitheatre, and the squat arch of the Porta Consolare with three time-worn antique statues on brackets fixed to the masonry above the gate.

But Spello has a greater attraction than her classic ruins. There is in the Duomo a little chapel decorated by Pinturicchio in 1501 for the Bishop Troilo Baglioni. Sadly decayed by damp and neglect as these frescoes are—they represent the *Disputa*, the *Nativity*, and the *Annunciation*, with four *Sibyls* in the triangular spaces of the ceiling—they are more creditable to the master than the far-famed decorations of the Siena Library and the Borgia Apartments in Rome. They have more of the spirit of true wall decoration, and they



The Porch of the Duomo, Spello



The Porch of the Cathedral, Foligno





are so well planned for their position that the little chapel seems to gain in spaciousness. The naïve charm of his master, Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, of which there are not many traces in Pinturicchio's Roman work, seems to have come back to him as he returned to his native district, the landscape of which, with its soft atmosphere and illimitable depth of space, is so well rendered in the background of two of these frescoes. That Pinturicchio himself was pleased with his achievement may be gathered from the prominent manner in which his own portrait is introduced, painted on a wall under a *prie-dieu*, and above a tablet with the inscription BERNARDINO PICTORICUS PERUSINUS in bold Roman letters. The two Perugino altar-pieces in the same church, signed and dated works both, belong to his late and tiresomely mannered period. No one would think them worthy of a look were they signed with a less high-sounding name.

And now for Assisi, which could be clearly seen from Spello, nestling against the slope of Monte Subasio. There is perhaps no town in the world so completely merged with the fame of one single man as Assisi is with St. Francis. The spirit of the Saint hovers over the city and the surrounding district, and fills it with memories of his life and his miracles, and his seraphic sweetness of character. Take St. Francis away from Assisi—which, of course, means taking away her position as the cradle of modern art—and she will remain just one among many romantic, picturesque, mediæval cities, like Todi, or Spello, or many another place that rarely figures in the tourist's

itinerary. It is the memory of St. Francis that makes her unique among all pilgrims' shrines ; that explains Assisi, just as Assisi explains her saint. Assisi, as she presents herself on the approach by road through the Spoletan valley, might almost stand as symbol for St. Francis's character, whose vernal, lovable innocence and tender sympathy for every living being are reflected in the perfect peace and heavenly loveliness of this soft-toned Umbrian valley, whilst his sterner, ascetic side finds a counterpart in the sad, arid, bald aspect of Mount Subasio.

The most unimaginative materialist, as he looks from the Piazza S. Chiara or from the castle walls upon the heaven-blessed valley, cannot but experience a vague sense of the vanity of worldly possessions and ambitions, and a desire to shake off the cares and responsibilities connected therewith. Poverty loses its terror where the fruits of the earth flourish in such abundance under God's sunlight that you have only to stretch out your hands to find the wherewithal to sustain your body. Such prosaic considerations as hedges and boundary walls to divide well-apportioned territorial possessions, and the possibility of cold and rain, scarcely enter into one's train of thought as one's eyes wander over this earthly paradise. Nature so abundant, so perfect, so kindly, may well engender humility of spirit carried to the point of discarding all knowledge and learning, of accepting things as they come, and rejoicing passively in the untarnished beauty of Creation.

Much as I appreciated the luxury of steam-power



Holy Water Basin in Spello Cathedral



Spello : An ancient City Gate (Porta Consolare)



and a well-cushioned seat for the long climb to the Porta Nuova from Passaggio d'Assisi, where travellers from Foligno have to abandon the main road to Perugia, I must confess to some foolish scruples at the incongruousness, not to say snobbishness, of entering by car a place which would more appropriately be approached barefoot and with a pilgrim's staff. Everything in the higher part of the town harmonised with this mood and with preconceived notions of what Assisi should be like. Over the venerable sunlit churches and neglected palazzi and narrow streets floated the memories of the seraphic friar—the only thing of life in this city of the dead. Not a soul in the streets, until, at a corner, about half a mile from the gate, there appeared two young ladies, English in looks and dress, each seated, palette in hand, before an easel. By the time we reached the Hotel Subasio, close to the cloisters of S. Francesco, we had grown accustomed to the sight. Assisi was simply swarming with lady artists—there were whole sketching classes. There were dozens of women painters impertinently prying into the secrets of the sleeping town. And the Hotel Subasio was their headquarters. They stood and sat about in groups, and filled the rooms and corridors with their loud chatter. We noticed one of them in particular who had evidently mistaken her cheeks for her palette. When we saw her again a little later posing with a sketch-book near the high altar of the Lower Church, we realised that her make-up was not intended for the glare of the outer world, but for the gloom and dimness of that frescoed shrine

of art, where she had installed herself as a counter-attraction to Giotto and Cimabue.

The aggressiveness of the cosmopolitan tourist element at and around the Albergo Subasio was for the time being destructive to the reverent mood with which the great church, or rather churches, erected in honour of the saint over his tomb, should be approached. But not for long. It returned with increased intensity the moment we entered the vast, cool, crypt-like nave of the Lower Church, where, until our eyes became accustomed to the at first oppressive darkness, we found it impossible to distinguish anything but the mighty spans of the low arches and the general subdued opulence of the frescoed walls. Slowly, very slowly, the architectural forms and the wall-paintings began to take more definite shape, as if fine veils of mist were being gradually withdrawn, until the whole significance of what has rightly been described as the cradle of Italian art forced itself upon our consciousness.

How insignificant are all the learned squabbles and disputes about the authorship of these frescoes in view of the great deed achieved here and in the Upper Church by an army of artists from Rome, from Florence, from Siena, all acting under the same impulse, all inspired by the same ideal, and, consciously or unconsciously, by the teaching of St. Francis. Art has ever been the expression of the *Zeitgeist*. When St. Francis broke away from the cold formula of the word and replaced hierarchal Christianity by his gospel of humanity and love, he rang the death-knell



S. Francesco, Assisi, from the road to Perugia



Assisi, from the Piazza S. Chiara





of the stiff and lifeless, if majestic and sumptuous, formula of Byzantine art. His teaching was bound to be echoed in art, and it could not be echoed by the symbolical hieroglyphics of Byzantinism. And thus arose a new art of action and life and emotion, of which the church of S. Francesco at Assisi is the cradle and the inexhaustible storehouse.

With the leisure necessary for intimate study may come a thirst for knowledge as to the exact share taken in this wonderful ensemble by the different masters, some half mythical, others of more definite place in the history of art, who are by tradition or documentary evidence associated with the decoration of these two churches: Pietro Cavallini and his Roman helpers, Jacopo Torriti and Rusuti; Giunta Pisano; Cimabue and Giotto and their followers; the Sienese Simone Martini and Lorenzetti. On a flying visit, with a motor-car practically waiting at the gate—and the spirit of St. Francis hovering in every shadowy recess—I preferred a general impression to detailed study. I wanted to *feel* S. Francesco rather than *see* it, to drink in the spiritual beauty and the beauty of form and colour rather than to analyse that beauty and its origin. The men who created these cycles of frescoes were insignificant beside the created work, especially when, as in many frescoes of the Upper Church, all that may have been personal in their method of expression lies hidden under coat upon coat of barbarously crude repaintings of later centuries. Fortunately sacrilegious and incompetent restorers have left the beauty of Giotto's wonderful

triangular compositions—*Poverty, Chastity, Obedience,* and the *Apotheosis of St. Francis*—on the groined vaulting over the high altar unimpaired, and have not done much harm to Cimabue's great *Madonna and Angels with St. Francis*, the only work left by up-to-date criticism to the "father of modern painting." If only the Lower Church could have a share of the light which in the vast nave above falls brightly upon the ruined and badly-patched frescoes, presumably earlier works by the very masters whose mature and well-preserved masterpieces in the church below remain half revealed and half concealed by the eternal twilight!

If St. Francis and his message are ever present within these frescoed walls, they are certainly not to be found in the crypt which holds his mortal remains, and which nineteenth-century Italian taste has provided with a magnificent marble altar, and statues, and marble pavement, and other sumptuous decorations that ill accord with the character and teaching of the *poverello*, worse even than the magnificent Renaissance church of S. Maria degli Angeli, erected in the valley down below, from Vignola's designs, over the Portiuncola and the cell where the Saint breathed his last. A simple cross in a flowering garden would have been far more appropriate for St. Francis's tomb. The sight of the crypt made us resolve to "cut" S. Maria degli Angeli—and, indeed, whatever else of interest there may be at Assisi, and to spend the rest of our limited time in the double church of S. Francesco, until hunger should drive us from the hushed



The arcaded Piazza of S. Francesco, Assisi



The Piazza, looking towards the Hotel Subasio, Assisi



stillness of the sanctuary to the detested prattling of many tongues at the albergo at the opposite end of the lower arcaded piazza. And so thoroughly were we all under the mystic spell of the *poverello*, that none of us dared confess to a craving for food (well justified by the abnormally long interval since breakfast), although before very long we were all veering towards the exit, keeping up a pretence of keen interest in the frescoes which by then each one of us would willingly have bartered for a plate of cold viands.

After two hours' communion with the most lovable of saints, and with those early masters who first gave life and human emotion to the majestic frozen images of their predecessors from the Eastern Empire, the mental image of the inviting tables of the dining-room at the Subasio constituted a link with the prosaic outer world and toned down the crudeness of the abrupt contrast. For eyes attuned to the subdued sumptuousness, the mellifluous harmony of colour that grows out of the semi-obscurity within the church, the vast piazza became almost colourless in the tremendous shadow-destroying glare of direct and reflected light. Silence there was both without and within, but the one was the silence of somnolent torpor, and the other a silence full of eloquence—of infinity and sublimity. And how much more real and significant was the life of those naïve primitive frescoes on the walls than the few vestiges of life in the arcaded piazza; a vendor of picture post-cards and tourists' souvenirs, seated half asleep by the table on which

she had spread her shoddy wares ; a foolishly overdressed Anglo-Saxon woman painter sketching two white oxen tethered to one of the square pillars of the colonnade, and watched by a barefoot little girl ; and two or three wretched beggars intent upon giving the lie to the Saint's teaching of the blessedness of poverty.

St. Francis would certainly have disapproved of the unnecessary ampleness of our luncheon—a thought which did not appreciably detract from our enjoyment of the well-earned meal, not so much at any rate as did a party of Germans whom we heard eating their soup at the other end of the room, and who hastened our departure for Perugia. In searching for the car after lunch, I had to descend to the lower regions of the Albergo Subasio, which, being situated on a slope similarly to the church and monastery of S. Francesco, echoes in amusing fashion its arrangement in three tiers, the restaurant and reception-rooms corresponding to the Upper Church, the *Salle des fêtes* and adjoining rooms to the Lower Church, and the garage—surely the most charming, the cleanest, and the most picturesque garage in the world—to the crypt. From the windows of this pillared garage could be seen across the lovely valley, Perugia enthroned on a high hill towards the north-west, so majestic, so inviting, that we were all eagerness to speed towards her gates. On the run down to the valley we saw the buttressed and arcaded fortress-like walls of S. Francesco in all their grandeur and romance. Within half-an-hour we had crossed the



Bovine Models, Assisi





Tiber by the fine structure of the Ponte San Giovanni, and had swung round the wide curves of the road leading to the glorious Porta S. Pietro, nearly 900 feet above the level of the bridge. We had passed from the city where nothing seems to live but memories of a far distant past, to a city charged with great memories too, but alive and progressive, elegant and gay.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Foligno . . . . .	767	...	...
Spello . . . . .	1030	4½	4½
Passaggio d'Assisi . .	695	7½	12
Assisi, Porta Cappuc- cini . . . . .	1322	6	18
Assisi, Porta S. Pietro	1148	2	20
Bastiola . . . . .	656	6	26
Ponte S. Giovanni . .	590	8	34
Perugia, Porta S. Pietro . . . . .	1476	7½	41½
Perugia, Upper Town	1705	1½	43

## CHAPTER XII

### FROM AUGUSTA PERUGIA TO COURTLY URBINO



PERUGIA is, above all, a city of beautiful gates and porches, the predominating type being a very wide and comparatively low opening surmounted by a semicircular arch which carries round and connects the elaborate mouldings, reliefs, and incrustations of the jambs, although it is generally divided from the lower, square portions of the gate by a richly-moulded and boldly-projecting cornice. The archetype of these porches is the main entrance to the Palazzo Comunale. The noble Porta S. Pietro, by Agostino di Duccio and Polidoro di Stefano, departs from it in so far as it dispenses with the moulded lintel or cornice. I doubt if the whole golden period of the Renaissance in Italian architecture has produced another masterpiece that so closely approaches the classic Roman ideal, or that presents a similar happy combination of strength and elegance and perfect scale and proportions. When Agostino di Duccio's name is mentioned in Perugia, it is generally in connection with the façade of the Oratorio di S. Bernardino, which was the one great

disappointment I experienced at "Augusta Perugia." The grand feeling for the dignity and rhythm of architectural forms, that makes a simple motor-tourist entering Perugia by the Porta S. Pietro feel something like a hero flushed with victory passing under an arch of triumph erected in his honour, is altogether absent from the façade of S. Bernardino, the design of which seems inspired by the sole desire to gain surfaces for the application of sculptured or inlaid decoration. The sculptor even grudged the architect the space needed for the majestic opening suggested by the mighty coffered arch above the entrance. Two mean doors, divided by wide marble framing, and surmounted by a frieze in relief, take its place, and are weighed down by the scale of the superstructure. Like the front of Orvieto Cathedral, the façade of S. Bernardino can be enjoyed only in detail, and not in its general effect, though time has fused the colours to an exquisite patina.

However, S. Bernardino belonged to the next day. For the present we listened to Pomponius's rapturous comment on that arch, and presently, as we continued to climb towards the lofty plateau formerly occupied by the citadel, now the elegant centre of the modern town, found our attention diverted to a new channel—the entrancing view across the country to the west around the silvery sheet of Lake Trasimeno. Another sharp curve and we had arrived at the Grand Hotel Perugia, or at least at the back entrance, whence the journey was continued by lift to the level of the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele.

It was all so strange, this sudden return to all the luxuries of civilisation after two weeks on the by-roads—two weeks so crowded with impressions and experiences that they seemed more like two months. Even Siena, the nearest approach to luxury that we had struck, was provincial compared with Perugia and its English-managed hotel. We had returned to the land of electric tramcars and liveried hall-porters, of afternoon-tea lounges with Anglican parsons and stern, middle-aged spinsters in occupation of the wicker-chairs, the land of dinner-jackets and whispered conversation—and the constraint after the unlimited freedom of the road suggested life behind prison-bars. Still, civilisation has its advantages as well as its penalties. A really well-furnished garage close by the hotel must figure prominently on the credit side. Also a German photographer ready, nay, eager, to develop your films almost while you wait. That the same worthy German subsequently unloads upon you his stock of odd-size spools which cannot be coaxed to fit your camera, has to be entered on the opposite page—an annoyance particularly vexing when you are bound for one of the most remote and primitive parts of the country, where Kodak spools are unknown luxuries.

But this source of vexation was as yet hidden in the obscurity of the future. Meanwhile everybody shared Ryder's optimistic satisfaction with the capacity of the garage. With well-patched and vulcanised and "re-valved" tyres we should be safe for our next venturesome crossing of the Apennines, this time

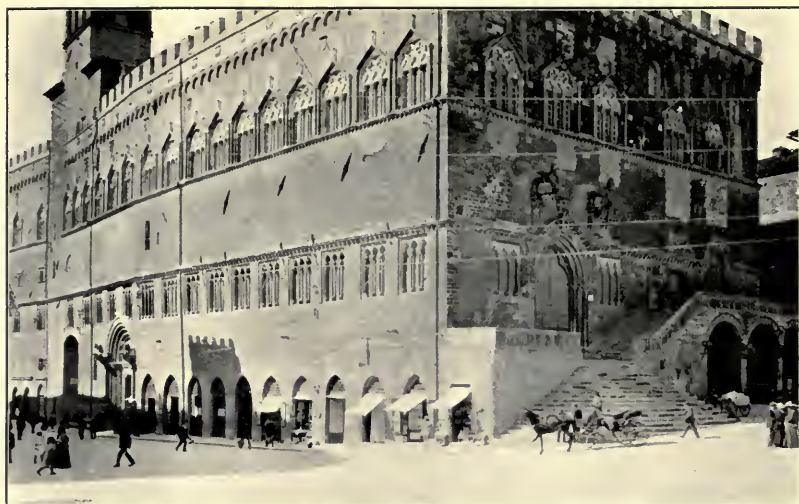
across the main ridge into the Marche, and should no longer have to tempt Providence. With this comforting thought we could fully abandon ourselves to the enjoyment of the hour—the hour of the late afternoon, when the fashion of Perugia gathers on the beautifully laid-out piazza Vittorio Emanuele to listen to the strains of a Puccini selection discoursed by a military band, or to gaze from the parapet over the soft grey and green luxuriance of the Tiber valley, studded with farms and villages and slender campanili, into that further valley where the walls of Assisi cling to the mountain-side flushed by the sunset glow which no longer gilds the cupola of S. Maria degli Angeli ; and further still, to Spello, Foligno, and Todi. The whole country is spread out like a map, painted in the mellowest, tenderest hues, under the limpid depth and purity of the Umbrian sky.

To make the best of the waning daylight while it lasted, we strolled along the Corso Vanucci to the heart of the town, the great piazza flanked on one side by the unfinished Cathedral, only the lowest course of which is adorned with that strange lozenge-shaped pattern of marble incrustation which was probably intended to clothe the whole edifice, and on the other side by the mighty crenellated Gothic mass of the Palazzo Comunale, which gains in picturesqueness from the apparently accidental, but no doubt carefully considered slight twists of the long frontage. In the middle of the square the railed Fonte Maggiore, that much injured but still astounding masterpiece of the dawn of Italian sculpture, on the decoration of

which the Pisani, Arnolfo di Cambio, Rosso, and other great sculptors expended the wealth of their invention and contrived to blend in a harmonious whole, without a sense of incongruity, an endless variety of motifs, including scenes from Æsop's Fables and from the Old Testament, imaginary historical portraits, and saints, and allegorical figures of the Liberal arts, the Roman wolf and the Christian lamb, the Guelf lion and the Perugian griffin—the two symbolical beasts who, modelled on a larger scale, also project on brackets from the wall of the Palazzo Comunale above the handsome side-entrance. It was too late for the galleries, but not too late for a drive down to the majestic Porta Etrusca or Arco di Augusto, pylon-flanked, with Etruscan foundations and a partly-destroyed Roman arcaded superstructure; and to other points of interest.

And the impression everywhere remained the same: decay stayed in time, reverence for a great past without neglect of the requirements of the present, progressiveness without aggressiveness. The modern blends and does not clash with the old. There is neither the sadness of faded splendour, nor the sordidness of unimaginative utilitarianism. Perugia strikes one as a town of culture, and refinement, and comfort, and even elegance—a town where it would be delightful to *live*.

The table d'hôte menu could not very well be escaped. Nor did we desire to make ourselves conspicuous by appearing without a white shirt-front at a hotel where evening dress seemed to be *de rigueur*.



The Palazzo del Municipio, Perugia



The Southern Front of the Duomo, Perugia





For further concessions to convention we felt absolutely disinclined, and nothing would have induced us to join the bored and boring conclave in the lounge. We preferred to run the gauntlet of withering and censorious glances, and to take coffee and liqueurs in the Corso, where we found all the public buildings brightly illuminated in honour of the birthday of the heir to the throne. Having arrived at an unusually early hour in the afternoon, satisfied our first curiosity, and become as it were "acclimatised" in Perugia, we were for once able to enjoy a *dolce far niente*, and to watch contentedly the slow stream of promenaders that flowed steadily from the mediæval centre to the modern centre, from the Municipio to the Prefettura and back, bent, like ourselves, upon doing nothing in particular except indulging in a lazy passive enjoyment of the cool evening air and of existence in general.

Even Pomponius, like everybody else, was punctual and full of energy next morning, when the rest of Perugia, galleries, churches, public buildings and all, had to be compressed into a couple of hours. Of that first ardour a good deal was spent—indeed, Belle was well-nigh exhausted—before we had done with the interminable three flights of steep stairs that lead to the Pinacoteca Vanucci on the top floor of the Palazzo del Municipio. In this country of grand architectural enterprise one's eyes become so inured to vastness of scale that an occasional climbing expedition of this kind is needed to make one fully realise the gigantic proportions of the buildings.

There are many Italian towns and European

galleries in which the mature achievement of the Umbrians, as represented by Perugino, Pinturicchio, and the youthful Raphael, can be studied more profitably than in sacked and plundered Perugia. For the mysterious origin of that school you have to turn to the Pinacoteca Vanucci, which contains nearly all that has been left of the life-work of Benedetto Bonfigli and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. You will be left in doubt as to whence these two masters' art was derived, and the more you study the question and the contradictory nonsense that has been written about it, the greater will be your perplexity. But at least Bonfigli and Fiorenzo will explain the later phases of Umbrian art. Personally I must confess to being infinitely more attracted by the naïve and artless piety of Bonfigli and by the firm design, the exuberant vitality, the comparatively naturalistic rendering of forms of Fiorenzo, than by the effeminate, affected, insipid grace of Perugino and the Peruginesques.

That the influence of the Florentine school of Fra Angelico, Benozzo Gozzoli, and Filippo Lippi, modified by the soft character of the Umbrian surroundings in which he spent his life, is at the basis of Bonfigli's feeble, yet exquisitely charming art, is beyond doubt, although so far all attempts to trace his direct descent have been entirely conjectural and unconvincing. In the much-injured frescoes of the Cappella dei Decemviri he has left a delightfully naïve record of the semi-legendary early history of Perugia, in which the appearance of the mediæval city of a hundred towers seems to be faithfully portrayed, if

one may judge from such buildings as S. Ercolano and the Municipio, which are still extant. The clumsy delineation of the figures and other weaknesses are amply atoned for by the intensity of his devotional feeling and by his naïve straightforwardness as a pictorial *raconteur*.

On a far higher artistic plane are the authenticated works by Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, alas! only two in number: the niche with a lunette depicting the Madonna in Glory with Angels, and SS. Peter and Paul at the sides, signed and dated 1487; and the pentateuch with the Virgin and Child and four Saints, and the eleven panels that belonged to the same altar-piece painted in 1472, according to the contract, which is still in existence. For some unknown reason there is no mention of Fiorenzo in Vasari. In the absence of this solid basis for further research, modern criticism has indulged in the wildest conjectures concerning the paternity of his art, with which at least twenty different masters have been credited, among them some who can be proved by dates to be entirely out of the question. It is only in recent years that at least one wrong notion has been definitely disposed of. The Peruginesque features in Fiorenzo's art are not due to the influence of Perugino, as had been formerly believed, but are derived by Perugino from Fiorenzo, who was his master as well as Pinturicchio's, and who therefore assumes the most eminent position as the fountain-head of the so-called Peruginesque school that was to culminate in Raphael.

But then speculative criticism steps in, fathers Fiorenzo with a whole list of works that show none or few of his morphological characteristics, and cannot possibly emanate from the same artist, even allowing for the evolution of his talent. Everything for which no plausible name can be found is placed in the Sala di Fiorenzo and boldly labelled with Fiorenzo's name, until the bewildered student loses all clear notions as to that master's real personality. There are above all the eight charming little panels with scenes from the Life of S. Bernardino, delicious little genre scenes in the spirit of Gozzoli, but obviously of Umbrian origin, with swaggering slender figures and dainty details—very fashion plates of the cinquecento, but without a trace of Fiorenzo's style, of his seriousness, or of his very characteristic and by no means altogether pleasing colour. Even more amazing is the arbitrary connection of an unmistakably Florentine *Adoration of the Shepherds* with Fiorenzo's name. And most puzzling of all, the *Adoration of the Magi*, in the painting of which he *may* have had a share, though it can only have been a small one, the bulk of the work being obviously done by his pupils, Pinturicchio and Perugino. Modern criticism has eliminated Perugino's name in the face of the irrefutable evidence of that artist's auto-portrait in the corner. The argument is, of course, that some one else may have painted Perugino's portrait in this picture, but all such reasoning must fall to the ground when you see the position of the eyes, which suggest immediately a person painting his own reflection in a mirror.

