

NOTES MADE ON THE CONTINENT
IN 1848-9.

BY REV. J. A. SPENCER, D. D.

(Concluded from page 288.)

"Sunny Italy"—Virgil's Tomb—Its Picturesque Location—Hills about Naples—Grotto of Pausilippo—Length, Character, &c., of this Tunnel—Hill of Pausilippo—Classic Remembrances—Ride along the Bay of Naples—Remains at Puteoli—Temple of Serapis—Ruins of an Amphitheatre.

I am not at all sure, whether a large portion of the enjoyment which travellers find in "sunny Italy," does not depend upon the delicious climate, which seems so to soothe the senses into a dreamy and luxurious quiet, that one looks at objects through a new and different medium, one feels that he gazes with other eyes than he thought, and as day follows day he learns to appreciate that height of facility to southern regions, *et dolce far niente*, which our colder clime and our more active habits can neither understand nor enjoy. At times the sky is so perfectly lovely, the air is so balmy, and all nature clad in her robe of beauty and fragrance so delightfully, that it seems as though the charming fables of its poets had their realization, and we can well fancy that we are indeed amid the Elysian fields, and drinking in beauties fit for the heroes and princes of immortal song. Some such days as these have fallen to our lot during our sojourn in Naples, and on one of the brightest and sweetest mornings which could be imagined we sailed forth, as well to enjoy those luxuries which God in His goodness showers upon all ages, the pure air, the warm sunshine, the fragrant orange grove, &c., as to revive and deepen our recollections of classic scenes, rich in ancient lore and the resort of pilgrims from every land. The day was devoted to Virgil's tomb, Pozzuoli, and neighbouring objects of interest.

The tomb of the greatest of Latin poets is just on the skirts of the city and overlooks the road as you ride in a southeasterly direction along the bay toward Baia. Alighting from the carriage we walked up quite a hill and arrived at the vineyard in which the tomb is situated. After traversing a path for a few hundred yards, we came to a spot of ground second in interest to no other where rest the ashes of a child of song. It was necessary to go down several steps and through a low portal, and then we stood in the very place, where, as we have no reason to doubt, the remains of Virgil were deposited by order of Augustus. The tomb, which has the form of a small temple, is not large, and far from imposing; it is arched over head with stone, and looks out at one side on the grotto or rather as we should call it tunnel, of Pausilippo: a little way off, too, the deep blue Mediterranean rolls in majesty and beauty, even as it did when the Mantuan used to sit and gaze upon it with a poet's eye. A stone like a modern tomb-stone, has been erected, and on it is inscribed the epitaph which Virgil himself is said to have written.

"Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc Parthenope: cecini ruscua, rura, boves."

I shall not impose upon you, gentle reader, with the reflections which this interesting spot stirred up in my mind: you, who may by this time know something of my tastes in such matters, will not doubt that I was sufficiently excited, though I spare you the infliction of any ecstasies in which I might indulge.

Naples, as you may recollect, is surrounded by hills, objects which detract from facility and convenience of intercourse between distant points in the same proportion that they add to the picturesqueness and beauty of the scenery. It would seem that ages ago the inhabitants of these regions had caught the idea and understood the uses of cutting a road through, instead of carrying it over the top of, a lofty hill. The proof of this is the Grotto of Pausilippo, which is mentioned by a number of the ancient writers as one of the great works elaborated before their days: they do not inform us who was its author. The grotto serves as a short cut through a very high hill, enabling the passenger by foot or by carriage to traverse a level path of half a mile instead of having a journey of two miles and a half around and over the hill. We rode through this singular passage or tunnel, as we should term it, and I cannot but think that it deserves a word or two of description. The nature of

the substance is fortunately very soft and easy to cut, it is what is called tufa, a sandy yellowish-coloured volcanic substance, found in great abundance in the neighbourhood of Naples, and much used for building walls to vineyards, small houses &c. The road is about fourteen feet wide, is paved with lava, and nearly level; its length is about half a mile in east and west direction. The height of the excavation or tunnel is said to be 150 feet, and it is lighted at all hours with lamps scattered along at a few points, and quite insufficient to give light to those who are passing along the road. We were not able to see distinctly as we rattled through the grotto, and I was constantly in fear lest we might run down some people on foot and fall foul of the numerous vehicles and donkeys which use this great thoroughfare between the villages and Naples. Happily, however, neither in going nor returning, though we dashed through at a fine speed, did we meet with anything untoward or unpleasant.

Of the Hill of Pausilippo I need not say much: its fame is well known to all lovers of classic lore as the residence of Virgil, Silius, Italicus, Lucullus, Pollio, and others, no less distinguished for talent, learning, wealth, and other qualities. The ruins of former villas and elegant edifices are plainly evident, as indeed is the case almost everywhere about Naples.

Continuing our ride, or drive, as the English term it, we skirted the picturesque shores of the bay of Naples, being not only delighted with the lovely scenery of a region unsurpassed for its facilities for ministering to luxury, ease, and indolence, but deeply interested in the localities which called up in our minds the long and oft-read history of Rome and its wonderful power, greatness, and glory. There in the distance was the island of Capri, where the tyrant Tiberius spent many of his days, and revelled in his dark and disgusting licentiousness; near by is Nisida, with its fine old castle; and to the west lie Ischia and Procida, the former renowned for its strength and its connection with many prominent historical events, the latter well known on account of the far-famed "Sicilian Vespers." As we proceed the road opens to us new views, each different from the other in some respects, and yet each very lovely and attractive to those who admire the beautiful of nature and art. The high hills in the distance which lie behind Pozzuoli, the broad valley called *de' Bagnoli*, spread out in all its luxuriousness before the eye, the beautiful gulf of Puteolano, so named from Puteoli, the ancient appellation of Pozzuoli, the numerous villas, the convent on the top of a lofty hill, and the rich and glowing vineyards and olive groves, all around, present a superb prospect, one which, as seen under the soft and languid sky of Naples, is indescribably lovely.

We spent some little time at Pozzuoli in examining the remains thickly strewn around, giving sure evidence of what we know from history that this was one of the favorite places of resort of the ancient Romans, and here they erected their lordly villas here enjoyed the exquisite beauties which nature has bestowed with a lavish hand, and here revelled in those pleasures and enjoyments to which a wealthy and corrupt state of society infallibly leads. Among the numerous antique remains of the temples, we gave more particular care to those of the temple of Serapis. When discovered, about a hundred years ago, this ancient temple was in most excellent preservation, and it is a source of regret to observe how it has been not only despoiled of most of its ornaments, columns, statues, vases, &c., but suffered to go to ruin and decay from want of care and the effects of the weather. Still, as it now stands, there is hardly any ruin more interesting and instructive than this, or which gives one a better idea of the vast size and imposing character of an ancient, heathen temple. It was built in the second century before the Christian era, and bears even in its ruins the evident traces of great beauty and architectural grandeur and skill.

According to Sir Charles Lyell, "Signor Carelli, who has written the last able treatise on the subject, endeavours to show that all the religious edifices of Greece were of a form essentially different; that the building, therefore, could never have been a temple; that it

corresponded to the public bathing-rooms at many of our watering places; and lastly, that if it had been a temple, it could not have been dedicated to Serapis, the worship of the Egyptian god being strictly prohibited, at the time when this edifice was in use, by the senate of Rome." This is a mooted point, and though much might be said both for and against the view just quoted, I doubt if the reader would care to enter into the question, so I leave it to the antiquarian.

From the temple of Serapis, a short walk brought us to the extensive ruins of an ancient amphitheatre. In several respects it agrees with that which we saw at Pompeii; but