I had entered the Sala di Fiorenzo with the hope of gaining some definite knowledge of that master's art. I left it with a more nebulous notion of his personality than I had formed before. In the "star room" I am ashamed to confess I was frankly bored by the mannerisms of the men whose fame has so completely obscured that of their master, though I experienced a thrill of pleasure at the resonant richness of colour in the *Adoration of the Magi* by Eusebio da S. Giorgio. Incredible though it may seem, it was, and probably still is, impossible to obtain a catalogue of the leading public collection of Umbrian art! After much searching the attendant produced a much-fingered copy of the perfunctory compilation which apparently has been exhausted many years ago, and which the authorities have not troubled to reprint. The precious document had to be returned to the custode before we left the gallery.

Perugino was a disappointment at the Pinacoteca. The adjoining Collegio del Cambio restored him to his right position in our estimation and made us realise once more the injustice of judging a master's work torn away from the surroundings for which it was intended. Perhaps the Cambio frescoes, were they to be detached from their walls and removed to a picture gallery, would lose much of their charm: as the carefully considered and perfectly co-ordinated part of a complete scheme of decoration, in which elegant architectural forms, magnificent wood-carving and intarsia, and the painted panels, medallions, and decorative borders blend in perfect harmony of line and sump-

tuous colour, they may have been rivalled, but surely not surpassed in the history of Renaissance art. Few, if any, apartments of the time have been preserved to us in so unimpaired a state of perfection ; few, if any, give us so clear an idea of the Renaissance spirit, of the love of art and pride of achievement that induced a "Chamber of Commerce" to embark on such noble enterprise ; of that mingling of religious faith and classic learning which saw no incongruity in the mingling of Christian legend and classic mythology and history ; of that grand feeling for artistic unity, which knew how to fuse these heterogeneous elements into suave harmony.

Our morning's work was by no means finished, but the rest was not undiluted pleasure. The interior of the Cathedral has neither beauty nor grandeur, and is singularly barren as regards art treasures, though a superb Madonna with SS. John, Stephen, Onophrius, and a Bishop (whose head is a *tour de force* in foreshortening) by Luca Signorelli, with figures of singularly sculpturesque design, reconciled us to what we should otherwise have regarded as waste of precious time. Far more impressive, and indeed artistically by far the most important church of Perugia, is the old basilica of San Pietro de' Cassinensi, at one time the cathedral of the city, and even now, in spite of spoliation and alteration, a very museum of art treasures. We drove to S. Bernardino, of which church I have already spoken, and to the long Piazza del Sopramuro, where the market was in full swing, lending life and gay colour to the noble setting ; and

then back to the Albergo to keep our appointment with the rejuvenated Cricket.

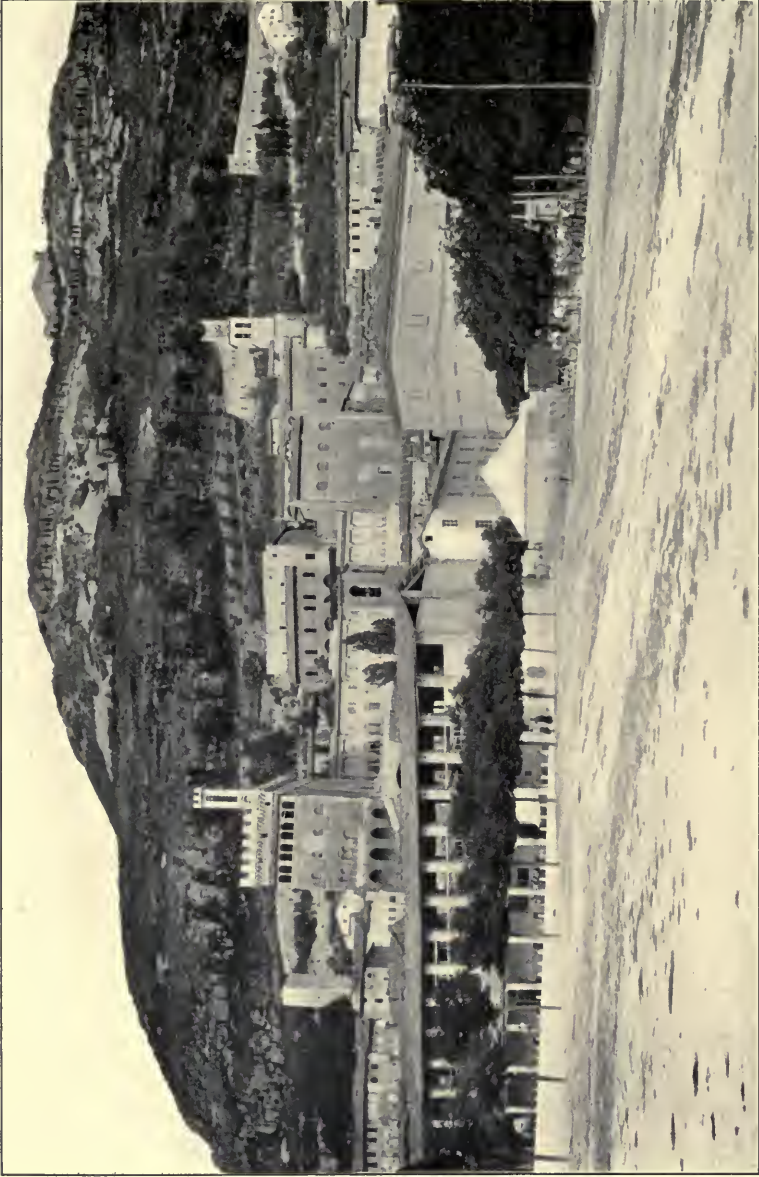
A rapid review, before the start, of our possessions revealed the absence of a bottle of old cognac which up to now had taken the place of a medicine-chest, and which, since it was not to be found, the greatly perturbed and effusively apologetic manager of the hotel hastened to replace by the best that his cellar could produce. In God's brightest sunshine we started on our last Italian day of untarnished delight—a long, delicious run through country on which it would be vain to exhaust superlatives of admiration—a run without breakdowns or untoward incidents of any kind to upset my *orario*, according to which we were to arrive without undue haste at Urbino an hour before dinner. Apart from the minor ups and downs we had to cross two formidable mountain ranges and wind up the day with the considerable climb of over 1000 feet to the height of Urbino; but the Cricket was on her best behaviour and flew up the not excessively steep inclines with the merry chirping that we had grown to love.

We left Perugia by the Porta S. Margherita, skirted the walls along the Via XIV Settembre to the Porta Pesa; descended the swinging curves to the waving sea of willows and olives in the valley of the yellow Tiber; and crossed the river at Ponte Felcino after a descent of over 1000 feet. Leaving the road to Umbertide and Sansepolcro on the left, we had a steady climb of fifteen kilometres through a mountainous region that would have been dreary in

its barrenness, but for the inexhaustible charm of the smiling country stretched out below. There are scarcely any villages along this route to Gubbio, but castles, farmhouses, chapels, and modest inns follow at fairly frequent intervals. Scarcely any traffic was there to impede our progress—a horseman now and then with his gun slung across his back, or a roughly-clad shepherd of the fine physique that distinguishes these mountain-folk in contradistinction to the deformed cretins of the Aosta and other northern valleys.

From the summit near the Casa Mosella (2198 feet) to the Ponte della Pietra across the Acquino River, whence Gubbio is to be seen sprawling on the lower slope of Monte Calvo, the road is rather twisty and in parts fairly steep. The lowest point is reached at the Osteria S. Silvestro (1371 feet) beyond the Ponte degli Assi, whence the few towers and horizontal lines of the houses of Gubbio, rising tier above tier on the arid slope against a thin, patchy backing of verdure, remain constantly in sight. Like every town in this inexhaustible country, Gubbio has an entirely personal character. Unlike most of them she does not reveal her charm at a distance. Gubbio, seen across the valley, has only the beauty of intense sadness. Even the kindly midday sun—kindly at least while we were in motion—could not give warmth and colour to that most colourless of scenes. The serried walls of the houses look as if they were cut out of the grey mountain whose grassy slopes are thin and bleached, and seem to give grudgingly scant nourishment to the





Gubbio, with the Palazzo dei Consoli



sparse rows and patchy groups of oaks and olives on the lower hillside. Clinging as they do to the mountain, the buildings form no animated skyline, and the mountains themselves have neither rugged cliffs and crags, nor gentle curves to excite or soothe the eye.

And in all this greyness and sadness rises the massive, crenellated Gothic Palazzo dei Consoli, in the front of which the defiant masculine strength of the masonry of large wall-spaces is happily blended with the feminine grace of an elegant loggia high up under the machicolated attic. The unadorned bareness of the rest of the town, as seen on that run across the valley, almost suggests an autocratic government, jealous of the splendour of its habitation, having imposed a "sumptuary law" upon the builders of Gubbio, a law from which even the monastic orders were not exempt, to judge from the forbidding plainness of the shell of S. Francesco in the inevitable Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, near the Albergo San Marco, where we stopped for our midday meal.

It was not a meal that lingers pleasantly in my memory. There was nothing wrong with the food, but the whole atmosphere, charged with garlic and buzzing with flies, was as unappetising as the audible relish with which the gentry of Gubbio masticated the solid and sipped up the liquid victuals, plied their toothpicks, and cleared their throats.

Soon after leaving Perugia, I had discovered the photographer's trick or mistake in setting me up with a supply of utterly useless Kodak films. Hoping to

be able to get the right kind at Gubbio, I left the rest of the party lingering over the dessert and started off. We were to meet again at the Palazzo. The heat was terrific, the streets so steep as to be useless for any kind of vehicular traffic. Kodak films were unobtainable, but the search had taken me through the most fascinating labyrinth of narrow, tortuous streets, spanned by lofty arches, past some beautiful Renaissance doorways and Gothic windows, and revealed some hints at least of the past greatness and present romance of Gubbio—so insignificant to-day in the sluggish course of its provincial life, but once the centre of prodigious artistic activity and courtly splendour. I thought of the almost legendary earliest painter of the Umbrian School, Oderigi of Gubbio, of Ottaviano Nelli, of Maestro Giorgio and his masterpieces in majolica; of the Dukes of Urbino, whose sway extended over Gubbio, and who built in this second greatest city of their domain a palace that in some ways almost rivalled the splendour of their chief residence.

The thought of the Palace reminded me of my appointment. We were to meet at *the* Palace, the grand landmark of Gubbio, which I had rashly identified with the Palazzo Ducale, although a little reflection should have told me that crenellated Gothic building could not possibly be Luciano Laurana's Renaissance palace. And so I kept asking the way to the Ducal Palace, and was sent climbing, climbing, up the steepest of streets in the enervating heat to the highest point of the town, only to find that the

interior of the palace could not be seen, that indeed there was nothing to be seen, as it was practically dismantled and ruined, though I managed to gain admission into the elegant colonnaded court—an almost exact copy, as I was to learn later, of the one at Urbino, but alas, neglected and decayed, and overgrown with grass and weeds. Even the not altogether uninteresting aisleless marble Cathedral, opposite the palace, was scarcely sufficient compensation for the exhausting walking expedition, the chief treasures being a feeble altar-piece by Raphael's master, Timoteo Viti, and a *Pietà* by Dono Doni, in which the central group is bodily "lifted" from Michelangelo's famous marble group at St. Peter's in Rome. To make the best of the march I had unintentionally stolen on my companions, I peeped into another church or two on the way down to the Palazzo dei Consoli, and was amply rewarded by lighting upon a magnificent, and for once well-preserved altar-piece by Ottaviano Nelli in the church of S. Maria Nuova : a Virgin and Child with music-making angels and saints, which better explains the prodigious influence upon the art of Umbria and the Marches with which this master is credited than most of the mediocre things that pass under his name.

When I arrived at our rendezvous I found Belle languidly resting on the parapet that divides the piazza in front of the palace from the steep hillside. Pomponius, too, was almost prostrate with the heat. What energy there was left among us was concentrated in Dan, who had lugged his heavy camera up

and was busy photographing the noble façade. Under such circumstances Eugubian tablets and Roman remains and Gubbian majolicas were powerless to stay our longing for the road with its cooling breeze, the prospect of which, added to the dread of a night at the uninviting albergo, was the only stimulant that could brace us to overcome our disinclination to move. There was nothing to be done in this horseless city but to walk back through the sweltering streets and across that enormous shadeless square to the hotel, whence we could plainly see the oblique line of our road cut out of the rocky slope of Monte Calvo and disappearing in the direction of the Colle di Gubbio (2552 feet) and Scheggia.

The run promised the excitement of steep gradients, the exhilaration of mountain air, and the grandeur of a wild and uninhabited region. But it was not to be. No sooner had Ryder turned the Cricket's bonnet in the direction of the mountains than we were stopped by the *padrona* of the inn, who told us that the road was dangerous and temporarily closed for repairs. If we were bound for Scheggia, we should have to make a detour of fifteen miles, going through the valley south-east to Padule and Branca, then north-east to the junction with the old Via Flaminia below Fossato di Vico, and then again north-west to Sigillo and Scheggia. The road could not be missed as it followed the railway to the intersection with the Via Flaminia at the Osteria del Gatto, near Fossato, where we had to turn to the left.

That the road followed the railway line was only

too true. It clung on to it in closest embrace for twelve miles of dull, featureless country. Even the villages and buildings lacked that charm of beautiful proportion and age that is to be found almost everywhere in Italy. Things only began to improve when we turned into the grand highway between Rome and Rimini, built twenty-one centuries ago by C. Flaminius. It is a superbly-laid road, about 23 feet wide, and less dusty than the majority of Italian highways, which leads at a scarcely perceptible gradient between two mountain ranges to Scheggia (1939 feet), where it joins the direct road from Gubbio. About a mile beyond Scheggia is the summit of the pass (2073 feet), whence the road descends in two sharp bends to a beautifully constructed stone bridge. The views from the height of the pass, and indeed all the way from Sigillo to Cagli, are magnificent, although scarcely of typical Italian character. No more olives and cypresses, but oaks, chestnuts, elms, and other trees that flourish in the rougher climate north of the Alps. And with the flora the architectural character, too, is changed. There is an absence of that instinct for beautiful proportion that marks the meanest farmhouse west of the Apennines: everything seems inspired by strict utilitarianism that dispenses with "useless" decorative features.

The fact is, we had left Umbria and crossed into the Marches, and were now making for the rugged cliffs, which, far away in the north, marked the position of the wild Furlo Pass, beyond which lay Urbino with all its romantic associations. The Via Flaminia only

skirts the crumbling walls of Cagli, which ancient little city we should have passed on the left, had it not been for Pomponius's timid reference to an oft-quoted remark made by the Governor of North Carolina to the Governor of South Carolina, and for a sense of duty which impelled us to pay our respects to the divine Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi, whose great *Madonna and Saints*, with the *Resurrection* above, at S. Domenico of Cagli has more than local fame. So we turned off the high road and drove up the excessively steep main street of Cagli to the large piazza—neglected, dilapidated, depressing like the rest of the little town. Our arrival caused something like a sensation, and when we halted at a little café in the square and sat down at one of the round iron tables, the natives formed a solid ring round us, dividing their attention between us and the car. They stood and stared at us in the most embarrassing fashion; they fingered the tyres, and the splashboards, and the sides of the car, the straps, and the lamps, and the bonnet. They swarmed around the Cricket as flies swarm around carrion. I felt that it would not be safe to leave Ryder alone in his linguistic helplessness, especially as S. Domenico was some distance off the square, and as a picture post-card with a clear reproduction of Santi's masterpiece had satisfied my first curiosity.

Thus we left Cagli as speedily as possible by the same way we had come, crossed the railway before Acqualagna, the most unexpected prosperous manufacturing town in a district where it seems strangely





The Furlo Pass



The Tunnel on the Furlo Pass



out of place, and steered for the terrifying sheer cliffs of the Furlo Pass. I remembered Mr. E. Hutton's fine description of this pass, of his ascent "higher and higher" to the "roof of mystical Italy," which he saw lying beneath his feet—and was not a little surprised to find that, far from being a formidable climb, the run through the Furlo Pass was practically on level ground, if anything with a slight downward tendency! Indeed, the Furlo Pass is no pass at all, but an overwhelmingly grand and magnificent ravine with cliffs of green and rosy grey rock rising on either side and almost shutting out the light of the sky, and echoing the roar of the tumbling waters of the Candigliano down below in the gorge. The most impressive and picturesque point is reached by the entrance to a tunnel, 106 feet in length, built in the reign of Vespasianus, as is still recorded on the rock at the north entrance, which bears the lettering IMP . CAESAR AUGUSTUS . VESPASIANUS PONT . MAX . TRIB . POT . VII . IMP . XVII . P . P . COS . VIII . CENSOR FACIUND . CURAVIT. Soon after emerging from the tunnel we saw the verdant, luxuriant plain of the Metaurus spread out before us, and before Calmazzo we passed the battlefield where Hardrubal's Carthaginian host was annihilated by the Romans in B.C. 207. At Calmazzo we crossed the Metaurus (453 feet), and obtained the first glimpse, far away in a north-westerly direction, of Urbino proudly dominating the surrounding land from her mountain height, as befits the chief residence of the powerful and cultured Montefeltro rulers who made their court a training

school whence princes and nobles from every part of Italy returned to their homes with all the accomplishments of "the perfect courtier."

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Perugia, Upper Town	1705	...	...
Perugia, Porta S Margherita . . . .	1378	1	1
Ponte Felcino (Tiber) Fork to Città di Castello . . . .	650	7½	8½
Piccione . . . . .	730	2½	11
Summit . . . . .	980	6	17
Osteria S. Silvestro .	2198	7	24
Gubbio . . . . .	1371	12	36
Osteria Gatto (below Fossato) . . . . .	1640	5	41
Sigillo . . . . .	1394	19	60
Scheggia . . . . .	1574	6	66
Scheggia Pass . . . .	1939	10½	76½
Pontericcioli . . . .	2073	1½	78
Cantiano . . . . .	1312	5	83
Cagli . . . . .	1214	4	87
Acqualagna . . . . .	836	10	97
Calmazzo . . . . .	777	8½	105½
Urbino . . . . .	453	11½	117
	1480	14	131

## CHAPTER XIII

### A RENAISSANCE PALACE AND A DRENCHING



N the slopes of the Apennines," says Baldassare Castiglione in his *Book of the Courtier*, "almost in the centre of Italy (poor guess!), towards the Adriatic, there lies, as everybody knows, the little city of Urbino. Although situated in a mountainous region, less pleasant perhaps than some that we may have seen, it is favoured by Heaven in that the country is exceedingly fertile and rich in fruits of the earth. And besides the pure and health-giving air of the region, all things necessary for human life are to be found here in great abundance. But among the greatest blessings which it enjoys, this I count to be the chief, that from remote times it has always been governed by the best of Princes, although, in the universal calamities of Italy during the recent wars, it was deprived of them for a time."

The race of the Montefeltrian Princes has long been extinct, and Urbino is just a provincial city of United Italy, but Castiglione's description holds good to this day, and the whole district, quite apart from the favours bestowed upon it by Nature—the dis-

trict and its inhabitants still have that air of prosperity and contentment which they must have had when they were ruled by "the best of Princes." I saw no sign of real poverty either in the *contrade* or in the city, nor did I come across a single unhappy face. Very striking, too, is the trimness of all the approaches to the city on the hill—the finely engineered roads and viaducts and bridges; the intense cultivation of the land around; the tree-planted, open spaces; the well-kept walls, the stately avenues. When you see the giant pile of the Ducal Palace towering mightily over the city that seems to have grown under the protection of these grand buttressed walls, you begin to realise what the Montefeltro rule meant for Urbino—that benevolent despotism to which even to-day the town owes all and everything that can possibly make a wanderer's footsteps seek her out in her splendid mountainous isolation. For Raphael, her greatest son, cannot be the attraction, since Urbino, so rich in art treasures, thanks to the liberal patronage of Dukes Federico and Guidobaldo, has not a vestige of his handiwork.

How well the character of Federico is reflected by that palace which dominates Urbino, nay, *is* Urbino. The greatest soldier of his time, Federico was at the same time the most cultured protector and patron of the arts of peace, the very personification of the Early Renaissance spirit. And so the palace of his dreams, built for him by Luciano da Laurana upon the foundations of the earlier mediæval castle, has something of the strength of an impregnable fortress,



The Castle of Urbino





and more of the elegance and grace of a palace of peace. Powerful foundations and massive walls below, and then open loggie flanked by round towers with delicate pinnacles that have more of the French *château* than of the Italian *castello*. As you approach Urbino from the Metaurus valley in the south, and follow a road describing a half circle round the eastern side and entering the gates from the north-west, you never for a moment lose sight of that imposing landmark, which gains in grandeur and romantic picturesqueness as the distance lessens. Everything helped that day to add impressiveness to a scene that, even in the sad greyness of the following morning, made it impossible for us to take our eyes off the lovely palace-city on the two hills, and made us crane our necks until the vision disappeared behind a wooded hill. But on that late summer afternoon of our arrival the sun had just vanished behind the mountains in the west, leaving a golden glow on the edges of purple clouds, and emphasising the vast silhouette of the castle ; whilst in the blue haziness of the valley beneath, a long funeral procession on foot, with flaming torches, could be seen trailing along a ribbon-like white road—priests and acolytes preceding the coffin, carried shoulder high by four sturdy men, and followed by the torch-bearing mourners, mostly women wrapped from head to foot in flowing black shawls.

The procession disappeared in the distance, and the Cricket swung round into the narrow Corso Garibaldi under the castle walls, to the Albergo d'Italia,

the only inn in a city of over 5000 souls: yet another proof of the self-contained isolation of this prosperous community that does not depend, like so many towns of Italy, upon the support of tourists, art pilgrims, and relic-hunters—and least of all of motorists. There is an improvised garage almost opposite the inn, but the narrowness of the street and of the entrance into the barn makes unfair demands upon the acrobatic skill of the man at the wheel, and is an inexhaustible source of amusement to the idle section of the Urbinates. How Ryder managed the great turn I do not know, as the apportioning of our luggage to the different rooms claimed my immediate attention. Absence of competition has not made the innkeeper and his staff relax their efforts to make the guests feel comfortable. “Rarely clean and comfortable” is the guide-book’s verdict rashly passed on the *alberghi* of the smaller towns. Scrupulously clean, with the maximum of comfort that can be given by personal attention to every whim on the part of the traveller, is my own experience of the modest hostelries in the little towns off the beaten track. And, in addition to it, a cuisine infinitely more stimulating to the palate than the monotonous convention of the “grand hotel” menu, just as the draught wines of the country served at the more modest establishment are almost invariably superior to the bottled medicines with misleading labels of the expensive wine lists.

The dining-room at the Albergo d’Italia immediately inspired confidence. In the provincial towns of Italy as well as of France, there is a certain *je ne sais*

*quoi* about the aspect and general atmosphere of some restaurants that at once denotes good cheer, and suggests that you will fare well if you leave yourself in the hands of your host. The hotel dining-room was of this kind, and the diners at the various tables were devoting themselves to the business of eating with the quiet intentness of the experienced gourmet. Pomponius was particularly interested in a group of officers—among them a captain of black skin and negro type—whose example taught us a new use of the ubiquitous white truffle as a seasoning applied to the viands by means of a kind of nutmeg-grater. The strange spectacle of the young negro in officer's uniform, and apparently on a footing of social equality with his companions, was subsequently explained by the padrone. The black captain was Italian, the scion of a noble house, whose father had held a command in the East African Colonies, where he had taken an Abyssinian wife.

The evening was pleasantly passed with a survey of the ground that would have to be covered next morning, and with fruitless speculations as to the plan and exact position of the palace, which seemed to be here, there, and everywhere, now rising to gigantic height, and then again offering a comparatively low, long-stretched front. In the absence of a plan of the town the mystery remained unsolved, even when next morning we tried to fathom it by the light of day. Nothing could impress us better with the colossal scale of the picturesquely irregular pile, than the fact that a long and fatiguing uphill walk was needed to

take us from the albergo, which is practically facing the buttresses of Laurana's twin towers, up the Corso Garibaldi, and then through Via Puccinotti on the right, to the Piazza Duca Federigo, which contains an angle of, and the main ingress to, the Ducal Palace. It is here, in the middle of this little piazza, between the palace and the flank of the rather cold, modern Renaissance cathedral, that the Urbinate have erected their monument to their greatest son—one of the excessively rare examples of modern Italian sculpture, which do not wholly belie the country's noble artistic tradition.

But neither Raphael nor Bramante—another distinguished Urbinate—have left the stamp of their genius on their native town. The man who made Urbino what it is was a man not of creative but of selective genius: Federico di Montefeltro, at whose bidding arose that wonderful palace, to the open gates of which, even as we looked on the Raphael monument, our eyes were drawn by a glimpse of the exquisitely proportioned Renaissance courtyard; hook-nosed Federico, who surrounded himself with, and gave employment to, the greatest artists and craftsmen of his day—Uccello, Piero dei Franceschi, Pisanello, Sperandio, Laurana, Melozzo da Forli, Signorelli, Justus of Ghent, Timoteo Viti, Francesco di Giorgio, Ambrogio da Milano, and an army of intarsiatori, stone-carvers and craftsmen of every description; Federico, whose biography, in concise Latin briefness, was carved by order of his son Guidobaldo in two bands running above the arcades and below the attic around the court.

“Federico, Duke of Urbino, Count of Montefeltro and of Castel Durante, Gonfaloniere of the Holy Roman Church, and Captain of the Italian Confederation, built this house from its foundations for his own glory and the good of posterity. He fought many battles, went out six times to war, defeated his enemy eight times, and, having been victorious in all his campaigns, extended the borders of his dominions. His justice, clemency, liberality, and religion in time of peace equalled and adorned his conquests.”

“For his own glory!”—to be sure, Federico did not hide his light under a bushel. From the masonry of the outside *loggie* to the coffered ceiling of his study, on doors, friezes, chimney-pieces, panellings; carved, inlaid, and painted, wherever they could possibly be introduced, he had his initial letters F. C. (Conte) or F D or FE DUX, and his arms, and the badge of the Garter embodied in the decorative scheme amidst an unprecedented wealth of Renaissance ornamental motives: garlands of flowers, putti, trophies of arms, musical instruments, rams' heads, acanthus and ivy leaves, shells, tendrils, vases, birds, candelabra, sphinxes, griffins, and palmettas. A fairly complete history of Renaissance ornament could be illustrated with the details of these wondrously beautiful intarsia and marble-carvings; and a description of the palace, as it is to-day, would largely consist of a description of these ornaments, and the enumeration of the stately rooms where they are to be found. For with the exception of a few pieces of sculpture, and the meagre remains of what must have been one

of the greatest collections of paintings of the quattrocento, now brought together in the little *pinacoteca*, there is little left of the treasures referred to by Castiglione at the opening of the *Cortegiano* :—

“ On the rugged heights of Urbino, Federico reared a palace which, in the opinion of many, is the finest in Italy, and furnished it so richly with all things needful that it seems to be rather a city than a palace. For he adorned it not only with all things required for ordinary use, such as silver plate and sumptuous hangings of gold and brocade, but with an infinite number of antique marble and bronze statues, of precious paintings, and musical instruments of every variety ; neither would he allow anything within its walls which was not most rare and excellent.”

Time and posterity have dealt harshly with this Arabian Nights' Palace. Windows and arcades have been walled up. A large portion of the building now contains government offices, reeking with disinfectants and red tape, whilst other parts have been dismantled and robbed of their very door-embasures to swell the treasures of the Victoria and Albert and other museums. Nearly everything that was moveable has been removed long since. Yet Federico's palace still contains so much artistic wealth that it remains one of the sights of Italy—enough at any rate to fill the mind of the most unimaginative visitor with visions of those glorious distant days ; to fill the halls and courtyards with sumptuous pageants ; to picture the more intimate circle described by Baldassare Castiglione assembled at the evening hour

on that charming open terrace to enjoy the cooling breeze wafted over from the mountains on the distant horizon, and to pass the end of day in pleasant converse.

If, in the majority of apartments, and especially in the state rooms, a certain amount of mental reconstruction is needed to complete the fragmentary picture, Federico's studio, with its marvellous intarsia panelling and coffered blue and gold ceiling, inlaid and carved with filigree-like delicacy of detail, and the adjoining little private chapel cased in marble and exquisite stucco decoration, have retained all their erstwhile magnificence and opulent richness. In this chapel it is not spoliation that causes regret—not the removal of things that ought to be there, but the barbaric introduction of incongruous things that ought to be removed: a plaster-cast of Raphael's skull in a glass case, and a series of small photographs of his pictures stuck row upon row in a large frame. So like the modern Italian, to honour the memory of a great artist by destroying the artistic unity of a beautiful work of architectural art!

Federico himself, in marble carved by Girolamo Campagna, stands in the guise of a Roman general, and in a Mantegnesque attitude in a square niche on the staircase. He is again quite adventitiously introduced, with some of his courtiers and the Persian ambassador, in the *Communion of the Apostles* by Justus of Ghent, in the little *pinacoteca*, a picture painted apparently before the Flemish master had become completely acclimatised in Italy, and before

he adopted a manner so Italian that to this day certain pictures from the Urbino Palace are variously ascribed to him and to Melozzo da Forlì. Giovanni Santi and Timoteo Viti, Raphael's father and his first master, may be studied to advantage in this little gallery, which also contains a delightful predella by Paolo Uccello, and an interesting architectural view ascribed to Piero dei Franceschi, but more probably painted by Laurana, the architect of the Palace.

Piero himself, monumental in the statuesque simplicity and emphatic patterning of the figures, we met, after leaving the Palace, in the sacristy of the Cathedral. How virile, how grand and impressive is this *Flagellation* and the group of Federico's brother Oddantonio, with his two evil counsellors—the two scenes on the same panel, the *Scourging of Christ*, being used symbolically to explain an incident of local history. We saw, quite near the Cathedral, above the door of S. Domenico, a glorious lunette in terra-cotta by Luca della Robbia, the crowning feature of a very original Renaissance portal with boldly advancing columns in the place of the customary pilasters, but the whole being so clumsily applied to the much earlier Gothic façade that the classic pediment cuts into the rose window. We saw the steep street leading to the house where Raphael was born—so steep that we preferred to pay our homage from a respectful distance. We saw Luca Signorelli's noble and solemn *Descent of the Holy Ghost* and the *Crucifixion* at S. Spirito. And then we returned to the waiting car, cherishing the fond hope that with her help we



might escape the rain-clouds that were closing in upon Urbino.

Fine weather was particularly desirable, as we were about to cross the Trabaria Pass, one of the highest and wildest parts of the Apennines, and then from Sansepolcro intended to penetrate into the even more desolate mountain fastness of La Verna to follow St. Francis to his furthest retreat. Our first objective was Urbania, the Castel Durante of olden days and of majolica fame, to reach which we had the choice of two roads. The more frequented one would have meant returning three miles on the road by which we had arrived, and then following the course of the Metaurus to Urbania. We preferred the somewhat shorter and far more interesting mountain road with its innumerable twistings and windings across M. Spadara, and spent a pleasant half-hour in enjoying the ever-changing panorama and looking out for bits of blue promise in the threatening sky.

On the heights before Urbania, towards which we could see the road descending in four sharp angles, we ran into the rain with such suddenness that we had a good wetting before the Cape-hood could be hoisted. For the rest of that wretched day I continued hoping—hoping first that the rain was only hanging about the valley and that we should rise above it; hoping then that, as is so often the case in the Alps, it was exhausting its rage on one side of the mountain range, and that we should only have to cross the highest point to get back into warmth and sunshine. My companions were snugly installed in the sheltered body

of the car with a view of Ryder's back and my own, whilst I, drenched and shivering with cold, and with the rain beating my face, had to bear the brunt of the discomfort and to cheer the others with news of the weather ahead.

And thus we passed through Urbania, where a powerful, war-like castle appeared in the unpleasantly restricted field of vision. Skidding along merrily we passed through the compact little towns of S. Angelo in Vado, Mercatello and Borgo Pace, followed everywhere by the kindly natives' smiles of compassion. Between Urbania and Borgo Pace (1509 feet) we had risen some 600 feet, and now began the serious business of climbing another 1900 feet to the summit of the Trabaria (3427 feet). Down came the rain in sheets, shutting out the view so completely that I could only vaguely guess the character of the scenery, which appeared to be very like that of the higher Alpine passes, but without the snowfields and glaciers in the distance. What gave it Italian character and romance was the appearance now and then, on horseback, or on mule, or on foot, of some rough, brigand-like shepherd or mountain-dweller, picturesquely clad in sheep-skins and loose cloaks thrown over the shoulder. Up and up we rose, beyond the wooded region to the area of stony desolation, where the valley is barred by the mountain wall which the road scales by a long series of hair-pin corners.

The fury of the rain had abated when we reached the summit, but the westward view was not a whit more cheering than the retrospect: mist and clouds

and rain all round. The slippery ground made the innumerable curves of the descent nervous work, although the road is so beautifully engineered that there was never any serious danger. It rained all the way down to the Tiber valley; it rained when from the slope of Monte Giove we first saw in that green valley the cheering roof of S. Giustino linked by the straight line of the main road with Città di Castello in the south and with Sansepolcro in the north. It rained when we passed through S. Giustino after a descent of close on 2500 feet. But, as though fate were bent upon mocking us, it ceased raining the moment we had entered within the gates of wall-girt Sansepolcro, and drew up at the door of the Albergo Fiorentino.

There is nothing more interesting on a road journey through Italy than the first impression, the first revelation of a distinct personality, of every successive new town. When every detail has faded from one's memory, this first impression remains in all its vividness. My first and only fixed impression of Sansepolcro is a spacious, busy kitchen, with a grateful wood-fire, with steaming kettles and dishes, and two buxom, solicitous women—one of them of strikingly handsome feature—bustling about me, pulling off an overcoat and coat, the sleeves of which were clinging to my soaking wet shirt-sleeves, hanging up the garments to dry, and placing a chair for me by the glowing embers. It was not a little tantalising to see the contents of a huge pot of particularly appetising aroma diminish and vanish into nothing, as dish after

dish was filled with the savoury stew and carried into the dining-room, but there was no help. I had to get dry before I could join the others at their meal ; and when I *did* join them, it was too late for that tempting *plat-du-jour*, thanks to the approval with which it had met from a large and merry wedding or birthday party of country-folk who had chosen this unpropitious day to come "to town." Too late for everything but an improvised cutlet and some cheese !

Borgo Sansepolcro is luckier than Urbino, in so far as it harbours a few masterpieces from the brush of its greatest son. There are no Raphaels at Urbino, but there are several Pier dei Franceschi at Sansepolcro ; and his *Flagellation* at Urbino had whetted our appetite for this great initiator of the Renaissance. Luncheon disposed of, we made our way through the main street, past an extraordinarily well-preserved Romanesque relief frieze of horsemen, lions, eagles, and other animals that has mysteriously found its way into the wall over the door and window of a little shop ; past an imposing square brick tower planted in the middle of a piazza, to the Cathedral in the centre of the town. Here our progress was barred. A respectably-dressed, elderly, bearded man, rough of speech and jerky of gait, and with no trace of the professional guide's obsequiousness, demanded to know whither we were going, and whether we wanted to see "the pictures."

"Nothing worth looking at in here," he said, pointing at the Duomo, when I had timidly responded

to his imperious questioning. "You follow me—we shall go to the Palazzo del Comune."

We humbly submitted to his ruling and entered the little *pinacoteca*, to be immediately confronted by what is surely one of the most powerful and grimly majestic conceptions in the whole history of art: Piero dei Franceschi's *Resurrection*. Facing the spectator, and rising from the tomb bolt-upright with an irresistible upward movement, you see the figure of Christ—the same Christ as the one in the National Gallery *Baptism*, but no longer humble and submissive and with half-closed eyes, but with a terrible stare of magnetic force—a hierarchic Byzantine Christ with real life and vital energy. There is something grating, though far from unpleasant, about the colour scheme which rather accentuates the *terribilità* of the conception, as does also the almost rigid geometrical form of the triangle formed by the Saviour and the four sleeping soldiers. Sleep surely has never been more convincingly rendered than in the attitudes and expression of these four soldiers—not natural sleep, but the magic slumber which has taken them quickly and unawares in the attitudes in which they happened to be when it descended upon them.

From the open-mouthed amazement with which our guide stared at Piero's masterpiece, it was easy to gather that he had never before set foot in the little gallery. He seemed to be as much under its spell as we were ourselves,—only it wore off more quickly. When minute after minute passed in absolute silence, without any of us making a move, the

man who had so energetically appropriated us began to clear his throat and to drum impatiently with his fingers on the railing in front of the picture. Then, mumbling to himself, he hobbled about the room, always trying to draw our attention from the Piero. But by now our courage had returned and we refused to be hustled and tyrannised. We just took our own time in this admirably arranged little gallery, which contains a complete set of photographs after Piero's known pictures, in addition to an interesting *Crucifixion* by Signorelli and some works by minor Tuscan and Umbrian painters. Dan's unnecessary liberality in the matter of tipping took the man by surprise, but did not make him relinquish his sternness of demeanour. He almost commanded us to return to our hotel, pointing out the direction with a jerky movement of his stick, and remained at the corner, following us with his eyes, as if to make sure that we should obey his orders.

At the inn I tried to elicit some information as to the feasibility of continuing the journey via Pieve S. Stefano to La Verna and Bibbiena. Opinions were divided. The padrone thought it *might* be done, although the road was unsuitable for large cars—very steep and rough and not without danger. Another man declared it impossible. The casting vote was given by Heaven, which opened its sluice-gates anew just as we got ready to start. We paid our bill, including a charge for “garaging” the car whilst we were at lunch—the only instance of an unfair charge on our whole journey through Italy!—and turned south-

east across the Tiber to S. Leo and up the Cerfone valley, via the Foce di Scopetone (1724 feet) to Arezzo. A run of thirty-six kilometres through friendly but practically uninhabited country; and a repetition of the morning's experience—rain, rain, rain! I, for one, was not sorry, when we arrived at the Albergo Reale d'Inghilterra at Arezzo, to get at my luggage and to put on some dry clothes. That I escaped a violent cold and rheumatism speaks well for the effect of motoring upon one's health.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Urbino . . . . .	1480	...	...
Il Tufo . . . . .	1417	4½	4½
Summit (M. Spadara)	1640	3½	8
Urbania . . . . .	895	10	18
S. Angelo in Vado .	1296	10	28
Mercatello . . . . .	1407	5½	33½
Borgo Pace . . . . .	1509	4	37½
Trabaria Pass . . . .	3424	13½	51
S. Giustino . . . . .	1082	16	67
Sansepolcro . . . . .	1082	4	71
S. Leo . . . . .	1059	5	76
Le Ville . . . . .	1023	7	83
Summit (Foce di Scopetone) . . . . .	1724	17	100
Arezzo . . . . .	852	7	107

## CHAPTER XIV

### REDUCED TO BEGGARY



**I**TUATED near to where the Arno doubles back upon its course, at the meeting of three fertile valleys and trade routes, the Casentino, the Lower Arno valley and the Val di Chiana, and near the Tiber valley, Arezzo in the days of the eternal struggles among the communes and various principalities was in far too important a position to be allowed an independent existence. In the Middle Ages it was for a time under the rule of the Counts Palatine of the Guidi family, who crowned every hill-crest in the Casentino with their massive castles, and subsequently it was subject to the bishops of the Tarlati family. But in the fourteenth century Florence extended her conquering hand over Arezzo, and continued to hold her in firm grasp. Thus Arezzo, a town of considerable size, remained a dependency of little political importance. It was no doubt a prosperous town, but none of its families rose to dominating positions in commerce or politics or by deeds of arms. To this fact, perhaps, the town owes a peculiarity which distinguishes it from all other Italian cities of the same or even lesser importance : a striking absence

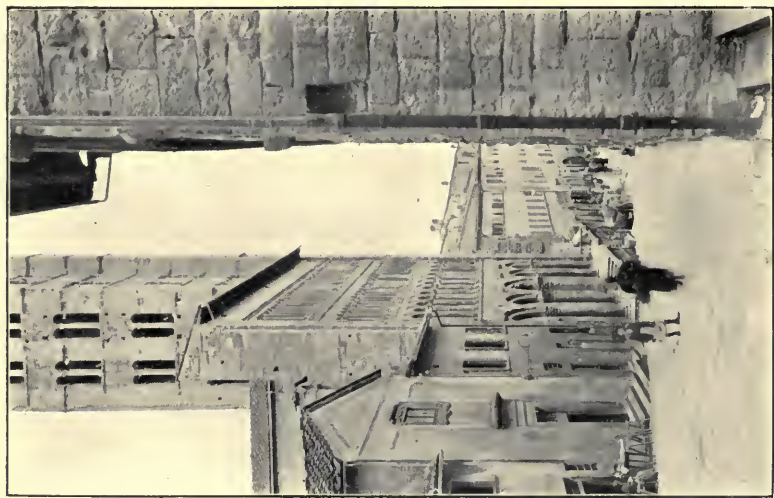


of handsome private palaces. It is not an exaggeration to state that the architectural features of Arezzo are practically confined to churches and public buildings, which testify to a flourishing municipal life of Republican character, in which private interest was subordinated to the welfare of the community. And it is in accordance with this character that the great men of Arezzo, from Guido, to whom we owe our system of musical notation, and from Petrarch, to Raphael's humanist friend, Pietro Aretino, from Margaritone to Vasari, who built the stately loggia in the piazza that bears his name, were men who sought and found distinction in artistic and intellectual pursuits.

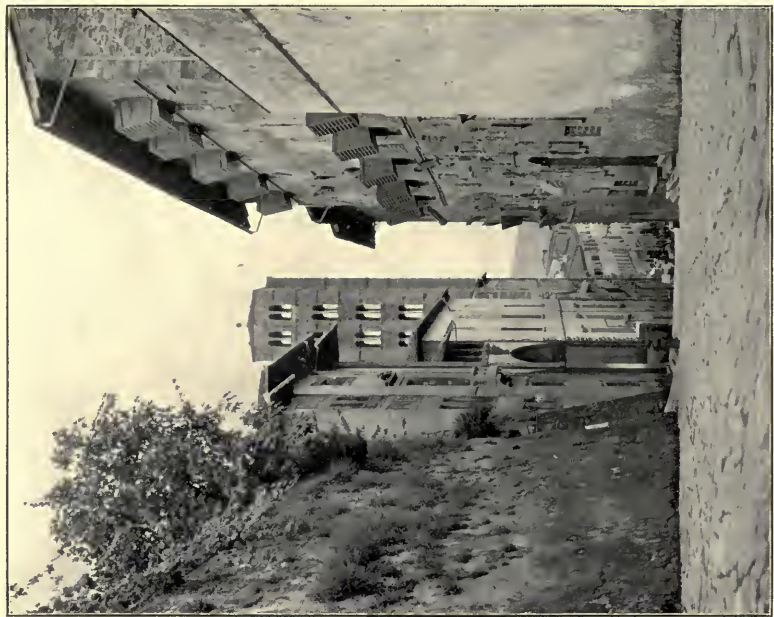
The rain had not entirely ceased when we set out on our *giro della città*. We were prepared to find fault, and the aspect and demeanour of the Aretines were not conducive to soothing our ruffled temper. Accustomed as we were to being stared at, the Aretine stare struck us as particularly offensive. In self-protection Dan devised an excellent method of retaliation which proved wonderfully effective when tried on a man who had done his best to bring upon himself the well-deserved punishment. It was simple enough. Dan simply pointed smilingly at the man's boots, and we all stopped to look at them. Of course there was nothing wrong with them. They were quite up to the average of Aretine boots; but their owner lost his faith in them. He looked first at the right, then at the left boot, turned round to examine the heels in turn, became red in his face, and finally

slunk off in a state of utter bewilderment, casting furtive glances in our direction, but quite unable to meet our triumphant smile.

The little incident helped to revive our spirits. All our troubles and discomforts were forgotten when a few minutes later we stood in the choir of San Francesco among the frescoes of our beloved Piero dei Franceschi. The delight was the greater, as it was altogether unexpected, for the church, completely dismantled for restoration, and filled with scaffoldings and heaps of debris, presented so dreary an aspect from the entrance that we were half inclined to turn away without passing through the nave, had not an interesting early fresco on the entrance wall induced us to search for more. And so we came to the choir which Piero decorated with the Legend of the Holy Cross—the “Golden Legend,” which can here be read from the planting of the branch from the Tree of Knowledge over Adam’s grave to the Victory of Constantine over Maxentius—a fragmentary pictorial tale, owing to the havoc wrought by time and damp, but set forth with such power and monumental directness by this master of form and composition, movement and light, that it would be difficult to find its equal in the whole history of art. One has to visit Arezzo if one would realise the full significance and influence of Piero dei Franceschi upon all future art, an influence as great as that exercised by Masaccio. What Masaccio did for form and statuesque grandeur of design, Piero achieved for light and atmosphere. He may be called the discoverer of sunlight and the



S. Maria della Pieve, Arezzo



Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Palazzo Pubblico, Arezzo



forerunner of the nineteenth-century plein-air school. Nor is there ever in the whole range of his work a concession to prettiness. His types—even the heads of the Queen of Sheba and her women in one of the frescoes at Arezzo—are anything but “pretty”: they have the beauty of character and strength and of intense vitality.

From S. Francesco we walked up the steep Corso Vittorio Emanuele to the Duomo, a beautiful Gothic building—Gothic at least in so far as the term can be applied to any central Italian church—raised on a marble platform in the highest part of the town, and, when I saw it, half hidden under the scaffolding erected by the modern architect to whom the finishing of the façade has been entrusted. It was late in the afternoon, too late to see anything of the pictures, but sufficiently light for the five terra-cotta masterpieces by Andrea della Robbia in the dreadfully over-decorated Chapel of the Madonna.

The downpour meanwhile had become torrential and made the streets too unpleasant for an extension of the walk. We hurried back to the hotel and spent the rest of the day in planning out the to-morrow's programme, which was to include, if possible, an attempt on La Verna from the west, since the attack from the east had to be abandoned.

The weather was more propitious next morning, when we saw Arezzo in her brightest garment of sunlight, which was especially becoming to the early thirteenth-century façade of the much older church of S. Maria della Pieve, with its three graceful tiers of

infinitely varied columns—a type of church that we had not seen since the day we had left Lucca and Pisa, and which in this Pieve attains to the highest degree of grace. Leaving the church by the back entrance we found ourselves amidst the bustle and noise of a poultry market in full swing in one of the most picturesque squares of Italy : the Piazza Vasari, one side of which is occupied by the round arcaded apse of the Pieve and by the Law Courts, a composite building, partly in Renaissance and partly in Gothic style with exquisite filigree-like decorative details. Returning to the Corso through a little side-street we lit upon the Palazzo Pubblico, the whole front of which is covered with armorial shields carved in stone, about as effective a method of decoration as any architectural device. The massive stone building now serves as prison, which accounts for the extraordinary box-like projecting Venetian blinds inserted over the half-walled-up windows in such a manner as to let in a little air and light, without enabling those confined within to look out upon, or communicate with, the outer world.

It was only on leaving Arezzo for the Casentino, the “Valley enclosed,” that I noticed the beautiful situation of the old town in a fertile plain, the general colour of which was the nearest approach to the rich green of northern meadows and orchards that I had so far seen in Italy. Straight as a dart we flew on level ground for six kilometres to the Chiassa Bridge, just above the point where that little Apennine stream joins the Arno ; and then always in close proximity



Piazza Vasari and Poultry Market, Arezzo





to that river and to the branch railway line that connects Arezzo with Pratovecchio at the head of the valley, we passed through Borgo a Giovi, Castelnuovo, Subbiano, S. Mama and Rassina, with the lovely skyline of the roofs of Bibbiena on the hill in front of us. A district that bears all outward signs of prosperity and progressiveness, if the enslaving of the swiftly-flowing Arno for industrial purposes can be taken as a sign of modern progress. What was particularly striking in this southern part of the Casentino was the light, tender, vernal colour and character of the landscape in spite of the advanced season.

Meanwhile I was anxiously scanning the sky; which held fair promise straight ahead and in the direction of Florence, but seemed determined to frighten us by threats and frowns away from the rock of St. Francis in the east. The bald head of La Verna was hidden in a black skull-cap of thunder clouds; and we had learnt the previous day that it is wiser to shun the wilds of the Apennines in inclement weather. It was obvious that St. Francis resented the smell of petrol. Regretfully we decided not to disturb the sacred stillness of his mountain retreat. But not before we had turned from the high road, which, as usual, sends an off-shoot to the town on the hill and prefers to follow a fairly even course through the valley. Indecision made us steer for Bibbiena, instead of proceeding on the main road, Bibbiena being the starting-point of the road for La Verna.

Did the automobilophobe saint wish to punish us for that one little move in his direction? We were

given reason to raise that question before the day came to an end. Even to this hour the mere memory of that crawl to Florence is a very nightmare ; and the cause of the trouble was unquestionably the little detour to Bibbiena. The town, so picturesque from the distance, proved a disappointment when we had entered the gates. The streets, of course, had the beautiful accidents of the broken sky-line, which render every old street in Italy so incomparably picturesque ; but otherwise on the slow run through the main streets we saw nothing to detain us or to tempt either Dan or myself to add to our growing collection of photographic records.

At the foot of the hill, only a few yards from the point where we regained the main road, and with war-like, proud Poppi well in sight, our troubles began. A cart had met with an accident, and had been left there, half in the ditch, half on the narrow road, with its shafts acting as a barrier, which forced Ryder to steer the car over a heap of jagged flints on the other side of the road. There was no alternative, and he did the inevitable with every possible caution. But we had scarcely run half a mile towards Poppi, when we noticed that the back tyre was getting deflated and had to be replaced. As soon as we stopped we noticed that the day had become close and oppressive. No shade was to be obtained from the few slender poplars by the roadside, no shelter against the stinging sun. And the outposts of the heavy clouds collected round La Verna could be seen moving towards Monte Falterona and the Consuma Pass, as if to cut off our retreat.



Bibbiena, from the road to Poppi



The Castle of Poppi



A cheerless outlook—and more cheerless when, a couple of miles further up the Arno valley, we scored the second puncture.

Thanks to these mishaps we had taken an hour for the four miles from Bibbiena to Ponte a Poppi, the suburb on the left bank of the Arno, where we meant to lunch at the first possible inn. However, the two or three squalid *osterie* on that side of the river were unanimously voted impossible. We had to cross the solidly-built, mediæval bridge, right under the castle hill, and had occasion to notice the peculiar shape of the castle, the side of which facing the valley is narrower than the other three sides. This ancient stronghold of the Guidi, the strongest and biggest of the many castles with which that mighty family crowned the hills of the Casentino to lord it over the surrounding land until the battle of Campaldino in the plain below Poppi established the supremacy of Florentine power, is said to be the prototype of innumerable buildings of this class, the noblest representative of which is the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

Across the bridge a narrow straight line leads up to the town like an immense steep staircase. The short cut was not for us, who had to scale the hill by the more circuitous winding road which enters the quaint arcaded streets of Poppi behind the castle. The entrance to the Albergo Vezzosi faces the castle green, the scene of many a joust and tourney in the olden days ; but when I looked out from the window of the dining-room, which is situated on the same level as the entrance, I was not a little surprised to

find myself looking down into the chief piazza of the town from a tower-like height. The warmth of the reception given us by the hostess and her smiling female staff—daughters or maids—was in inverse ratio to their preparedness for an invasion by five hungry people. Most insinuatingly did the *padrona* suggest that the signori should inspect the castle, which would not take long, and give her time to have the table laid. Famished as we were, we were sufficiently considerate to fall in with her views.

The approach across the tree-planted green was unlike anything we had seen in Italy, where villages, towns, or outlying buildings as a rule cling close to the towering walls of the feudal lord's castle as though in search of protection. There is something almost English about the isolation of the lordly building and the green plot in front, though the façade with its beautiful Gothic windows, the crenellation, the mighty square tower, and the whole proportions of the building are as Italian as could be. There is a sense of power and splendour about the whole building and its setting and details—the low postern tower, the relief lion over the arched portal, the wonderful inner courtyard with its moss-covered flags, its low, wide vaults, the outer staircase winding round the walls on arches and protected by graceful banisters; the sculptured armorial bearings on the walls—most effective and romantic of all decorations, that speaks to future ages of great men and great deeds and pride of race—and right above, the faded and decayed remains of what must once have been a splendid fresco



From the Hotel Window, Peppi





decoration. Unfortunately this castle was just then in the hands of the restorers, whose scaffoldings hid much of it from view and broke unpleasantly into the architectural lines. More unfortunate still, that under the circumstances it was impossible to obtain permission to ascend the stairs and to roam about the castle, the romance of which, more likely than not, will vanish as the restorers proceed with their labours, although it is only fair to admit that in recent years the work of restoration has in many parts of the country been carried out with much thought and intelligence.

At the inn meanwhile our absence had been turned to good account. Our meal was a masterpiece as regards ingenious use of meagre resources. Thus two anchovies and a hard-boiled egg with various seasonings and furnishings were turned into quite an attractive course for our party of four. Quite a long succession of quaintly invented dishes followed, each accompanied by a *buon appetito!* as it was placed on the table. When we could eat no more we had to reassure the anxious hostess that it was no fault of hers if we had come to a full stop before the procession of viands had ceased. Had we but known what the day had in store for us, we should certainly have had the remains of that enjoyable repast wrapped up in paper and taken it with us into the mountains.

The same road by which we had arrived had to be followed down to the bridge which we had to cross in order to return to our main road. Following the Arno towards its source, with the main chain of the

Apennines on our right and the Pratomagno peaks on the left, we proceeded to Certomondo and across the battlefield of Campaldino to the point where the Consuma road turns to the left from the Casentino railway and main road to Pratovecchio and Stia at the head of the valley. Soon afterwards we crossed the Arno, which disappeared from sight on our right as we climbed up to Borgo alla Collina. Here the ascent began in real earnest. Up to now there had been a fair amount of traffic—ramshackle carriages and carts drawn by horses with tinkling bells and waving plumes, by oxen, and mules, and donkeys ; but beyond Borgo alla Collina we had the road nearly to ourselves. Up and up we went towards the clouds, enjoying the views into the green valley on our left and towards the hill-enthroned towns and castles on our right, until we were right in the clouds which on closer acquaintance took the shape of Scotch mist. It was not raining exactly. It was dampness hanging in the air. Whilst we went along it felt like very fine rain, but the moment we stopped we could not feel any drops descending.

Need I explain *why* we stopped ? Another puncture of that ill-fated back tyre. And when the change was accomplished—the third since we had left Bibbiena—we were not allowed to run more than two miles before we had to pull up once more for the same reason. I was cold and wet, and was encouraged by Belle to walk ahead until they were ready to follow and to pick me up again. And so I trotted along on the slimy winding road through the damp mist which

did not allow me to see beyond the blackberry bushes by the wayside—blackberries of giant size, but of watery taste, as blackberries are apt to be if there is no warm sun to draw out their flavour. I walked for about a mile and a half until I arrived at a kind of farmhouse among a few trees in a dreary, stony solitude—the highest point apparently of the ascent, since the road became level beyond this spot. I knocked at the door, for I was hot and thirsty after the brisk walk, and asked for a glass of water, instead of which I was immediately offered wine. Payment had to be forced upon the hospitable farmer.

“Is this Consuma?” I asked.

“Consuma? No! this is the Omomorto. Consuma is a good way off—an hour and a half!”

Omomorto—the Dead Man—a suitable name for this dreary, bleak, cloud-bound height.

I thanked the man, and returned to meet the car, which surely ought to have started by now. However, I found the poor Cricket in the very place where I had left her, and was immediately pressed into service to take my turn at the pump. At last we were able to take to the road again, not without many anxious looks back upon the troublesome back tyre. Within a few minutes we flew by the Omomorto which before had seemed such an interminable distance off. A few miles on fairly level ground, and then a final climb of some 400 feet to Varco, a fairly large village, which, for some unaccountable reason, has sprung into existence at the very height of the pass (3470 feet).

Having got thus far without any further trouble,

we took fresh heart and felt confident that the tyres would now hold out to Pontassieve and Florence, the whole journey being downhill and the road as good as could be desired. With every mile our confidence grew, and when beyond Borselli we passed out of the grip of the Scotch mist and saw through the rifts in the floating vapour below us the lower Arno valley and the Sieve valley spread out in all their loveliness, we lost the last trace of anxiety and began to talk of Florence and of how we were to spend the evening. Diacceto we passed in highest spirits. Pomponius was for a brief halt and a sip of *vermouth*, but he was outvoted. It was not worth while, since we should be at Florence in another half-hour or so.

About a mile from Diacceto our fond hopes came to an end. Another puncture! And this time it was not merely a matter of changing the tube, but of patching, since all our spares had already suffered on this wretched journey. That was the beginning—about five o'clock in the afternoon. By seven o'clock we had moved about a mile in spurts of a hundred yards or two, with regular intervals for further patching. At half-past seven we were left without patches and without solution, far from any human habitation and scarcely in the right mood to enjoy the glorious spectacle of the flaming sunset sky. Ryder gave a deep groan. For the first time he was at his wit's end and at the end of his material resources. Had he been an emotional southerner, he would probably have sat down by the roadside to sob and cry.

“Look out—there’s a car coming!” broke in Belle upon our fruitless consultation.

“A car? Do stop them and ask them to lend us a patch and some solution,” said Ryder eagerly.

A very reasonable request. Only—my Italian, mostly derived from the study of Dante, did not run to patches and rubber solution. Had Dante lived in the twentieth century, he would doubtless have added another circle to his *Inferno*, a region of eternal break-downs and insufficient equipment for repairs. However, I posted myself in the middle of the road, and signalled to the approaching car to stop. Begging in the high road with an insufficient command of the language is not a very pleasant task. The fact that one of the occupants of the car was a cardinal in a purple robe did not diminish my embarrassment. I stammered and spluttered an apology, and tried to explain our distress. The cardinal listened with a smile of celestial kindness, and set the final seal on my humiliation by replying—in French. He then instructed his chauffeur to give me the alms for which I had so ineloquently pleaded, cut short my expressions of gratitude, wished us better luck, and continued his journey towards Florence.

The last gleam of daylight had vanished long before we were ready to resume our journey. Needless to say, the acetylene lamps again refused to work, so that we could only proceed very slowly and cautiously. This time we managed a couple of miles before the tyre became again deflated, about two kilometres before Pontassieve, close to the point where the Con-

suma road meets the direct road between Florence and Arezzo.

It was nine o'clock. Pangs of hunger made themselves felt and added to our misery. Our stock of sustaining *panforte* had given out long since. There was nothing to eat or drink, and the prospect of indefinite further delays on the road. We were in as bad a plight as the one from which the Heaven-sent cardinal had rescued us. It was a moment for heroic resolutions. Something had to be done unless we resigned ourselves to spend the night on the high-road. As a final expedient Ryder decided to put on to the back wheel one of the spare tubes for the front wheel. Pomponius awoke from his resigned torpor and proposed that he would set out in search of food if I would accompany him. The lights of Pontassieve were well in sight, and we could return in little more than half-an-hour.

Through pools of water and squirting mud we trotted off into the blackness of the night towards the Arno Bridge, beyond which begins the main street of Pontassieve. At the first *vendita di generi diversi*, a poor enough shop, but sufficient for the need of the hour, we effected our purchase : fresh rolls with butter and thin slices of salami, a large straw-covered *fiasco* of chianti, and a few tumblers, which we promised to return presently. It was not a Lucullic meal, but when we displayed the result of our foraging expedition we were given quite an ovation by our patient companions in misery. The salami was of the coarsest and most garlicky species, but I doubt if any of us

had ever enjoyed a meal more heartily ; and the wine, that huge, round-bellied *fiasco* for one lira, was worthy to rank with the far-famed products of Orvieto and Montepulciano. And the indigestion that followed the feast was commensurate with our enjoyment rather than with the comparatively meagre ration resulting from the division of eight rolls with salami among five hungry people.

Between Pontassieve and Florence the road was badly worn by excessive traffic, which fact, added to the insufficiency of our dim lamps, considerably impeded our progress on this last stage of that journey of evil memory. Even the bright lights of the streets of Florence failed to have a cheering effect upon our depressed spirits. In solemn silence we proceeded through the long succession of streets to the Hotel Cavour in the Via del Proconsolo between the Duomo and the Bargello. Silently we alighted at eleven o'clock, were shown to our rooms, and bid each other a brief "good night." There was not even question as to supper. We just wanted to retire and to forget that dreadful day on which we had achieved the record of doing fifty-eight miles in twelve hours.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Arezzo . . . . .	852	...	...
Castelnuovo . . . . .	853	10	10
Ponte Calliano . . . . .	866	1	11
Subbiano . . . . .	872	1½	12½
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## ITINERARY—(continued)

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Rassina . . . . .	1000	11½	24
Bibbiena . . . . .	1370	6½	30½
Poppi (Bridge) . . . . .	1096	6½	37
Poppi . . . . .	1425	1	38
Poppi (Bridge) . . . . .	1096	1	39
Borgo alla Collina . . . . .	1407	4½	43½
Consuma . . . . .	3470	15	58½
Fork to Arezzo . . . . .	426	15	73½
Pontassieve . . . . .	327	2	75½
Florence . . . . .	177	18½	94



## CHAPTER XV

### TO BOLOGNA ACROSS THE APENNINES



FOR two days and three nights we saw nothing of the Cricket and little of Ryder, who had instructions and could be trusted to attend to her needs without assistance, since some members of the staff of the Garages E. Nagiliati had a sufficient knowledge of English to make an interpreter unnecessary. Meanwhile we were glad enough of an excuse to our own conscience for this break in the journey, and we threw ourselves whole-heartedly into the enjoyment of the inexhaustible wonders of artistic creation in that fairest of all cities. Perhaps it was as well that one of the two days happened to be a Sunday, and that some sort of festa was celebrated on the Monday—Italy seems to be always celebrating something or other, a local saint's day, somebody's birthday or centenary, a fair, an inauguration of some monument or building. As it was, we were forced to curtail our sight-seeing to reasonable limits, and to vary the long round of churches and galleries with a drive to the Piazzale in front of S. Miniato and to the Cascine. The Bargello was closed and so was the Accademia and the Opera del Duomo ;

but the Uffizi, the Pitti, the Riccardi Palace, the Duomo, S. Maria Novella, the Carmine, the Badia, S. Spirito, S. Croce, S. Trinità and S. Lorenzo contained enough and to spare to keep us busy for two days.

For once we were systematic, conscientiously "doing" the sights, armed with our Baedeker, like so many other tourists. For Florence has no climax, like most of the other cities we had visited, no miraculous artistic achievement, no individual building, or frescoed chapel, or sculptured shrine that will make you feel that everything else must fall flat after it. In Florence you pass from miracle to miracle, with ever-increasing wonder and delight, and with each new surprise comes the desire for more. Florence, indeed, is the last city in the world that should be included in the programme for a motor tour, except by those who, like ourselves, are well acquainted with her charms, or those who have unlimited time at their disposal. Constant movement from place to place is of the very essence of an enjoyable motor tour; and Florence is a town that cannot even be skimmed in less than a week.

A bigger volume than the present one would be needed for an adequate record of what we saw and feasted on during those two days. I shall therefore not attempt the impossible: to compress a history of Florentine art into a chapter of a little travel-book. Besides, Florence may almost be taken for granted. Everybody knows Florence and loves Florence. It has rightly been called every European's second home.

It was with a sense of grim satisfaction that, on the morning of our departure for Bologna, I examined the eighteen items which figured on the garage bill. They included new tubes and vulcanising of the old ones, the fixing of valves, and patches and solution, and every conceivable species of oil, besides many other mysterious minor things, the enumeration of which in Italian did not convey much meaning to me. With this bill in my pocket, I felt at any rate safe from a repetition of the mishaps that attended the preceding stage of our journey, which already seemed ever so far back in the dim past. Everything promised an enjoyable run, and though it was still fairly early in the morning, the sun shone down with such force that we were quite grateful for the cooling current of air, and passed without excessive regret the walls that enclosed the unseen treasures of S. Marco and the Scalzo—the frescoes by the Beato Angelico and worldly Andrea del Sarto.

We measured the whole length of the Via Cavour, cut across the vast piazza of the same name, crossed the Mugnone by the Ponte Rosso, and were soon in a world of villas and gardens of indescribable beauty. Past handsome wrought-iron gates, flanked by richly sculptured stone posts and sentinel-like cypresses, between high walls overtopped by trees of every conceivable variety and colour, with now and then an opening upon a vista of exquisite loveliness, we ascended the hills to the right of the Mugnone valley, with nothing to disturb our pleasure except the dust whirled up now and then by some passing motor-

car—an inconvenience from which we had not suffered since we left the Carrara district. And so we managed to get beyond Trespiano and close to the Florentine cemetery, a distance of not quite five miles, before we noticed that the back tyre on the left was again going down rapidly. Was it the new tube? No—Ryder, with an eye to economy, had put on one of the invalids that had been released from hospital. It was evidently no good attempting to run on patched tyres, except in case of extreme need. And we were determined to spend the afternoon at Bologna, and not on some lonely spot in the mountains which had to be crossed. The new tube was thus put on as speedily as possible, and in a quarter of an hour we were moving again towards the wooded height between Montorsoli and Pratolino, occupied by the magnificent park of the Villa Demidoff, which was at one time the summer retreat of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

At Pratolino (1512 feet) we had reached the summit of the first range of hills. The road now went downhill through charming wooded country, following the Mugello railway and the course of a little tributary of the Sieve, through Vaglia to the Osteria di Novoli (715 feet), where it branches to the left of the Firenzuola road, and resumes its upward course to the summit of the Futa Pass (2962 feet). A mile beyond the village of Cafaggiolo we crossed the Sieve, and after a few miles of switchbacking through cypress avenues and fields and olive orchards in a country of exquisitely soft contour and colour, with here a church or chapel,



In the Heart of the Apennines : On the road to the Futa Pass



there a castle-like farmhouse or handsome villa set in a frame of luxuriant vegetation, the business of climbing the main chain of the Apennines began in all seriousness.

We had now the road again practically to ourselves, and could gather from the interest our coming aroused at every village or homestead that this shortest route between Florence and Bologna was not much frequented by motorists. The form of greeting adopted by the children and by a good many of the grown-ups in this frontier district between Tuscany and Emilia is a peculiar forward thrust of the arms followed by a rapid closing and opening of hands, just as one would do in trying to get rid of a cramp in the hand. Nearly the whole land on the way to the Futa Pass between Monte Citerna and Monte Gazarro and the lower slopes of the Sasso di Castro beyond the pass, seems to be divided between two owners, both of whom are possessors of a proud historic name. Almost everywhere in Central Italy the hedges and dividing walls along the roadside bear tablets or signposts with the names of the landowner. On this run I saw along a distance of at least twenty-five miles no other inscriptions than "Bandita Corsini" and "Bandita Torrigiani."

With every turn of the road, as we approached the summit of the pass, the grand panorama of grey, rugged mountains and smiling valleys spread out in ever-widening circles, new summits appearing on the horizon, and the lower hills flattening out below us and assuming the aspect of a vast map that conveys

but the vaguest idea, by means of shading, of the varying altitudes. The olive plantations now looked like grey patches with equidistant darker dots marking out a series of geometrical figures. The chestnut-covered slopes became mere patches of darker green painted in with a broad, fully-charged brush; the rivers, little lines of silver glittering brightly through the prevailing warm tones; the cypresses, little pointed black spikes, generally in two rows leading to some building marked by a crisp high light; the mountains in the further distance, transparent washes of every shade from blue to purple. And over it all hung like a veil the creamy warm atmosphere of the Tuscan hills, investing the scene with that incomparable sad loveliness which lingers, unforgettable, in the memory of those who have once been under its spell. Never before had I realised to what prodigious extent the art of that wondrous land has been influenced by these surroundings, which awaken a consciousness of infinity far more powerful than the sense of the infinite evoked by the snow-capped giants of the Alps or by the limitless sea. One can feel better than explain in words the mysterious connection between the emotional effect of that land and the breadth, the spaciousness, the fullness of form, the sense of style, that permeate the art of Central Italy, whether it be pictorial, sculptural, or architectural: it was bound to thrust aside all that is cramped and angular in Gothic form.

In the midst of the mountains, in a dip between the Futa Pass and the terrible desolation of the barren,



rock-strewn Raticosa Pass (3178 feet), not far from the volcanic region of Pietramala, where a subterranean fire sends forth blue flames that, I understand, can be clearly seen after sunset, nestles like an oasis in the desert the pretty village of Covigliajo, with its fresh gardens and avenue of chestnut trees and well-furnished, comfortable hotel, of which we availed ourselves for a welcome short break of the journey. Covigliajo, like Vallombrosa and other similarly isolated retreats, is a favourite summer resort of the Florentines—a very different kind of *villeggiatura* from the noisy, overcrowded mountain resorts patronised by the Genoese during the summer. But just then the whole place bore a mournful end-of-the-season air. The vast hotel was so deserted that the echo of our footsteps reverberated through the empty rooms, through which we had to search for a member of the severely reduced staff. The duration of the season at Covigliajo must be decreed by fashion and not by common-sense, or the hotel could not at a time which seemed ideal for a prolonged stay have borne so striking a resemblance to the Sleeping Beauty's palace.

Having replenished our supply of water for the steam generator, we set out for our last climb in the Apennines, the Raticosa Pass, to which the road leads by a series of hair-pin corners following each other in rapid succession, between M. Oggioli on the left and M. Canda on the right. After a descent of 500 feet in a little over a mile, we crossed into Emilia at Filigara. For about six miles the road continues through the magnificently situated town of Monghidoro and other

picturesque villages, on a kind of high plateau with slight undulations. The country between the summit and Lojano, and most of the way down to Pianora, has no longer the mild and smiling aspect of the southern slopes towards the Mugello, but a sterner and far more rugged character. Presumably owing to their exposure to the north wind, even the lower mountains on the Bologna side are singularly barren and rocky, like vast quarries where not even a few tufts of grass can find sustenance. Between Lojano and Livergnano the road is not only excessively twisty, but of a very uneven surface. It follows every accidental slight rise of the ground instead of cutting through it, so that it consists of a vast succession of humps, sloping now to the right, now to the left. But as we found a small army of surveyors at work, measuring and marking out their survey with little sticks and flags, I gathered that the government had taken in hand the task of reconstructing this road to make it more suitable for motor traffic.

Beyond Livergnano our progress was considerably impeded by a steady stream of carts, horses, oxen, and strikingly well-nourished and jovial farmers and villagers returning from some market or fair. Unfortunately the troops of cattle took so much room that more than once Ryder was compelled to take the extreme edge of the road and to run over a few heaps of sharp flints. And thus it was not long before another puncture was added to our already appalling list. The repair on this shadeless, fly-infested, scorchingly hot road, in the dust whirled up



“A steady stream of Carts, Horses and Oxen”



“Well-nourished farmers returning from the Fair”



by the trailing hoofs of the passing cattle, was one of the most annoying experiences on our entire journey—but fortunately the last of its kind, for henceforth, until the very last day, the tyres were considerate enough to take to bursting or deflating just as we drew up at hotels where we intended to stop for luncheon or for the night.

Not quite, though. For the next puncture occurred in the extreme outskirts of Bologna at the entrance to the shady, gravelled garden of an *osteria* which bore upon its wall the very un-Italian inscription “Spiessbräu.” A modest enough place, but an *al fresco* meal under the dense foliage of a chestnut tree—however simple the fare—was voted preferable to another half-hour’s waiting on the dusty road and a belated feast at the Hotel Brun. We had no cause to regret the decision. The antipasti, veal cutlets, salad, roast chicken, fruit and cheese made a meal that could not have been surpassed by the ingenious concoctions of the *chef* at the palatial hotel—palatial, in this case, in a literal sense, since the Grand Hotel Brun actually occupies the stately Palazzo Malvasia.

Ever since we had crossed into Emilia, and to an increasing extent as we approached the capital, we had been struck by such unmistakable outward signs of prosperity and good living, as corporeal rotundity, neat dress, and a general stamp of contentment in the facial expression of the people. If all Bolognese do themselves as well as the party of five men, who were the only other guests in this Italian version of a German beer-garden, their tendency towards *embon-*

*point* and their joviality need no further explanation. I have watched German students at their "Kommers" or drinking-bouts, but never have I seen a battery of bottles demolished with such speed and relish and in a spirit of such good-natured conviviality.

By the time we arrived at the hotel in the Via Ugo Bassi, we had gained a fair knowledge of the architectural character of Bologna, the beautiful city of arcaded streets. We had even seen the earliest type of these arcades, which have been a tradition of Bologna ever since the Middle Ages, before wood was replaced by stone as building material. For the Palazzo Isolani, which we passed as we slowly threaded our way through the narrow streets to the hotel, still retains the wooden columns which support the projecting superstructure, the lower storeys being set back for shade in summer and protection from heavy snowfall in winter. We passed the absurd leaning towers of the Asinelli and Garisenda families, that have stood for eight centuries bowing to each other, and wondered at the coincidence which connected the name of the Asinelli family with so asinine a performance, for, unlike the leaning tower of Pisa, these two structures in all probability do not owe their inclination to the sinking of the foundations, but were deliberately planned to defy the rules of architectural common-sense. And we saw the great Palazzo Comunale, and Gian Bologna's glorious bronze Fountain of Neptune, surely the most perfect work of the kind created during the later days of the Renaissance—how playful and lively in the movement of the

figures and the rhythm of the lines, and yet at the same time how noble in proportion and dominated by that powerful figure of Neptune, who seems to control and check the exuberance of the amorini and dolphins and water-nymphs.

The palatial splendour of the Hotel Brun was a little overwhelming after the homeliness of the many old-fashioned inns to which chance had led us. Planned with lavish disregard of the value of space, the building encloses a large court, part of which has been transformed into a garage, so that for the first time since many a long day we slept under the same roof as the Cricket. Having despatched Ryder with a hotel servant to a motor repair-shop close by to give orders about the vulcanising and replacing of the air-tubes, we set out for a round of the churches, which in Bologna far exceed in interest anything that can be seen at the museums.

First to S. Petronio, the gaunt unfinished brick edifice, which, even in its present gigantic dimensions, occupies only a third of the area intended to be enclosed by what was to be the largest church in Christendom. The relief carvings by Jacopo della Quercia on the pilasters and architrave of the central doorway, executed in a kind of limestone too soft to resist the effects of age and inclement weather, are even in their present half-obliterated condition one of the most astounding achievements of the early Renaissance, unrivalled, indeed, as regards the superb rendering of muscular action by anything that was subsequently done until the time of Michelangelo, who

himself had studied these reliefs at Bologna and was profoundly influenced by them. The interior, like most of the Gothic church interiors of Italy, has a certain heaviness and clumsiness of proportion which produces an effect quite incommensurate with the enormous scale of the building. It has nothing of the loftiness of the northern cathedrals, nothing of their sublime grandeur, and of what might almost be called their spirituality. This is the more remarkable as here for once the Gothic principles of construction are not violated, the pure Gothic forms not adulterated with classic reminiscences. But there are few churches in Italy that can boast finer examples of stained glass—which is accounted for by the German nationality of their maker, Jacob of Ulm, for Italy never excelled in this glorious craft. Of fine altar-pieces by Cossa and other Bolognese masters, and important works of sculpture, there is no lack in the chapels, but none of them produced the thrill of delight which every person susceptible to the emotional appeal of art must inevitably experience at first sight of Jacopo della Quercia's half-decayed reliefs in the porch.

We next drove to the extraordinary and confusing cluster of seven churches, cloisters, and crypts, built and rebuilt, patched and altered, upon probably still older foundations between the tenth and seventeenth centuries, which are known by the name of S. Stefano, the most recent of the seven churches. For the mere amateur it is next to impossible to disentangle this architectural Gordian knot, and the professional member of our party was too deeply absorbed in



watching the movements of two strikingly handsome and smartly-attired French ladies, who had arrived by car just as our emaciated mare drew up before the entrance, to satisfy my craving for information. Not even the supremely interesting tomb of S. Petronio in the dodecagonal Romanesque brick interior of S. Sepolcro, the earliest of the seven churches, could divert his attention from their movements—a marble tomb which serves at the same time as altar and as pulpit. For the rest this conglomeration of places of worship is remarkable for the entire absence of any sculptural decoration on the façades, although on the front of one of the churches, bricks of different colours in delicate variations are arranged to form geometrical patterns, by which unusual means a delightful effect is achieved.

On the way to S. Domenico our vetturino proved himself the true child of young Italy by stopping in front of a modern architectural abomination and inviting us to admire this Cassa di Risparmio which, together with the post office, were to him the chief artistic glory of his city. The interior of the Dominican church was a disappointment in so far as, thanks to the eighteenth-century mania for reconstruction, it has lost every trace of the Gothic character which is still retained by the west front. But there was ample compensation for this disappointment in the great marble shrine of St. Dominic, which, though not the work of Niccolo Pisano, as repeated by Baedeker in blind reliance on gossipy Vasari's blunder, is one of the most remarkable works of the sculptor's art in Italy; and in a beautiful altar-piece

by Filippino Lippi, depicting *The Marriage of St. Catherine*—a breath of Florentine grace wafted into the harsh atmosphere of the earlier and the tedious eclecticism of the later Bolognese school. The shrine of St. Dominic, the work of many hands from Niccolo's pupil, Fra Guglielmo, who carved the panels of the sarcophagus, to Niccolo dell' Arca, to whom is due the superstructure, and the youthful Michelangelo, whose hand can be traced in one of the kneeling angels, is, as may be expected, not entirely homogeneous, but its details will ever remain an inexhaustible source of delight.

Once more the driver pointed proudly at the *Cassa di Risparmio*, which we passed again as we drove to S. Francesco, an interesting thirteenth-century brick structure in the pointed style, the apse of which, flanked by two canopied Gothic tomb-monuments, we had already admired from the bedroom windows at the hotel. It harbours yet another far-famed marble treasure: an exquisitely carved reredos by the brothers Massegne, reconstructed in the nineteenth century from a mass of fragments. But by then our powers of appreciation were well-nigh exhausted, and Pomponius made a firm stand against being hustled to any more churches. In sight of Giovanni's fountain in the Piazza del Nettuno, at an open-air café, we watched the life of Bologna, the promenade at the hour before sunset, without which the Italian town-dweller would think his day a blank, and enjoyed our well-deserved rest until the campanile of S. Petronio reminded us that it was time to think of dinner. But

the very thought of the table d'hôte in the silence of the hotel dining-room, where voices never rise above a whisper, made us shudder. Unless Bologna belied the looks of her citizens, there could be no lack of good restaurants, and we preferred to take our chance. We found what we needed in one of the narrow main streets, the Via Rizzoli. Barbianello was the name over the door, and the place seemed to be largely frequented by officers, which is always a good sign. The restaurant was bright, and clean, and lively. We dined well and amply, choosing from the long list just what our fancy dictated. We had the round-bellied *fiasco* on the table exchanged for a wine of superior quality, accompanied by a large bottle of San Pellegrino. I have before me the bill that was presented to us at the end of the feast. It amounted—for the four of us—to the sum of 8·80 francs, or seven shillings and fourpence in English money!

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Florence . . . .	177	...	...
Pratolino . . . .	1512	12	12
Vaglia . . . . .	1115	2	14
Fork to Firenzuola .	715	10	24
Futa Pass . . . . .	2962	21	45
Covigliajo . . . . .	2857	7	52
La Casetta . . . . .	2719	1½	53½
La Mazzetta . . . . .	2962	3	56½
Pietramala . . . . .	2782	1½	58
Raticosa Pass . . . . .	3175	1½	59½
Monghidoro . . . . .	2706	7	66½
Lojano . . . . .	2316	7	73½
Pianora . . . . .	672	15½	89
Bologna . . . . .	220	16	105
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## CHAPTER XVI

### A FRAGMENT OF ART AMONG RUINS



THE chief consideration in settling the programme for the following day was the necessity of arranging our time-tables with a view to escaping from the mosquito-infested neighbourhood of Mantua in time to reach the Garda Lake before nightfall. By the shortest route we should have to cover 184 kilometres between Bologna and Salò, where we meant to pitch our tent for the night. This route would take us through Modena and Mantua. And as we had no intention to leave two cities of such commanding importance unexplored, an early start was imperative. The lazy habits we had acquired during a fortnight of leisurely runs made us look upon eight o'clock as an unreasonably early hour, but eight o'clock found us nevertheless pacing the courtyard in impotent rage at the non-arrival of the promised tyres, without which any move would have been sheer foolhardiness. I telephoned to the shop in the Via Saffi, and was assured that the parcel would be delivered in five minutes. The five minutes grew to fifteen. I sent messenger after messenger, and finally went down myself to give vent to my annoyance in

the best Italian I could muster, but was speedily disarmed by the cordial approval with which the owner of the shop accepted my abuse on behalf of the lad whom he had sent, oh, ever so long ago! to the garage. There was more telephoning, more apologising, and finally the culprit arrived about half-past nine o'clock with two Michelin tubes and with the bland smile of complete innocence. The bill mounted to 126 francs for the pair, whereas in Florence the price had been nearly 25 per cent. higher.

The delay was not as serious as it would have been on any of the earlier stages of the journey through Italy, for there was nothing to impede our speed between Bologna and Modena—not the vestige of a hill, no tortuous streets through towns and villages, not a bend in the wide and excellent, though very dusty, road for over twenty miles from the moment we left the hotel. Indeed, this remark would almost apply to the entire length of the grand Via Emilia, which runs practically without deviation for 268 kilometres from Rimini to Piacenza. Straight as an arrow, without any need to reduce our speed in town or village, we went at an even forty miles an hour through Panigale, Anzola, and Castelfranco dell' Emilia, through featureless, prosperous, agricultural land. The straight line is only broken once, where the road makes a slight detour in three sharp angles to avoid the bed of the river Panaro. With the departure from the straight and a few cross-roads near S. Ambrogio came the necessity of ascertaining the right road. A dog-cart approached with four well-

dressed, corpulent men, whom I gathered to be Modenese citizens on an outing. Ryder slowed down.

"Modena?" I shouted to the passing cart, which had also reduced its speed.

Up jumped the four men with irresistibly comical politeness; off flew four bowler hats; and four voices exclaimed in chorus: "Si, Signore, Modena! sempre diritto!"

"Straight ahead!" I knew what this meant—and I was not mistaken, for we had scarcely passed the Panaro Bridge, flanked, like most of the bridges in this district, by two towers at each end, when straight before us was a ditch and a hedge. Fortunately there was no doubt as to the direction. We turned off to the right, in which direction the straight line extended again as far as eyes could reach, and within ten minutes we were among the villas and gardens of the suburbs of clean, prosperous Modena.

The slender, pointed tower of the Ghirlandina, the most graceful campanile in northern Italy, rose before us as an unmistakable landmark to show that we had only to follow the Via Emilia to get to the cathedral, which was our immediate objective; and before long we arrived at the Piazza Torre, where we left Ryder and the Cricket surrounded by the usual admiring throng, and made for the entrance to the cathedral on the opposite side of the building in the Piazza Grande. Built in the earliest years of the twelfth century, this cathedral, although of comparatively modest dimensions, is unquestionably the most impressive and on the whole the most pleasing of all



Porch of Modena Cathedral



The Cathedral, Modena





Lombard-Romanesque churches. What it is exactly that constitutes its incomparable charm is somewhat difficult to explain. It is partly the combination of elegance and simplicity of the double arcading under the tiled roof of the aisle, with its exquisite play of light and shade ; the perfect proportions of the porch, which is carried by two slender columns resting on the backs of couchant porphyry lions, and surmounted by a recessed loggia ; partly the lucid clearness and pure logic of the articulation, every member of which exactly corresponds with, and explains, the structure of the interior ; and above all the glorious, soft tones of the marble shell, of roseate hue on three sides, and warm, greyish-white on the west front, which contrast beautifully with the stronger note of the red-tiled roofs of aisles and nave. Seen through the tall arches of the Palazzo Comunale on the other side of the piazza, the whole vast area of which was then filled by the tents and booths and gaily-coloured canvas umbrellas of a market, the south front, with all its shallow buttresses, pilasters, gables, arcades, and other rhythmically repeated projections throwing deep shadows on the flat surface which shimmered softly in the strong sunlight, completed a picture of indescribable beauty and animation.

Dan and I were busy with our cameras, although our best efforts were rendered fruitless by the eagerness of the youthful Modenese to interpose themselves between the lens and the view ; whilst Belle and Pomponius occupied themselves more profitably with examining the reliefs on the façade, where two

daring eleventh-century stone-carvers, in depicting Old Testament scenes, from the Creation to Noah, broke away from the Byzantine imagery of their time and attempted to tell their story with touchingly naïve clumsiness of expression—the first modest move in the direction of the revival which was triumphantly initiated by Niccolo Pisano.

High Mass was being celebrated when I entered the cathedral, and the swelling sound of the organ seemed to lift in some mysterious way the groined vaulting of the roof, and add to the sense of spaciousness in regard to which the interior of Modena Cathedral far surpasses many an Italian church of far larger dimensions. The whole effect was so solemn, and the congregation so genuinely devout, that I lost all inclination to play the part of the inquisitive sightseer, and stealthily slipped the incriminating guide-book into my overcoat pocket. Nor did I have cause to regret the resulting lack of positive information, as Modena is distinctly one of the churches which invite one to accept gratefully the beauty of the ensemble made up of noble proportions, an unusually fine play of light, fragments of Romanesque reliefs on the walls, a few early frescoes and late monuments, without troubling about the personality of those who contributed towards the fabric. Indeed, the most interesting artistic features of the building belong to a period in which the personality of the craftsman was kept rather in the background, and although the names of Nicolaus and Wiligelmus appear on the reliefs of the façade, the sound of these names conveys

no particular meaning. Peculiar dignity is given to the choir which, supported in front by slender columns in the bases of which the customary device of the couchant beast is varied by the interpolation of a prostrate knight under, and a crouching grotesque figure above, the animal, is raised high above the crypt, which can be clearly seen through the openings between the columns.

At the foot of the Campanile I found the car besieged by a swarm of children and loafers. It was obliterated from view by their dense phalanx, and I had some difficulty to push my way through. Belle was there, and Pomponius, both anxious to escape from the pressing crowd; but Dan was still somewhere with his camera, and I was sent in search. By the time I had collected him, Pomponius had gone to buy some picture post-cards. He returned whilst I was trying to find him, and I had to be hunted down in turn. At last we were complete, and managed to break away from the importunate gathering of natives, to follow the Via Emilia for another two miles to Madonnina, where the road to Mantua branches off to the right. Another car had just taken the same turning, and had left behind a trail of dust which remained hanging in the air so that we could not escape it, although for a mile or so we went at snail's pace. We thanked our lucky star when, after crossing the "tower bridge" over the Secchia, our pace-maker swung off towards Campogalliano and left us in undisturbed possession of the main road.

Beyond an occasional inn or village there was

nothing to break the monotony of the ten miles to Carpi, and, indeed, of the next twenty miles to S. Benedetto Po. Everywhere the vast green plain, intersected by canals and cut into squares by rows of mulberry trees with vine garlands, with never an inch left uncultivated. But the magnificence of Carpi, with its mighty walls and towers, with the lordly palace of the Pio family, conceived on a scale befitting royal rank rather than the limited power of a race of petty rulers ; its fine Renaissance cathedral, and colonnaded piazza—the magnificence of Carpi burst upon our astounded eyes altogether unexpectedly : one of those delightful surprises which meet the road-traveller in every out-of-the-way corner of Italy. Who were those Pio lords who created this model city which bears the stamp of their power and cultured taste ? And how did they manage to hold their own in the open plain, surrounded by principalities of far greater weight, whose rulers were ever eager for aggrandisement ?

With lunch-time approaching, Mantua thirty-four miles off, the possibility of renewed tyre troubles, and the threat of a night with the mosquitoes from the Mincio swamps, I turned a deaf ear to Pomponius's entreaties to devote a precious half-hour to Carpi. He flung a "hustling journalist !" at me, and I tried to comfort his outraged feelings with the thought that it is better to leave a feast before you are sated, and that the lightning vision of Carpi, with so much splendour left to the imagination, would be a more enjoyable recollection than the inevitable discovery of its faults on closer acquaintance.



"A truly alarming, rumbling pontoon-bridge"



Mantua across the Lake



Between Carpi and Moglia, and again between Zovo and S. Benedetto Po, a stretch of the highway was under repair, which signified in each case a run of a hundred yards or so over sharp flints. The tyres behaved bravely—for the time being. Two miles from S. Benedetto we had to cross the wide bed of the river Po by a truly alarming, rumbling pontoon-bridge, the planks of which wobbled and creaked and swayed under the Cricket's weight, in a manner that justified the worst fears. A few miles further we saw to the right of our road the houses of Pietole, Virgil's reputed birthplace, and after the next bend of the road, the towers and cupolas of Mantua. We entered the town by the Porta Cerese, leaving the famous Palazzo del Tè on the left, and made by some tortuous streets for the Corso Umberto in the heart of the city. Just as we stopped in the pretty garden courtyard of the Aquila d'Oro, one of the back tyres began to go down. Ryder was radiant at his good luck. For the first time he could effect his repairs in comfort—and he had something to occupy his time after lunch, whilst we were “doing Mantua.”

I cannot imagine what sort of impression Mantua would produce on any one who approaches it with a perfectly unsophisticated mind, taking the town just as it is and without relation to its past. It has many fine buildings, from the fortress-palaces of the Middle Ages to the baroque edifices erected during the Austrian occupation; it has nothing of the melancholy sleepiness of some of the old Tuscan and Umbrian cities, which seem to spend their life in

dreaming of their days of splendour. It is quite prosperous and lively in its provincial way. The sun, too, on that September day did his best to invest Mantua with colour and warmth. And yet it struck us as the saddest and most depressing of all decayed places that we had visited. Perhaps we were wrong. Perhaps we should not have begun with the Castello di Corte, with its mute, yet eloquent, story of spoliation and destruction, the echoes of which clung to us wherever we subsequently went in Mantua. Yet it was this earliest residence of the Gonzagas that had chiefly attracted us to the lake-enclosed fortress town, once the seat of a court as resplendent and cultured as that of Urbino, a home of all the arts and letters, which surely never found a keener patron than Isabella d'Este, the ideal woman of the Italian Renaissance.

From the outside, the Castello di Corte, with its mighty, almost windowless walls, machicolated square towers, and deep moat, is a grim fortress rather than a palace; and this character is accentuated by the exposed position facing the protective lake and the long bridge of S. Giorgio, one of the five approaches to the water and marsh-girt town. The palace of Urbino stands within the town, though towering above it. Any approaching enemy would have to fight at the town-gates and in the streets, before they could approach the castle. At Mantua the war-like castle would have to be stormed first, and the town would then be at the mercy of the intruder. To minimise the danger of invasion, the town was rendered



well-nigh impregnable as far back as the twelfth century by the digging out of the enormous basins of the Laghi Superiore, di Mezzo, and Inferiore, which must have constituted one of the greatest engineering feats of the Middle Ages.

Nothing about the outside of the mighty Castello suggests the utter ruin and desolation of the interior. With the exception of the portion of the buildings where the archives are now kept, the halls and corridors and apartments, once hung with precious tapestries and filled with the marvels of art and craftsmanship, are stripped bare, the very shell being allowed to crumble away and fall to pieces. Not a vestige left of former splendour—not a carved door-post or window-embrasure, not an enriched fireplace or fragment of panelling. Nothing but whitewash and crumbling mortar—nothing, until you are reverentially ushered into the *Camera degli Sposi*, where the hand of the sacrilegious despoiler was stayed by the mighty genius of the great Mantegna.

Not that the frescoed walls of this apartment are anything but a shadow of their former glory. Neglect has done much towards obliterating them, and the attention paid to them by a not too competent restorer does not add to the delight that is caused by such portions of Mantegna's work as have remained comparatively immune.

The glorification of Lodovico Gonzaga and his family was the master's object in the decoration of this room, which, completed, as shown by the inscription on a tablet borne by butterfly-winged cupids, in

1473, was apparently the first comprehensive scheme of a fresco series of entirely secular character in Italian art. Two walls of the room are completely ruined. The others, much injured and repainted, show Lodovico and his spouse, his family and his court, in all their dignity and pride, resplendent in sumptuous array, serious, and conscious of their power and responsibility. Each individual figure is a monumental conception. The pride of race and rank is expressed in every attitude, not excepting the children, and particularly Gianfrancesco, the future husband of Isabella. But Mantegna, the student of classic antiquity, expressed this pride in a statuesque bearing as far removed as could be from the mixture of swagger and dandyism with which the Umbrian masters of the late quattrocento invested their worldly contemporaries.

There is enough left of the original colour to indicate the sumptuousness of Mantegna's scheme, in which gold, deep crimson, and rich green were the chief notes, although the beholder's imagination has to be pressed into service. What can be seen without such help is the masterly arrangement of light and shade in accordance with the lighting of the room, so that the shadows of the picture seem to be the result of the light flooding in through the windows of the apartment, except in the case of the ceiling which, a real *tour de force* in daring foreshortening, shows a glimpse of open sky seen through the circle of a parapet, over which the heads of four women are seen peeping into the apartment, whilst winged putti are

climbing and playing about the parapet. Here, of course, it was the master's intention to create the illusion of light streaming down from the sky. The realisation of this effect is as perfect as the perspective illusion; and the whole conception has touches of humour and dainty charm which are surprising with an artist as severely monumental as was Mantegna. His love of classic forms and ornamental motives found full play in the amazingly elaborate grisaille decoration of the spandrels.

The more we looked at the beautiful ruin, the more we realised how much of it is irretrievably lost, how little of it left, the more we were filled with sadness. One injured fragment of wall decoration left as sole witness to the full, proud life recorded in this fragment! We bore a grudge to modern Mantua's callousness in not being in eternal sackcloth and ashes. What we had seen was so real—and so grand—that we had no inclination to go through the florid apartments of the later additions to the palace. What could Giulio Romano and the Raphaelites and Primaticcio, seen through their restorers, have to say to us after that noble ruin of the Camera degli Sposi? Moreover, Baedeker, and a little historical knowledge, spoke of little but further spoliation: the Mantegna cartoons—at Hampton Court; the Gonzaga family's collection of pictures—bought by Charles I. and after his death scattered to the winds; Raphael's tapestry—"now in Vienna"; in the *Stanze dell' Imperatore*—painted "copies of the tapestry formerly here"; other rooms dismantled, decayed, ruined! To be sure,

Napoleon had slept in one of the rooms—and left some of his empire furniture behind. But of that we had seen enough and to spare at Compiègne.

We walked back slowly and stopped before the hideous baroque façade with which Austrian dominion has provided the often rebuilt cathedral of S. Pietro. Could anything worth seeing be found within that shell? We passed on, noting on our way the incongruity of the sordid utilitarianism of all that is modern in Mantua with the picturesqueness and nobility of form of all that has remained of the past. We passed through the main arteries of Mantuan life, but in the shop windows there was not an object that did not breathe commercialism and strict utility. Food—plenty of food; cheap clothes, kitchen utensils, boots—everything that appertains to the necessities of life, and nothing that could add a touch of beauty to it. Even the “ornaments” assumed the appearance of ugly necessities, which people would buy, not to decorate their homes, but merely to fill voids. The people were in complete harmony with everything else. They looked just like people whose aspirations would not extend beyond the satisfaction of such needs as could be met by the contents of these uninviting stores. And the sun shone down upon it all with cruel brightness, upon rosy brick-walls and brown tiled roofs, upon marble and vari-coloured plaster, spreading over streets and squares a lovely pattern of colours and light and shade, and accentuating the dull greyness of modern Mantuan life.

Although not in an appreciative mood, we could



A Street in Mantua



not but admire the beautiful classic proportions of Alberti's façade to S. Andrea, with its majestic recessed portico, and the deep loggia surmounting the pediment, an architectural masterpiece, in spite of the strange effect produced by the wall of the nave over-towering the façade, which thus appears as a mere piece of applied decoration. The interior, adorned with a coffered barrel-vault, and with frescoes by Giulio Romano and his pupils, is impressive and opulent, although no amount of coloured ornament can ever counteract the coldness of this typical late Renaissance design. In one of the chapels on the left stands the tomb of Mantegna, with the master's determined features caught with convincing realism in a bronze bust of doubtful authorship, among the faded frescoes painted on the walls of the chapel by the master's pupils and by his son Francesco.

We left Mantua by the Porta Molino, which guards the entrance to the supremely interesting Ponte dei Molini, a covered bridge some 1400 feet in length, which was first built in the thirteenth century to fulfil the functions of a bridge and a weir, through the twelve openings of which the water from the upper lake was to flow down to the middle lake, and at the same time to drive the wheels of the mills built on the bridge. To judge from the smell of flour streaming out of the doors all along the covered passage, the mills are still running to this day. The far side of the bridge, which has undergone certain changes in the course of the centuries, is still flanked by mediæval towers, and

further along the road I noticed considerable remains of fortified buildings.

The country north of Mantua, to Marmirolo and Goito on the Brescia road, varied in no way from the intensely cultivated stretch of the plain between Modena and Mantua. But beyond Goito we beheld the first outposts of the Alps, the first gentle billows of the ground, although the road continued for another twenty miles on the same dead level below the hills, upon the crests of which we could see the little towns of Volta, Cavriana, and Solferino, with the hazy blue snow-covered mountains of Tyrol in the far, far distance. At Castiglione, where we branched northwards from the Brescia road, we came to close quarters with the hills, although we did not ascend the cypress-crested ridge from which castle and church dominate the town. A mile or so further, at a sharp turn of the road, we were suddenly confronted by a cart with an enormous wine barrel left with its strong white horse unattended in the very middle of the road, the carter having adjourned to an *osteria* a few yards off. Our loud tooting and horn-blowing quickly attracted his attention, but, aided by the sight of the car, also caused his mare to take fright. The man's struggle with the kicking and rearing beast lasted fully ten minutes, and ended in the unharnessing of the terrified animal, which had to be led into an adjoining field before we could resume our journey towards Lonato.

At Lonato, at last, we left the Lombard plain and turned eastwards into the hills, which for another two miles shut the Garda Lake out from our view. Then





“The unharassing of the terrified animal”



suddenly the vast blue expanse of the grandest and most varied of all Italian lakes lay before us, with Desenzano at our feet, and the narrow tongue terminating in Sermione and the Scaligeri Castle jutting out beyond like a gigantic pier. Further away still, the white-headed giants of the Alps, no longer in ethereal transparency of colour, but in definite, clear contours, range upon range.

We did not stop at half-German Desenzano, as the afternoon was drawing to a close, and we meant to reach Salò on the Riviera di Gardone before dark. First within sight of, then close to, the western banks of the lovely lake, we steered northwards, until the road turned inland again to cut off a broad promontory. In the closeness of the end of day, among the vineyards and orchards bordering the wood, we suffered considerable inconvenience from little flies and other winged insects that were constantly hitting our faces like hail-stones, and forced us to keep our lips tightly closed. Salò and the long line of white villas, hotels, and villages along the Riviera di Gardone, with their backing of olives, cedars, lemon and orange-trees, and sub-tropical gardens, were already in the deep shadow of the hills beyond which the sun was disappearing, as we began the steep descent along the winding road towards the bay of Salò.

The southern portion of the town, through which we had to pass on our way to hotel-land, was poor and dirty enough. And in the poorest and dirtiest quarter our run came to an end through yet another puncture. To be surrounded by a throng of bare-

foot, evil-smelling ragamuffins was a matter of but a few seconds. As my companions preferred arriving at the Hotel Salò ingloriously as luggageless tramps to waiting in such company, I was left alone with Ryder. Meanwhile darkness had set in. In the light of an oil-lamp, with scarcely enough room to move his arms, Ryder set to work, my help being confined to an occasional sortie and war-dance on the bare toes of the investing force. The irritation of the skin, which made itself felt after a few minutes in such company, made me think of the dreaded mosquitoes. I inquired whether Salò was free at least from that plague.

At first no one seemed to understand me. I tried "sanzare," "mosquitoes," "stechmücken." There followed some shrugging of shoulders and whispering, then loud giggling among the female part of the audience, and finally a bright, intelligent youth held up three eloquent fingers and answered my question: "Si Signore, tre—drei!"

I felt half inclined to become facetious and to ask for the names of the three mosquitoes of Salò, when it struck me that the word might have another local significance which might account for the strange reply, and which might lead to an unwelcome misinterpretation of my inquisitiveness. I was glad that the darkness concealed my blushes, and gladder still when we were able to make our escape to the civilised part of what I soon discovered to be an undiluted German health resort.

I found my companions in the dining-room in the



Castiglione



Lonato



very best of spirits and laughing heartily at the reply made by the *chef de réception* to *their* inquiry as to whether there were any mosquitoes. "Oh no!" he had reassured them—"only leetle ones!"

## ITINERARY

Place.	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Bologna . . . . .	...	...
Ponte Reno . . . . .	3	3
Borgo Panigale . . . . .	2½	5½
Anzola . . . . .	7	12½
Castelfranco dell' Emilia . . . . .	12½	25
Modena . . . . .	13	38
Carpi . . . . .	18	56
Novi di Modena . . . . .	14	70
Moglia . . . . .	5	75
S. Benedetto Po . . . . .	16	91
Bridge across Po . . . . .	3	94
Virgilio . . . . .	13	107
Mantua . . . . .	5	112
Marmirolo . . . . .	8½	120½
Goito (Mincio Bridge) . . . . .	7½	128
Castiglione . . . . .	22	150
Lonato . . . . .	8	158
Desenzano . . . . .	6	164
Salò . . . . .	20	184

With the exception of a moderate hill between Desenzano and Salò, the whole journey is practically on level ground.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THROUGH THE AUSTRIAN ALPS



AD I not known the ravishing beauty of the shores of Lake Garda from previous visits, I should have wondered why Germany should have chosen them in preference to the other Italian lakes for colonisation and annexation by peaceful conquest. On the moonless evening of our arrival inky blackness hung over the lake. The heavy atmosphere, laden with the strong scent of many flowers, held the threat of a break in the weather; and it was no vain threat. Next morning, looking out of the window, I found the entire view blotted out by a steady downpour of rain. The prospect was so hopeless that we decided not to wait, but to start out in search of the sun beyond the enclosing hills. It was a long and disheartening search—up the Chiese valley and along the strongly-fortified west bank of the Idro Lake, to the Austrian frontier at Lodrone, always uphill through the rain on a slippery, skiddy road, with the view shut out by the canvas sides of the Cape-hood, except straight ahead, and with rain beating into one's face. The quickly-disposed-of customs formalities on the Italian and Austrian sides



of the wooden bridge marking the frontier, and lunch at the poor inn of Lodrone, were the only breaks in the monotony of the journey to Tione at the junction of the roads to Trient and to Campiglio.

At Tione we ran into fair weather, and stopped to take in a supply of water and to lower the Cape-hood. Our avowed intention to go direct to Campiglio caused some surprise. We were advised not to try it: the road was narrow and steep, and our car too big and heavy. But we made light of the warning. The Cricket had never failed us yet in the mountains, and could surely do what other cars had done before. We started. Everything went without a hitch until we reached Pinzolo (2525 feet), where the business of climbing began in all seriousness. According to all available information the gradient never exceeds one in ten. But one in ten on a succession of the most awkward and dangerous hair-pin corners with an outward slope really meant about one in five, because, in order to negotiate these bends, it was necessary to turn so sharply around the inside edge that the gradient became more than doubled. Moreover, prolonged rain had practically dissolved the surface of the road, which had become appallingly soft and muddy. There was scarcely a bend which did not force us to back several times to allow the car to swing round. And to lighten the weight of the car, the three male passengers had to walk the best part of the steep climb.

Meanwhile it was rapidly getting dark; we were rising into the realm of the clouds, and the road

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became so narrow that there was scarcely enough room for the passing of vehicles and troops of mountain cattle. More than once we had to pull up sharp in the white mist before some unexpected obstruction that suddenly faced the car, although the melodious tinkling of the cow-bells generally warned us of the approach of cattle. It was only in the short intervals between passing from one cloud into the next, that the last lingering rays of daylight revealed the majesty of the gigantic pine-trees and of the eternal mountains. Progress was naturally very slow, and we had to light our inadequate lamps, long before the cheering electric lights of the great hotel of Madonna di Campiglio, at one time a monastic establishment in the grand isolation of the mountains, appeared before our eyes and made an end to the pleasurable excitement and vague fears engendered by a mountain journey through night and mist.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Salò . . . . .	246	...	...
Tormini . . . . .	745	4	4
Vobarno . . . . .	810	5½	9½
Barghe . . . . .	958	10½	20
Lavenone . . . . .	1263	9½	29½
Rocca d'Anfo . . . .	1345	8	37½
Ponte Caffaro (Custom House) . . . . .	1250	7½	45
Lodrone (Custom House) . . . . .	1250	½	45½

ITINERARY—(continued)

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Fork to Riva . . . . .	1299	4½	50
Tione . . . . .	1853	24½	74½
Pelugo . . . . .	2165	7½	82
Strembo . . . . .	2230	4½	86½
Pinzolo . . . . .	2525	5	91½
S. Antonio . . . . .	3700	6½	98
Madonna di Cam- piglio . . . . .	4970	8½	106½

The summer season was at an end at Madonna di Campiglio, and only a few belated visitors lingered on until the end of the month, when this most attractive of all Austrian Alpine resorts would be closed, to be opened again in December for the winter sports season. But we were not allowed to experience that sense of sadness and loneliness that hangs about the deserted public rooms of such vast hotels, when the gay throng of visitors has departed. No sooner had the hospitable proprietor of the place recognised the name of a visitor from far-away England, who had been under his roof two or three years before, than he made it his task to devote himself to our entertainment. The luxuries provided for dinner, so remote from any basis for food-supply, and at a time of the year when there was so little demand for them, would have been surprising anywhere but in Austria, where catering has been developed into a real art. After dinner we were invited into a little salon, where our host's brother-in-law, an accomplished musician, delighted

us for an hour or two with operatic selections from Wagner to Johann Strauss, and where before long we found ourselves whirling round to the irresistible rhythm of the latest Vienna waltzes. The attention shown to us comparative strangers became almost embarrassing when, at a signal given by our host, two large trays were brought in with champagne, Russian sandwiches, and other delicacies.

The only thing of which they had run short at Madonna di Campiglio was petrol. But fortunately we had only a very short uphill run to the Campo di Carlo Magno at the summit of the pass (5413 feet), whither we were conducted after lunch next day by our host, who, with justifiable pride, showed us over the new palatial hotel which had recently been built on that superb spot, and which was to be opened for the winter sports. The run from the summit for eleven miles through the finest of all larch forests could not make an appreciable impression on our meagre petrol supply, as it was steadily downhill on a road of ideal surface and construction; and at Dimaro we hoped to replenish the nearly exhausted contents of the tank. When we found that no petrol was to be obtained at Dimaro, or at the next village, Prosson, things began to look more serious, and it was just touch and go whether or not we should be able to complete the four kilometres to Malè on practically level ground. However we just managed to run into the little town, and considered ourselves lucky that we had not been forestalled by any other tourists, since the whole store of petrol at the chemist's



A dangerous curve on the Descent from Madonna di Campiglio



amounted to 80 litres, which we immediately commandeered. The chemist was at first inclined to charge as much as 70 hellers per litre, but on discovering that we were "wholesale consumers," and on my indignant protestations, he reduced the price to 50 hellers.

I do not propose to give a full description of the ground that has been covered in so exhaustive and attractive a fashion by Mr. C. L. Freeston in his "High Roads of the Alps," that no automobilist would think of crossing the Tyrolese mountains without referring to it for guidance. We followed the left bank of the Noce to the Mostizzolo Bridge, which spans a chasm of phantastic wildness and grandeur, but instead of crossing the bridge and proceeding by the usual route via Cles and Sanzeno, we kept on the left bank of the roaring stream and made for Revò, Cloz, and Fondo, to Sarnonico, where we joined again the magnificent Mendel road. We were now in the very heart of the Tyrol, yet the country was far more Italian than the Teutonised precincts of the Garda Lake. Italian the names, the language, the types and costume of the people, the architecture of the village churches and houses, although gradually the Italian forms began to mingle with German, perhaps owing to the increasing use of timber as building material. A particularly picturesque feature in each village was the large square fountain and basin around which the female part of the population seem to spend their entire day, washing and soaping and rinsing a never-ending supply of garments and household linen.

We were soon amid the little cluster of hotels on the Mendel summit, and, after tea at the Mendelhof, stopped a few minutes on the little café terrace by the funicular railway station to watch the rapid changes of colour in the valley below and on the peaks of the Dolomites far away in the east: the *Alpenglühen* on the Rosengarten group, whose wall-like cliffs caught the last rays of the setting sun, and were glowing with the intensity of red-hot iron. Then came the long descent on a twisting road cut out of the sheer rocky side of the Penegal, into the vineyards and orchards of the happy valley of Bozen, famed for the unrivalled quality of its many varieties of luscious fruit.

It was evening when we crossed the Adige and entered the picturesque old town of Bozen, the main streets of which are strictly closed to motor traffic. At Bozen we meant to spend the night, but Bozen, shut in all round by mountains, was like an oven, even at that late hour—not a breath of air, stifling, oppressive. We dined out of doors, in the Walter Platz, at a garden restaurant, which gave us a taste of the lazy charm of Austrian life. An admirable military band played in the square; the restaurant was filled with tall, handsome officers, smartly-dressed women and men, whose requirements were administered by a little army of waitresses, chosen evidently for their good looks. Liveliness, light-hearted gaiety, and *Gemütlichkeit* everywhere. But Belle would not hear of a night in that airless, steaming cauldron, and to Pomponius's utter dismay we took to the road



again as soon as we had finished a dinner that fully justified the fame of the Austrian cuisine.

The gay lights of Bozen vanished in the distance as we rolled on slowly, with our ineffective lamps, into the unknown. We had no idea of distance, of locality, of where we should end the run; but we were going uphill, and all we cared for was the cool breeze and the prospect of a night at an altitude where the air would again be breathable. Since there were no branch roads and we had merely to follow the course of the Eisack between two mountain chains, there was no possibility of going astray. The rushing of the waters on our right mingled with the chirping of the Cricket; the higher reaches of the bare mountain walls on our left caught the rays of the rising moon with a phosphorescent, mysterious gleam, which left us in doubt as to whether it was given forth by snow or by silver-grey rock; the balmy air played around our faces, and there was always the delightful sense of possible, though not probable, danger, and of the uncertainty that lay ahead of us.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock when we arrived at Klausen. The town was fast asleep: not a soul about, not a lamp alight, not a sound to be heard. I was reluctant to frighten the peaceful burghers with a blast of my trumpet, which, when it did not altogether refuse to act, had assumed the voice of an angry, roaring lion. But it had to be done. The first blast was surprisingly effective. Heads peeped out of windows, and a door opened, showing in a square of light the not very steady figure of a

man in his picturesque, though rarely worn, national costume. The old boy had been celebrating some local event, but his head was sufficiently clear to enable him to conduct us to the Post Inn—in the Tyrol you are always safe at the “Old Post,” when there is any choice of hostelries—and to arouse the staff of that quaint, homely establishment. In a few minutes everybody was bustling around us, unloading the luggage, pushing the Cricket backwards up a little incline into a barn, the door of which was only just wide enough to let the car pass. Our jovial guide did not refuse to “take wine with us”—the excellent, rather sharp, but very drinkable wine of the country, and entertained us for an hour with local gossip, the while Pomponius busied himself with pencil and sketch-book to add to his collection of national types. Then there was much shaking of hands with our horny-handed guide, with our host, with the waitresses, with everybody in accordance with the time-honoured custom of the honest folk in that hospitable country; and we retired to our well-earned rest.

Apropos of Tyrolese wines, there are two brands that I can warmly recommend to those who find the general run of local wines too sharp and acid: the white “Terlaner” and the red “Kalterer See” are most grateful to the English palate.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Madonna di Cam- piglio . . . . .	4970	...	...
Campo di Carlo Magno . . . . .	5413	3	3
Dimaro . . . . .	2559	15½	18½
Prosson . . . . .	...	1½	20
Malè . . . . .	2418	4	24
Mostizzolo Bridge .	2066	10	34
Revò . . . . .	2375	7½	41½
Fondo . . . . .	3149	12½	54
Ronzone . . . . .	3555	3½	57½
Mendel Summit . .	4475	7½	65
S. Michele . . . . .	1365	15	80
Bozen . . . . .	876	10	90
Blumau . . . . .	1020	8	98
Atzwang . . . . .	1220	6	104
Waidbruck . . . . .	1545	7½	111½
Klausen . . . . .	1715	6½	118

Klausen was gay with flags and streamers and scented with the resinous exhalation of pine-branches used for the decoration of the streets for the reception of the Bishop of Brixen. The whole town had the homely and friendly aspect of the old-world towns of Southern Germany, without a trace of that Italian influence which has permeated the whole of Southern Tyrol. It is quite in keeping with its general character that Klausen has retained the mediæval custom of the *Nachtwächter*, the night-watchman, who, armed

with halberd and lantern, paces the main street of a night, calling out the hours in quaint doggerel verse.

We left, not without regret, to resume our northward journey on the old Roman road across the Brenner to Innsbruck. We passed through Brixen, and through the powerful fortifications of Franzensfeste, to Mühlbach, Mauls, and Sterzing. As we were discussing the advisability of pushing on towards Gossensass, whilst we were passing through the main street of Sterzing—a street so picturesque as to look more like a magnificent stage setting to the *Meistersingers* than like reality—our consultation was cut short in front of the fascinatingly old-fashioned Old Post Inn by a loud explosion which brought us to a sudden standstill. The back tyre had burst. This time the matter was serious. The outer cover had suffered so much that the mere replacing of the air-tube would not meet the case; and the “spare” was in very much the same condition. No tyres were obtainable at Sterzing, so that we were driven to enlist the assistance of a cobbler, with whose help Ryder put a leather patch on the worst part of the injured cover. Anyhow, this gave us time to lunch in comfort and to visit the Town Hall, which, among other treasures, contains a magnificent carved and painted hanging lamp-holder, shaped in the semblance of a woman, and an important series of paintings by Multscher, representing scenes from the Passion.

By the time we had done with the sights of Sterzing, the Cricket was ready to resume the climb

to Gossensass and to the summit of the Brenner (4495 feet), whence this oldest of all Alpine highways leads through a succession of charmingly situated summer resorts to the capital of the country, the lovely city of Innsbruck, which we saw from the Iselberg spreading out on both banks of the river Inn, against a background formed by a mighty, snow-capped mountain range. Providence was more kindly disposed towards us in Austria than it had been in Italy. We had scarcely dared to hope that the leather patch would hold out for a distance of thirty-two miles of mountain road; but it was not before we pulled up at the Hotel Tyrol that the invalid had a relapse and began to sink. We could now afford to make light of the trouble, for Innsbruck is one of the great centres of automobilism, and has a huge garage able to cope with every emergency. The new Michelin cover, supplied by Röthner and Wiedner, proved an excellent acquisition and remained unscathed to the end of the journey, which was only as it should be, since the charge for it—one of the seventeen items on the garage bill presented next morning—amounted to 12 guineas, or just 20 francs more than we had to pay at Perugia, although Italy is noted for the expensiveness of all motor accessories.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Klausen . . . . .	1715	...	...
Brixen . . . . .	1835	12	12
Franzensfeste . . . .	2451	8	20
Mauls . . . . .	3940	13	33
Sterzing . . . . .	3115	9	42
Gossensass . . . . .	3495	5½	47½
Brennerbad . . . . .	4390	5	52½
Brenner Summit . . .	4495	4	56½
Gries . . . . .	3806	5½	62
Matrei . . . . .	3240	11½	73½
Schönberg . . . . .	3280	6½	80
Innsbruck . . . . .	1885	15	95

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ACROSS FOUR GERMAN STATES



HE Cricket was to undergo her supreme test next morning: the climb of the redoubtable Zirlberg, which had proved a serious stumbling-block to the vast majority of the cars on the Herkomer tour in 1906. I knew this route, from previous experience, to be the worst constructed road in the Alps—as bad as Porlock and Lynton Hills in the west of England—and was looking forward to an exciting time. Fortunately it was a sunny and dry morning, so dry, indeed, that all along the straight avenue of three miles from Innsbruck to Kranebitten, and for another four miles to Zirl, we raised such a cloud of dust that the whole landscape behind us looked like a vast conflagration.

The real ascent begins immediately beyond the village of Zirl, which I had last seen in 1908 as a mass of roofless, blackened ruins left by a disastrous fire. It was now completely transformed; a clean, tidy, carefully-planned new town, with church and inns, cottages and villas, gardens and shops, had grown out of the ruins, built in the traditional picturesque style of the country, but a little artificial in its rather aggressive newness and trimness.

The climb beyond Zirl begins at a reasonable gradient through a cutting, before increasing to one in five on a straight run along the wooded slope of the mountain, with superb views back into the Inn Valley on the right and the castle of Fragenstein towering on a hill on the left. It was stiff work for the engine, which soon changed its melodious chirp into a prolonged groan. The groan became a thundering noise when, after a nasty curve with an outward slope, the gradient increased to one in four, and finally to twenty-seven in one hundred. The mountains gave back the echo of the Cricket's complaint, but there was never a moment's hesitation, and we reached Seefeld at the height of the pass (3870 feet) without the slightest misadventure.

The views all along and on the high plateau of Seefeld disclosed superb glimpses, first of the snow-clad Sellrain and Stubai ranges, and then of the picturesque little Wildsee and the rugged Karwendel and Wetterstein mountains. An amusing feature in this frontier district are the amusing and witty inscriptions and verses over the doors of the village inns, by which wayfarers are invited to partake of such cheer as kitchen and cellar may provide. The rapid transit by car did not give me time to record these specimens of peasant humour, but one of the doggerel verses was sufficiently original to have clung to my memory :—

Alkohol ist der Menschen groesster Feind.  
Aber in der Bibel steht's geschrieben :  
Deine Feinde sollst du lieben !



(Alcohol is man's greatest enemy. But in Scripture it is writ : Thou shalt love thine enemies !)

From Seefeld we descended through magnificent pine-woods to the little frontier town of Scharnitz, the Austrian customs station, where the formalities of registering the correct exit of the Cricket did not delay us more than five minutes. At Mittenwald, however, the German custom-house was left in charge of a subordinate without power to do the needful, his chief having adjourned to the Post Inn to spend his Sunday morning in convivial company. We had to hunt him out of the bar-parlour, and on the way back to the custom-house witnessed the amusing spectacle of the local fire brigade, with shining brass helmets and buttons, marching out in charge of the pump and accompanied by a brass band, to spend a really pleasant Sunday over their drill. The German loves his uniform and his discipline ; and when there is no garrison, the fire brigade has to supply something approaching a military display, practically every able-bodied citizen being an active member of that body.

The Bavarian douanier bore us no ill-will for having interfered with his Sunday amusement, and went without grumbling through the tedious routine of registration, inspection, cross-examination, and so forth, prescribed by the law of the land. Everything being in order, we were dismissed, and threaded our way through the windings of the crowded street, taking the turning to the left at the first road-fork, towards Partenkirchen. A range of hills had to be crossed, from the height of which, and all down the serpentine

curves of the other side we enjoyed a splendid view of the Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain.

We lunched at Partenkirchen, at the "Stern," and then turned away from the Alps, following the downward course of the Loisach to Oberau and Murnau. The villages near Murnau were almost deserted, all the peasantry having proceeded "to town," where there was a *Jahrmarkt*, or fair, and where, for the first time on our whole journey, our considerate slowing down to walking-pace was rewarded by insulting shouts and stone-throwing. Between Murnau and Weilheim we had another example of German amiability. It had begun to rain, and a cyclist who held the middle of the road in front of us had pulled the hood of his waterproof coat over his ears, so that he could not hear our combined shouting and tooting. Ryder took his first chance to pass him, but the man was so startled by the sudden appearance of the car that he nearly fell off his machine. Nearly only—but great was his wrath. "Damischer Hund!" was the mildest of the flattering terms with which he bombarded us. He caught us up again, when we stopped a few minutes later at a roadside inn to let down the hood, and Dan and I had it out with him in the *Wirtstube* to the infinite delight of the assembled Sunday afternoon revellers. It was a drawn battle, but we had the satisfactory conviction that we were not left in his debt.

At Weilheim—another fair, but this time without native hostility. The populace was fortunately too keenly interested in the antics of two female acrobats

in black and yellow tights on a trapeze in the middle of the market-place to take much notice of us. Just as we were leaving the town, we were stopped by the shrieks and gesticulations of a portly dame, who issued from one of the houses and ran after us. I wondered of what breach of the law we were guilty. "Pflasterzoll!"—pavement tax—exclaimed the woman, when she had regained her breath. I apologised and explained our complete ignorance of this local custom. Her provincial mind could not grasp such amazing stupidity. "Where on earth do you come from, that you should not know?" she asked incredulously, as she pocketed her nickels and handed me the receipt.

We were now on the beautifully-kept high-road to Munich. Beyond Wilzhofen we unfortunately missed the slightly longer road, which, branching off to the right, leads straight to and along the banks of the Starnberg Lake, the shore of which we thus only reached at the extreme northern point at Starnberg. A few miles further, at Wangen, we entered the immense Forstenrieder Park, through which we had a magnificent straight run of about six miles at the utmost speed of which the willing Cricket was capable. At Laim we struck the high-road from Munich to Augsburg, and had some three miles of good *pavé*—so unlike the wretched paved roads of France!—to the heart of the Bavarian capital. We were fortunate enough to obtain rooms at the *Vier Jahreszeiten*, which, like all the leading hotels of Munich, is generally overcrowded during the early autumn season, so

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that there is but little chance for those who do not book their rooms in advance.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Innsbruck . . . . .	1885	...	...
Zirl . . . . .	2040	12	12
Seefeld . . . . .	3870	12	24
Scharnitz . . . . .	3160	10	34
Mittenwald . . . . .	3020	7½	41½
Partenkirchen . . . . .	2350	18½	60
Oberau . . . . .	2160	8½	68½
Murnau . . . . .	2265	12	80½
Weilheim . . . . .	1845	19½	100
Traubing . . . . .	2182	16	116
Starnberg . . . . .	1930	9½	125½
Forstenried . . . . .	1840	16	141½
Laim . . . . .	1728	11½	153
Munich . . . . .	1703	5	158

The Cricket wanted a little attention paid to her organism next day, so that our start was delayed till four o'clock in the afternoon. Although by then all of us had succumbed to travel fever and were anxious to push on towards France, we were not displeased at the enforced delay, which enabled us to spend a couple of hours with the old masters in the Pinakothek, a picture gallery as remarkable for the richness of its contents as for the admirable manner in which these treasures are arranged and catalogued. Throughout Germany the sense of order seems to be the dominating factor in urban life. It is not only the instinct of the citizen, but it is enforced by the governing bodies and

by the police, although I must confess that, in Munich at least, I saw no evidence of the town being in any way police-ridden. Yet, if I were asked to sum up briefly my impression of Munich, I should say that it is the most orderly, the trimmest, and tidiest, and cleanest of all large cities, and that it is the city of all others where art has become the leading factor in life. It is impossible to escape art, even if you avoid the innumerable museums and galleries. It stares at you from every shop window, from every house-front; it is in evidence at every hotel, restaurant, or café. Much of it belongs to the phase known as *art nouveau*. But then Munich has avoided the absurdities of this "new art," and has developed it into a vital style.

I also know of no other large city richer in monuments, fountains, monumental buildings, and fine vistas. There is nothing haphazard about the streets of Munich. Everything is carefully planned with a view to showing the architectural features to best advantage, with as careful avoidance of symmetrical stiffness. The only shadow-side that we could discover in Munich life on such superficial acquaintance with it was the unbearable heat and stuffiness of all interiors. The hotel was like an oven: all windows hermetically closed, and the revolving doors swinging round on their pivots without ever admitting a breath of the crisp, bracing air with which Munich is blessed. The bedrooms and corridors were terribly over-heated, and so was the Pinakothek, so were the shops and restaurants. In the famous Hofbräuhaus the smoke of a thousand vile cigars and the odour of stale beer

and *sauerkraut*, added to the intense heat, created an atmosphere so thick and unwholesome and nauseating, that we staggered back from the opened door and had to give up our intention to see the most typical phase of Munich life.

The slight drizzle, which had begun to descend before we left Munich at four o'clock, ceased when we had completed the straight run to Pasing. The rest of the journey across the high plateau between Munich and Augsburg was pleasant enough but uneventful, at least as far as Mering (fifty-three kilometres from Munich), in which town a speed limit of five miles an hour is strictly enforced, apparently as a concession to the rising generation of that Bavarian town, so that they may indulge in stone-throwing and unparliamentary language. Immediately after leaving Mering we made up for that compulsory reduction of speed, by racing for a few miles on a beautifully straight road the Orient Express. The pleasure of the exhilarating rush through the air was, however, cut short by a traction-engine rumbling along with a deafening noise in front of us in the very middle of the road. The engine-driver could neither see us nor hear our furious shouting and tooting, so that for a distance of two miles we had to follow the slowly-moving obstruction which left behind it a trail of noisome black coal-smoke, until after the railway-crossing, about three miles from Augsburg, it turned off towards Friedberg and left us a clear run to our destination. It was just lighting-up time when we arrived at the "Drei Mohren," at one time a mansion belonging to the

powerful Fugger family of bankers, in the broad Maximilianstrasse.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Munich . . . . .	1703	...	...
Pasing . . . . .	1722	8½	8½
Bruck . . . . .	1689	17½	26
Alt Hegnenberg . . . . .	1745	17½	43½
Merching . . . . .	1735	7	50½
Mering . . . . .	1725	2½	53
Augsburg . . . . .	1591	14	67

Augsburg, although a flourishing modern German city, has in its outward appearance retained the stamp that it was given in the time of its greatest prosperity. It is essentially a patrician town, and a town of the German Renaissance, although the cathedral and a few other beautiful churches date back to the Gothic, and even the Romanesque, period. The hotel itself, a little overwhelming at first, with a grand staircase and wide marble-floored galleries, that recall in their spaciousness and stateliness the interior designs of some of the Genoese palaces, impresses one immediately with the wealth and power of those merchant-princes of Augsburg, who lived in almost royal state, and were the friends and advisers of emperors and kings. But German dread of fresh air has caused the vast courtyard to be covered with a glass roof and the entrance from the street to be sealed up with a revolving door. The windows of many bedrooms

and of the most private apartments open into this shut-in courtyard, which serves as lounge and breakfast hall—steam-heated, badly ventilated, and with that oppressive airlessness which the Bavarian mind apparently cannot dissociate from his sense of comfort.

We were up betimes in the morning to see a little of the picturesque little town with its beautiful monumental fountains and Renaissance mansions—so early, indeed, that we arrived at the Royal Picture Gallery long before the hour at which the public is admitted. A little persuasion overcame the custodian's scruples, so that for an hour or so we were in undisturbed possession of the supremely interesting paintings by the elder Holbein, Hans Burgkmair, Ulrich Apt, and many other German masters whose works are scarcely known outside Germany, where they are jealously guarded in public museums.

At ten o'clock we were on the road again. The Cricket was on her best behaviour, the weather was perfect, the country delightful, and *bien accidenté*. There were ever new points of interest in the constant change from valley to hill, from forest to agricultural land. On that rapid flight through Bavaria and Wurtemberg we passed in swift succession through the quaintest of old German towns, with high, gabled, dormer-windowed houses, projecting eaves, old castles, picturesque market-places, where life seems to centre around the often exquisitely decorated Gothic fountains. We crossed the Danube at Ulm, where we had time to visit the wonderful Gothic *Münster*, which boasts the highest steeple in the world and is an un-





A Street at Blaubeuren



rivalled museum of old German art and craftsmanship. Following the river Blau to its source, we arrived in time for lunch at Blaubeuren, where that river emerges from the ground, forming a vast basin of almost impossible milky and yet limpidly clear turquoise blue: the *Blautopf*, or Blue Pot. This phenomenon of colour, from which the river derives its name, is the more astounding, as the little pond is enclosed all round by old trees covered with dense, dark foliage, the reflection of which does not appreciably modify the turquoise hue of the water.

From Blaubeuren we had to climb a steep hill to a high plateau with occasional dips for the crossing of rivers. We passed through Münsingen, Urach, Metzlingen, where we met a gay wedding procession with all the men attired in dress-suits, although it was early in the afternoon. In the next town, Reutlingen, we were stopped by a sombre funeral procession—"a *Leich!*" (a corpse!), as we were informed by a boy who rushed forward to stop us as we approached the corner which hid the mourners from sight. At the famous university town of Tübingen we left the car in the market-square and climbed afoot the steep castle hill, where I was not a little astonished to find the familiar motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense* carved in bold letters over the floridly decorated Renaissance portal.

Everywhere on this progress through Southern Germany we found evidences of the Teuton authorities' love of exacting obedience from their subjects, and of putting up notices of things that are forbidden.

In one of the towns at the beginning of a street so steep that a neglect to use the brakes would have been simply suicidal, I noticed a board with the quite unnecessary request to put on the brake, with the threat of a fine. And there is no level-crossing without a notice board bearing the rather absurd inscription : " Halt ! if the barrier is down."

Just before sunset we arrived at Rottenburg, which looked more like the setting to a German fairy tale than like reality. Twice we passed along the main street to find a hotel more inviting than the *Bär*, which looked too picturesquely mediæval to enlist confidence. But there was nothing better ; and when the landlord came out to assure us that we should be made thoroughly comfortable, we did not resist. Two rosy-faced little boys in dress-coats with tails almost trailing on the ground carried our luggage up the wooden staircase—two figures so grotesque in their eagerness to serve that they would have made the fortune of any musical comedy. We had no cause to regret having pitched our tent in this quaintest and most homely of all old-fashioned inns that we had met on our peregrinations. The place was literally shining with cleanness ; the dinner would have been approved by the most fastidious palate ; the wines proved our host to be no mean connoisseur ; and for the rest nothing was left undone to ensure our comfort. Rottenburg, indeed, is worth visiting, if only to spend a night at the Bear Inn.



In the Black Forest



## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Augsburg . . . .	1703	...	...
Zusmarshausen . .	1529	25	25
Unt. Knöringen . .	1508	17½	42½
Lemheim . . . .	1476	12½	55
Ulm . . . . .	1575	18½	73½
Blaubeuren . . . .	1695	18	91½
Münsingen . . . .	2319	29½	121
Urach . . . . .	1515	13	134
Metzingen . . . .	1170	11	145
Reutlingen . . . .	1230	8½	153½
Tübingen . . . .	1036	13	166½
Rottenburg . . . .	1115	12	178½

Through mist and dampness we continued our journey next morning to Nagold at the outskirts of the Black Forest, which for once belied its reputation as the rainiest region of Central Europe. Following the serpentine Nagold river almost to its source, past Berneck and Altensteig, we climbed gradually to a high plateau (about 2700 feet above the sea), which, beginning at Hochdorf, extends for about five miles of superb pine forest to Besenfeld, whence the road descends again in a series of swinging curves to Schönegrund in the Murg Valley. Immediately beyond Schönegrund we joined the very rough and badly-kept main road from Freudenstadt to Karlsruhe, which we followed to Rauenmünzsch (1312 feet). Here began our chief climb in the Black Forest, on an excessively steep and very stony road along the rush-

ing and roaring Schwarzbach to Sand (2715 feet), the oldest summer resort in that part of the Black Forest, and an ideal spot for a break in the journey and our midday meal.

Beyond Sand the road was under repair, so that we were forced to make a detour on another road which, under normal conditions, is barred to automobile traffic. All along this glorious descent to Buehl and the Rhine Valley, the air was charged with the scent of the pines and of a thousand herbs and wild flowers. The Rhine was crossed between Buehl and Bischweiler. There was no mistaking that we were now in Alsace. The towns, Hagenau, Ingweiler, and many smaller places were becoming more and more French in their general aspect. The villages were as dirty as could be—a manure heap in front of every cottage, and each village infested by swarms of noisome flies and other winged insects. Near the village of Modern, as we passed a cart laden with fruit, the woman in charge of it became flustered at our approach, and in her eagerness to escape destruction upset one of the baskets, which rolled across the road under the car and broke the exhaust tap of the condenser, which had to be temporarily plugged with a piece of wood.

The crossing of the Vosges mountains beyond Ingweiler proved a dull affair, as the road leads across the lowest dip of the whole range, and never loses sight of the railway for a distance of over twenty miles. The Vosges Forest, in this part at least, cannot compare with the magnificent tracts of virginal forest land which we had traversed on the German side of the





An Alsatian Road



An Alsatian Village



Rhine. Our thoroughly satisfactory day's run came to an end at Saarunion just as the shades of night were closing in upon the little town.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Rottenburg . . . .	1115	...	...
Nagold . . . . .	1395	24½	24½
Altensteig . . . .	1984	15	39½
Besenfeld . . . .	2568	15	54½
Rauenmünzach . .	1312	16	70½
Sand . . . . .	2715	9½	80
Buehl . . . . .	452	14½	94½
Bischweiler . . . .	413	18½	113
Hagenau . . . . .	...	8	121
Ingweiler . . . .	...	26	137
Saarunion . . . .	711	40	177

## CHAPTER XIX

### A DAY OF TRIBULATIONS



IT was an unpropitious start next morning. A steady drizzle had descended all night ; not the heavy downpour that runs off the road in streams, leaving little pools and puddles in the hollows, but that penetrating, fine, warm rain which can best be described as floating dampness, and which seems slowly but surely to dissolve the surface of the road. Still, the attractions of Saarunion, such as the wretched little town presented itself in the light of day, were not of the kind to allure us to postpone our departure in the hope of a glimpse of sunshine. On the previous night we had discovered a certain charm about the soothing stillness and unbroken peace of the dimly-lighted, tree-planted place in front of the inn. Daylight dispelled any such illusion and showed Saarunion just to be the dullest, most uninviting and featureless of little Alsatian towns, neither typically German, nor French, but altogether without national or individual character. The inn, too, which under the influence of good wine and wholesome food had appeared cosy and homely, was now as dreary and uninviting as could be. Better

the fresh, if damp, country air, under the shelter of a waterproof Cape-hood, than the stuffiness of the dingy bar and dining-room.

And so we started at what we considered a sufficiently early hour to cover the fifty-two miles to Metz before twelve o'clock, which would allow us ample time to see the sights of the town and the surrounding battle-fields, and to reach Sedan at dusk. Although I was provided with the best available road maps, I made assurance doubly sure by asking our host for directions, which he willingly gave in the usual form: "Pass the station, cross the line, and then always straight ahead. You can't miss it. When you get to Alberdorf, the fourth village from here, you had better ask again to make quite sure."

I did not wait till we reached Alberdorf, but asked at the second village. "Ja, ja! straight ahead," was the comforting answer, which was quite satisfactory, so far as it went. But before we had covered two miles we found ourselves at a cross-roads without signpost, mile-stone, or indication of any sort. To go "straight ahead" was obviously impossible, since "straight ahead" of us was a ploughed field, the roads forking to right and left. To ask for directions was equally impossible, since there was no human being within sight or earshot. Both roads were, moreover, of the same width, and in pretty much the same condition, and one of them had no right to be there at all, according to the map: the question was which one?

"Which one?" echoed Ryder, as if he had read

my unspoken thoughts. I trusted to luck and asked him to take the one on the right. For some little distance all went well ; then the road began to narrow, and to get, to say the least, sloppy. Still, a month's experience on the highways and byways of four countries had made us make light of such vagaries, and we quite expected to get on to better ground again. Besides—there was no room to turn, and we had advanced much too far to think of backing. On we went, slowly on the level ground, and slower still when the lane—for it could be called road no longer—began to rise gently. It was not much of a hill. Under normal conditions one would scarcely have noticed the rise. But the conditions now were anything but normal, as we found out to our dismay when the Cricket came to a standstill, the wheels still turning rapidly but unable to get any grip on the heavy, sticky clay.

There was nothing to be done but to get out of the car, which meant sinking ankle-deep into the appallingly sloppy ground, and to add our combined muscular strength to the thirty horse-power pull of the engine. It was an emergency in which the commands of gallantry had to be disregarded, and even Belle did her modest best to get us out of the plight. Far away in the misty distance, beyond the crest of the little hill that we had to ascend, could be seen the long monotonous row of trees which marked the intersecting line of the high-road and filled our hearts with hope. If only we could manage the 300 yards or so to the top on this gentle gradient of not more

than one in fifty, all would be well. And so we pushed and pushed, with the result that in twenty minutes we managed to move the car as many yards. Deeper and deeper the madly whirling wheels cut into the pasty mud, until our exhausting effort ceased to make any impression. The resistance of the car to our pressure made our boots sink deep into the clay, which held us fast to the ground when we endeavoured to extricate our feet ; and the suction of the sticky clay nearly pulled our boots off, whilst the flying wheels bombarded us with a shower of mud.

We now searched the road and fields for a few stones to put in front of the wheels, so as to get the grip for a new start. Alas ! we might as well have searched for gold nuggets in this quagmire. All that we could do was to wade some little distance across a ploughed field in order to strip an apple-tree of its lower branches, and to use our plunder for the purpose of temporary road-making. For a while the expedient proved successful. There were a few fine spurts, short-lived, it is true, but none the less encouraging, and we managed to climb about half-way up the hill, taking it in turns to dig out of the mud the branches that were ground into it by each successive start.

Another hour passed thus pleasantly, the " road " getting appreciably worse, until we reached a point where further progress became utterly impossible, the back wheels having sunk a good deal more than half-way to the axle into the ghastly clay. Our strength was exhausted. We gave it up, and gathered to hold

a council of war, at which no sensible suggestion was forthcoming. Dan, whose imperturbable calmness was not to be disturbed by such a trifling contretemps, hinted that we should draw lots to settle who should be sacrificed for the next meal. Chill silence rewarded his ill-timed facetiousness. But whilst we were holding this unfruitful conference the haze began to disperse, and on the distant horizon salvation appeared to our searching eyes in the shape of a group of farm buildings. The discovery was as cheering and reviving as the sight of land to a shipwrecked crew.

A farm amidst ploughed fields meant horses. The task to proceed to the habitation of man and to secure a pair of strong animals, either by gentle persuasion or by threats and violence, devolved upon me. And to the farm I hurried as fast as my legs would carry me, which is to say, at the rate of two miles an hour, progress being considerably impeded by the necessity of extricating my foot at every step from its prison of clay. It was just like walking with heavy dumbbells attached to the boots. But at last I reached the farm. The family and all the hands were at dinner in the spacious kitchen, and stared in blank amazement at the mud-bespattered apparition in the doorway. I explained my mission. The tale of our plight was listened to with sympathy and politely concealed amusement. The farmer himself immediately left his meal—the steaming dishes sent an odour of well-seasoned food to my nostrils, and made me long to occupy the vacated seat on the bench—to get the horses ready.





Stuck in the pasty clay



The Rescue



By the time he had put on the harness and provided himself with chains and ropes, the exciting news of the car in distress had spread through barns and stables, so that now the whole population of the little colony followed us down to the scene of our discomfiture. There was the farmer himself and a few labourers, four generations of his family in the female line, children of every age, two dairy-maids, and a couple of dogs. The rest is quickly told: with one mighty jerk the two powerful horses pulled the car out of the mire, and a few minutes' sharp trot landed her safely on the high-road. Dan did not miss this fine opportunity for adding to his formidable collection of roadside photographs. The rescue party lined up in front of the car with the rustics' never-failing readiness to pose. There was much friendly chattering and handshaking and handing over of addresses to which prints of the negative might be sent, until we departed once more on *terra firma*, amid cheers and waving of hats and kerchiefs. The name of the place of evil memory was Givricourt.

The Cape-hood was no longer needed now, and soon the first timid rays of struggling sunlight made us forget past troubles, though I, for one, could not share in the general optimism. The constant blowing of the increasingly unmanageable Casale motor-horn had for some days past affected the nerve of one of my teeth, and exposure and the strain of pushing the car had rather aggravated the complaint, which the jolting of the car on the very indifferent road now turned into racking pain. Pomponius had to take a

turn at the instrument, and I devoted my attention to the milestones, each of which as we flew by brought me nearer the promise of possible relief. Altdorf, Leiningen, Wirmingen, and several other dirty villages offered no prospect of an acceptable meal, but at Mörchingen—Morhange, as the natives still call it in spite of official Germanised maps and of a garrison sufficiently formidable to keep down any demonstration of Francophile feeling—at Mörchingen we took our chance in defiance of the uninviting aspect of the inn. It was a modest enough place, and none too clean ; yet we felt almost ashamed to enter the dining-room in the indescribably dirty condition to which we had been reduced by our mishap. After much searching and grumbling a brush was produced at our request, and during the interminable wait for the lunch which we had ordered immediately on our arrival, we scrubbed and brushed each other's garments to rid ourselves of the crust of caked mud. I still found time to hunt up a chemist who could think of no better remedy for my throbbing tooth than to stuff some prepared cotton-wool into my ear, which did not exactly stop the pain but set up a rival irritation—an intense burning which almost amounted to pain.

A private, whom I questioned about the road to Metz, gave the encouraging assurance that it was impossible to miss, and in splendid condition. His colonel generally ran to Metz in half-an-hour—from which it was to be gathered that speed restrictions do not apply to officers in the German army, the distance being not less than twenty-eight miles. Whilst we

refrained from emulating his example, there was nothing to impede our speed, so that we were able to keep up a steady rate of forty miles an hour, and, passing through Rémilly, Courcelles, and Ars Lequeux, we were well within the outer ring of fortifications on the heights overlooking the capital of Lorraine about half-past three o'clock. Metz at all times of the year looks like the centre of a manœuvre district, or some large war camp. The forts on the outskirts of the town, the high-road, the streets and squares within the gates of the fortress proper, were swarming with soldiers, mounted and on foot; and to add to the sense of uniformed domination, the police were in evidence everywhere. The citizens of Metz are peaceable enough folk, but the guardians of the law find their time fully occupied with regulating the traffic—that is to say, with rudely shouting and gesticulating to make ignorant motorists understand that most of the streets are barred to automobiles. In no other German town through which we had passed were there any such restrictive regulations; and in no other German town had we met with anything but courtesy from uniformed officials. Anyhow, the Prussian manner of the policemen saved us much trouble, since we were simply *ordered* to the Cathedral Square, instead of having to ask our way thither.

There could be no question now of leisurely sight-seeing if we were to cross the frontier the same day, and to push on towards Sedan. But it is wonderful what you can do in half-an-hour when every minute is precious! We stopped at an open-air café facing

the Cathedral front. Dan and Pomponius inspected the interior of the Cathedral with surprising thoroughness, and came back overawed by the grandeur of this wonderful structure; Belle stayed with the car and ordered refreshment for our thirsty throats; Ryder took in a supply of water for the Cricket; whilst I had my aching gum lanced by a miraculously deft and skilful dentist, whose Polish name in large letters on the house next door to the café had at once attracted my attention. He must have done a flourishing trade. A good score of people with bandaged faces and swollen cheeks were groaning in his waiting-room. Indeed, toothache seems to be the great national complaint, for there was scarcely a village or hamlet where we had not come across evidence of its prevalence in the shape of facial swellings. The cause of it may perhaps be found in the dread of fresh air indoors. The habit of living in stuffy, hot rooms, with hermetically closed windows, cannot but make people susceptible to draughts. But, to return to my Polish dentist, a judiciously bestowed tip, with a whispered explanation of the urgency of my case, gained me immediate admission into his torture-chamber, from which I issued five minutes later a happier man.

If the eastern approach to Metz was bristling with arms and uniforms and suggested a large manœuvre field, the district west of the great fortress, towards the French frontier, could not look different in times of actual war. It was immediately after leaving the town that we were shown a sample of the manner in which German soldiers are trained to make them fit

for all emergencies, regardless of the physical suffering and discomfort entailed by the process. First, to the infinite delight of Pomponius, we had several demonstrations of the grotesque "parade march," a fiendish invention due, I believe, to the military genius of Frederick the Great. Pomponius's unmeasured and contagious hilarity, expressed by a strident falsetto "He he!" was well justified by that spectacle of a group of leisurely walking soldiers suddenly, as an officer hove in sight, pulling themselves up into rigid stiffness of body and arms, and throwing their unbent legs alternately and with clockwork regularity into a horizontal line. But what abuse, what severe punishment, what torments are needed to turn human beings into automatons! This parade march, so useless and abused in itself, is the very essence of that great military organisation. It is the symbol of inflexible German army discipline. Frederick the Great, when he devised this refinement of cruelty, knew well that the men who have submitted to the drill of the parade march will blindly obey all orders—will be invincible on the battle-field.

On a vast drill-ground to the right of the road a few detachments of infantry were practising an attack in loose formation. On the word of command a rush forward, then flop! down full length on their stomachs on the soaking wet lawn from which the water literally squirted up as though the exercise was taking place in a bog. Then volley-firing, another rush, and another thud and squirt. And for quite two minutes the poor wretches remained prostrate on the soaking

ground. They were just in their ordinary cloth tunics, and must have got wet to the skin. No—soldiering in the fatherland is no pleasant sport even in times of unbroken peace.

Taking the road to the right at Moulins, and branching off to the left at the next cross-roads, we climbed a steep hill to Rozerieulles (1089 feet), always within sight of grim forts and troops of soldiers, and traversed the scene of the fierce battles of Gravelotte and Rezonville, whose memory is kept green by innumerable crosses and monuments in the fields to right and left, as far as eyes can see. Curiosity took us a little beyond the point where, at Gravelotte, our intended route turned north towards the frontier. The few minutes' loss of time were, however, amply justified by the unique historical interest attached to the memorable battle-fields. About a mile from Gravelotte the road map indicated in the smallest possible lettering the word Malmaison—the last name on the German side of the frontier-line, and therefore probably the customs station where I should have to get our exit from German territory duly certified on the triptych. It was therefore necessary to be on the look-out for the custom-house, and also for the road branching off eastwards, as otherwise we should have had to skirt the frontier for some considerable distance.

Malmaison turned out to be a little castle-like building—a château or a fortified farmhouse—to the right of the highway, and one or two barns and an insignificant little house by the roadside; but there



was neither custom-house nor uniformed official. We took the turning to the left and, no other building being in sight, sped towards the frontier. All of a sudden there was a cessation of the jolting and bumping to which we had become so accustomed that day, and the surface of the road became as smooth and level as a billiard-table. The cause of this sudden transition became manifest at the next milestone, which bore the inscription, "Département Meurthe." The dismaying truth dawned upon us: we had run past the douane, and unless we retraced our steps and succeeded in convincing the custom-house officer of our mistake, the twenty-odd pounds deposit would be irretrievably lost. At all events we had to try our luck. Relying upon the absolute noiselessness of our White steam car and the sleepiness of the douanier, who had already allowed us to pass unchallenged, I asked Ryder to pass Malmaison and its hidden custom-house as quietly as possible, and then to turn back again as though we had come straight from Metz.

The manœuvre was completely successful. Indeed, there was no need for so much stealthiness. The little house by the roadside, on which this time we detected a tiny shield with the imperial eagle and the word "Zollamt," seemed to be completely deserted. Doors and windows were closed, and the only sign of life was a solitary chicken on a rubbish-heap in the adjoining plot of ground. Had we been about to enter the Fatherland, we could have run through without paying the heavy duty imposed upon motor-cars. It was a strange anomaly that in this fortified

frontier district, where every point of ingress is dominated by the mouth of cannon, there was nothing to prevent the free passage of dutiable articles. Heading again towards France, we pulled up before the door of the Zollamt. I knocked at the door—no reply! I hammered away at it furiously—it remained “locked, barred, and bolted.” Pomponius blew the recalcitrant Casale horn, which by now had ceased to utter any sound but a mournful groan, until his cheeks threatened to burst. Belle, Dan, and Ryder joined in fierce, vibrating war-whoops. The lonely chicken flapped its clipped wings in terror, but nothing else happened for quite five minutes. Then at last a very stout and jovial-looking official emerged from a barn in a meadow behind the house, struggling into the sleeves of his tunic as he moved towards us, and gauging distance and time so accurately that he had just fastened the last button as he drew up before the car with an amiable smile and a military salute. He apologised, though he did not explain, and without undue haste proceeded upon the lengthy duties prescribed by German red-tape, which include the triplicated entry of every item in the presence of the impatiently waiting traveller.

He was really quite a delightful person, that broad-shouldered, fair-bearded Teuton, and Belle rightly represented our Francophile architect's sigh of satisfaction as we passed into France: “Thank God, we have seen the last of these boors!” A heated discussion followed, in which Belle took up the cudgels for German cleanliness, tidiness, and good-nature, whilst Pom-

ponius waxed eloquent about the natural breeding and exquisite courtesy of the Frenchmen. It was not long before we were to be given a sample of that courtesy.

The French customs at Doncourt, about four miles from the frontier, were looked after with more vigilance than the German. The douanier and some sort of non-commissioned officer, whose exact status I was unable to ascertain, but who was clearly first in command, were quite ready to receive us. Pomponius, on whom French air, or rather the consciousness of breathing French air, acts like champagne, insisted on accompanying me to the office, so that he could point out to me the charm of manner with which the douanier put the necessary brief questions. He was certainly suave in his manner, especially after he had ascertained that we did not belong to the neighbouring land. He became almost effusive when Pomponius, pointing at our muddy boots, explained that we were bringing some of the lost territory back to France. The triptych being duly endorsed, the douanier came back with us to the car to check the number, make, and description, and we were politely dismissed.

Dismissed—by the douanier, but not by the jaundiced, hook-nosed, non-commissioned officer, who had been prowling round the car whilst we were having our pleasant chat indoors, and who now, after we had comfortably tucked ourselves up in our coats and rugs, demanded to be shown the number of the engine. It meant getting down again and opening the bonnet, and it seemed so unnecessary that I politely remon-

strated. I pointed out to him that the car tallied with the very detailed description on the triptych, that he could see we were merely touring, and that it was not likely we should have exchanged the engine.

"I want to see the number," he growled, and there was nothing to be done but to obey.

My companions had taken very little notice of this little altercation. They were enjoying a joke of their own. But their laughter, accompanied by words in a foreign language which he could not understand, was too much for the ruffled temper of our inquisitor, who had meanwhile to his ill-concealed annoyance ascertained that the number on the engine tallied with the one inscribed on the triptych.

"*Vous avez l'air de vous moquer de moi !*" he hissed. His eyes were flashing, and his black beard bristling, and his complexion turning from yellow to green. "You seem to be making fun of me. *Eh bien, nous verrons !* You say you can't change the engine, but you may well have changed the contents of your bags. We are now going to examine your luggage."

In vain did the friendly douanier try to soothe him with soft words. The man was adamant. He began with Ryder's handbag, which was strapped on to the footboard of the car. Dipping his hand deep into its contents he drew forth a pair of very old, but newly re-soled, boots.

"New!" he growled with grim satisfaction, tapping the sole with his knuckles.

"Old!" I retorted, turning round the object of contention, and pointing at the "uppers."



"MADE IN GERMANY!"



“ *Bien sûr!* but the soles are new—and made in Germany.”

“ No—made in England ! ”

“ Same thing ! They are new and dutiable.”

“ Not when they are on old boots ! ”

“ *Nous verrons!* ” And again he dipped into the bag and fished out a little box.

“ Here, you stop that ! ” exclaimed Ryder, blushing violently as he had to explain that the box contained a supply of pills. He was now seriously angry, and when the officer wished to know what was contained in the tidily packed little parcel which he next brought to the light, he refused to volunteer any information : “ If he wants to know, let him find out for himself ! ”

More suspicious than ever, our martinet undid the parcel and exposed—a little slab of alabaster, about four inches by three, with a view of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

“ Marble ! ” snorted the angry official, with a vicious tap which must have hurt his knuckle.

“ No—alabaster ! ” I answered, with the pitying smile of superior knowledge.

“ That *is* a kind of marble.”

“ I beg to differ. Besides, it’s only a souvenir.”

“ There is an import duty on marble. *Nous verrons!* ”

But we saw nothing. Having thoroughly rummaged through poor Ryder’s chattels, he abandoned his search and devoted his attention to the pile of luggage at the back of the car. The douanier, who

felt heartily ashamed of his colleague's atrabilious temper, vainly tried to soften his heart. It was no use: the whole pyramid of trunks and suit-cases and portmanteaux had to be taken down. The search, however, remained fruitless. A full explanation was demanded of me regarding some spools of Kodak films which the spiteful official would have opened but for my threat that I should make him pay for them if he exposed them to the light.

"I have finished," he growled at last; "you can pack up and go."

It was my turn now. I knew that the man, though he had acted contrary to the tacitly admitted rule that touring-cars are not submitted to examination for contraband, had not exceeded his rights; but I also knew that we could not be forced to pack and fix the luggage taken down by the custom-house officers. And I was determined to exact a penalty for the man's chicanery.

"Pardon, monsieur," I addressed him with the most amiable smile I could muster, "you have not quite finished. Unfortunately we have been so shaken on those wretched German roads, that we are all suffering from stiff backs and cannot possibly *assist you* in replacing and strapping up the luggage."

I made a point of laying the utmost emphasis on the "assist you," and the official's Gallic intelligence quickly grasped the fact that I was not wholly unacquainted with the regulations that applied to our case. He looked poison and daggers—but he submitted; and with the help of the douanier, who by a



sly wink or two conveyed to me his appreciation of the humour of the situation, he packed up our things, lifted the heavy pieces on to the luggage-carrier, had to take them off again to arrange them according to my instructions, spread the oil-cloth over the pile, and secured it all by means of straps and ropes. It was a bitter pill for him to swallow, and it was not sweetened by my ironical but faultlessly polite expression of regret at the unnecessary trouble we had given him.

With the mishap early in the day, and the two "frontier incidents," we had lost so much time that we had to abandon all hope to reach Sedan, unless we were to travel by night. The best we could hope for was to arrive at Montmédy for a much-belated dinner. It was now going on for six o'clock, and we were forty-eight miles from Montmédy. We decided to refrain from experimenting with short cuts and to keep on the *route nationale*, even if it entailed a few additional kilometres. Thus we raced merrily through Conflans-en-Jarnisy, then for twelve miles between river and railway to Etain, where we turned off in a northerly direction, switchbacking along the excellent straight, cross-country road to Longuyon (eighteen miles from Etain). By the time we descended into that little town the day had begun to wane, and we stopped in the main street in order to light up. The acetylene lamps, needless to say, refused to act, and we had to manage as best we could with the oil-lamps. On the other hand, we caused an illumination which had been altogether outside our reckoning, and which

caused a veritable panic in sleepy Longuyon, for just as Ryder had done with the lamps, big flames burst forth from under the car, where some petrol had somehow leaked out and caught fire. It was indeed fortunate that Ryder had already resumed his place by the steering wheel, a turn of which took us out of the imminent danger. We left behind us a trail of fire, a wildly gesticulating *sergent de ville*, and an excited crowd as we turned up the steep road which, before resuming its normal north-westerly course, doubles back for a mile or so almost in the direction from which we had come.

Complete darkness had meanwhile set in, and with our very inadequate lights we had to reduce the speed to about fifteen miles an hour. Still, all went well until, after passing St. Jean and crossing a narrow river, we had to climb a little hill a few hundred yards from the village. About half-way up the incline the Cricket came to a dead stop and refused to budge an inch. "No petrol," commented Ryder with laconic briefness. There was no help for it: *somebody* had to walk back with Ryder to St. Jean in search of the precious liquid. The duty devolved upon me. We trudged back across the bridge into the village street, made the necessary inquiries, and were told that *essence* could be obtained at a certain address near the *grande place* in the upper town—which meant a tiring climb up an excessively steep hill. At the given address the nearest approach to the gallons of petrol that we needed was a pint bottle of paraffin. More lengthy explanations, and new directions: there

was a something—*isterie* (it was a long, strange word which I could not altogether catch) at the further end of the square, where I *might* get what I want. We tried the *isterie*, which turned out to be a kind of general stores. Yes, they thought they had *essence pour faire marcher l'auto*. Would Monsieur follow Madame? Monsieur followed through long passages, up a few steps, down again into the cellars and vaults, until Madame halted before a vast assemblage of square tin *bidons*, the sight of which dispelled Ryder's profound dejection.

There were still a few anxious moments when we picked up *bidon* after *bidon* to find them emptied of their contents, but Madame's confidence was justified. Eight of the cans were full. My wish to acquire the whole lot caused a mild sensation. Madame's strikingly pretty daughter and a bright little boy with short-cropped hair and eyes like coal were sent down with us to help us carry the petrol and to take back the empty *bidons*. By the time we had filled the petrol tank (which meant unstrapping and rearranging our load of luggage, the mouth of the tank being unfortunately situated under the luggage-carrier) and got up steam, the clock of the church on the hill struck nine. Twenty minutes later we halted before the *Lion d'or* of Montmédy, where we were received with that pleasantness of manner and show of personal attention, which are almost invariably to be found at the old-fashioned inns in the less frequented districts of France. The whole household was set bustling to see to our comfort, and in spite of the late

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hour we were not kept waiting long for a meal that we should have appreciated even if the critical faculty of our palates had not been dulled by ravenous hunger.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Altitude (Feet).	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Saarunion . . . .	711	...	...
Albesdorf . . . .	853	20	20
Mörchingen . . . .	984	20	40
Rémilly . . . . .	794	22	62
Metz . . . . .	858	24	86
Frontier . . . . .	1053	18	104
Conflans . . . . .	617	11	115
Etain . . . . .	672	17	132
Longuyon . . . . .	922	30	162
St. Jean . . . . .	918	13	175
Montmédy . . . . .	620	13	188

## CHAPTER XX

### TOWARDS THE COAST



HERE is little to say about the next morning's run. Everybody who has motored on the high-roads of France knows the delight of flying up and down the little hills on the tree-bordered road, with miles and miles clear ahead, and the straight white band in front swelling and heaving and flattening out on the down run, until a new stretch of it appears from the rounded crest of the next hill. You just abandon yourself to the luxury of the cushioned seat and to the joy of speed, and dream, if you have been on the road for a month, cut off from all your particular world—dream of the things pleasant or unpleasant that may be in wait for you at home.

Always within a few miles of the Belgian frontier, we passed over the historic ground of Sedan, where we crossed the Meuse, and followed its course to the twin towns of Mézières and Charleville, where we suffered considerable delay through the difficulty of finding the only place in the town—a machine factory—where we were able to secure a badly-needed supply of thick oil. It was nearly lunch-time when we left, but we agreed that we had not earned the reward of

a meal. We had scarcely proceeded three miles when rain began to pour down and so to impede our progress that we took over an hour for eighteen miles. We passed through a succession of mean villages, without a sign of an inn—nothing but wretched estaminets. At two o'clock we arrived at Maubert-Fontaine. The village was no better than the others, but the map told us that here was our last chance, unless we could resign ourselves to cutting lunch altogether; and we felt in no mood for fasting.

The *Grand-Turc* inn looked forbidding enough: an old, plain, small, one-storey building, the ground-floor consisting of a kind of combined bar and kitchen, through which one had to pass into the guest-room, a dingy apartment with one large table. I asked the portly landlady what we could have to eat.

“*Entrez, monsieur. Nous verrons.*”

She could not tell. There was evidently nothing in the house except the inevitable *pot-au-feu*, which was simmering on the kitchen-range. But there was no hesitation, no delay. Whilst we were served the soup, other things were sent for to butcher and grocer. The *hors d'œuvres* after the soup kept us going until the omelette was ready, and meanwhile the cutlets and other luxuries had arrived—enough to make a delectable six-course meal. It was only when we had finished that I discovered from some press cuttings on the wall that we enjoyed the hospitality of the house in which Napoleon spent the night of the 19th of June 1815, on his flight from Waterloo. It has remained unchanged since that eventful day.

In alternating rain and sunshine we proceeded in the afternoon in as straight a line as possible towards Valenciennes. We passed Hirson and La Capelle. At Avesnes we had to light up. It was not an easy matter to find our way in the darkness to the fortified town of Le Quesnoy. The road was almost deserted owing to the dirty weather, and more than once I had to get down and knock at some door to obtain the required information. But it was on the last lap, between Le Quesnoy and Valenciennes, that our real troubles began. We had passed into the region of *pavé*, and no pen can do justice to the appalling manner in which the high-roads of that district are paved. The night was as black as ink ; rain poured down in torrents ; my tooth was again throbbing fiercely when, in the midst of the road, more than two miles from the nearest village, we came to a dead stop. Not a drop of petrol left !

It was too much for me. I simply asked Ryder what he proposed to do. As far as I was concerned I would sooner sleep in the car than tramp back on that nightmare of a road in search of petrol. Ryder said nothing. He alighted and was soon swallowed up by the black night. And thus we sat for an hour—glum, silent, hungry, with no sound around us but the beating of the rain on our canvas roof. An hour that seemed an eternity.

I was awakened from a not very pleasant reverie by the hum of many voices and the fall of footsteps. A whole procession with lanterns and *bidons* of petrol, led by Ryder, emerged from the darkness. How

Ryder had managed I cannot tell. He knew not a word of French, but somehow he had made them understand what he wanted; had told them, moreover, as the owner of the village store informed me with one or two unparliamentary interjections, that the car was just a minute or so outside the village, and had thus inveigled him and his family and assistants to come to our rescue.

The man was half angry, half amused, and was easily pacified with a few francs for his trouble. Not before ten o'clock did we drive into the courtyard of the Grand Hotel du Commerce at Valenciennes—too late for dinner, but not too late for an enjoyable repast on the cold viands, which we were served with many apologies about the impossibility of supplying a hot meal at so late an hour.

## ITINERARY

Place.	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Montmédy . . . . .	...	...
Sedan . . . . .	44	44
Mézières . . . . .	22	66
Hirson . . . . .	44	110
Avesnes . . . . .	29	139
Le Quesnoy . . . . .	29	168
Valenciennes . . . . .	16	184

Let all motorists be warned to keep away from the neighbourhood of Valenciennes. The town itself does not compensate for the horrors of the roads by which it is approached: a dull manufacturing town with





The Market-Place, Arras



just a few old buildings of no particularly engrossing interest, as we were able to ascertain during the morning hours of our last day in France, an early start having been made impossible by the urgent need of some repairs to the Cricket, which had on the preceding day developed an insatiable thirst for water and petrol.

Nine roads lead to Valenciennes. They are all *pavé*. And they are all abominable. It is only a question of degree, and I have not tried them all. But I feel fairly confident that none of them can be worse than the one we were compelled to take to Denain and Douai. That we escaped without a puncture was a sheer miracle. And the country! Coal-mines, chimneys, factories, smoke; villages and towns that can only be described as sordid and filthy; meadows and fields that look anæmic, colourless, sad; a population so miserable, pale, dirty, and joyless, that you are filled with horror and pity—a very hell upon earth. Nothing like it is to be seen in any other part of beautiful France.

A few miles from Douai, on the road to Arras, things improved a little. The *pavé* alternated with stretches of macadam, and the air was less completely obscured by smoke. Yet the outlook remained sad and monotonous. Arras itself, of course, is one of the show-places of France, but we were in no mood for sightseeing. We attended to the more important business of lunching, drove to the enormous arcaded *Grande Place*, and round the handsome, florid town hall, and then unwisely, instead of taking the Route

Nationale via St. Pol, Hesdin and Montreuil, were tempted by the rigid line of fifty-four kilometres, which on the map indicated the shortest route to Boulogne. Fifty-four kilometres of thoroughly bad, rough road, although with only a few bits of *pavé*. Fifty-four kilometres of coal-mining district, through many more villages, where every other house is an estaminet, and where every grimy face wears a scowl. In one of these villages we had our last puncture. A few men gathered around us to watch the changing of the tyres. I must confess to feeling more than uncomfortable. I suppose they were really harmless enough folk ; but they looked like very fiends, silent, frowning, threatening.

Not before Théroüane, where the road turns due east towards Boulogne, did the country assume again the normal friendly aspect of rural France. Twenty-five straight miles of switchbacking between the fresh green fields and meadows and woods soon made us forget the wretchedness and unrelieved ugliness through which we had passed in the earlier part of the day, and restored to us our normal good spirits. However, even on this last day of the journey we were not destined to reach our goal by daylight. The search for oil in the morning, the puncture in the afternoon, and other stoppages for water and petrol had caused so much delay that we did not get to Desvres before lighting-up time. And then the dimness of our lamps and the constant stream of vehicular traffic between that town and Boulogne compelled us merely to crawl along, so that it was long past eight o'clock when,

with a deep sigh of relief and an audibly murmured "Thank God! we'll be back in England to-morrow!" Ryder stopped at the door of the Hotel de Paris.

And a faint echo of this sentiment was in all our hearts as we sat round the dining-table, and talked about our experiences and recollections, and of what would linger most pleasantly in our memories.

"I think Volterra and the Signorelli frescoes at Orvieto, and the palace at Urbino," suggested Dan.

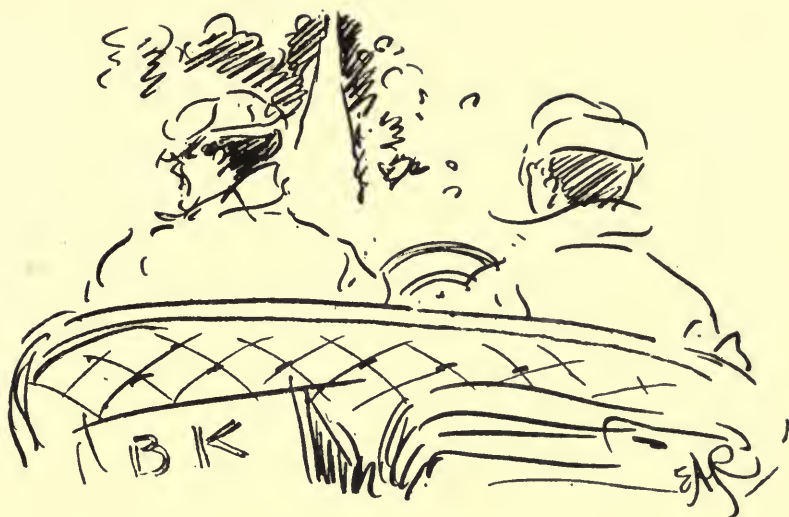
"Of course, it was all very wonderful," said Belle. "But I must say, I enjoyed the actual going, the sensation of speed, and the rush of air, and the constantly changing scenery."

"When I think it all over," said Pomponius, "what I enjoyed best of all was—our meals!"

## ITINERARY

Place.	Intermediate Distances (Kils.).	Progressive Totals (Kils.).
Valenciennes . . . . .	...	...
Douai . . . . .	35	35
Arras . . . . .	24	59
Thérouane . . . . .	54	113
Desvres . . . . .	31	144
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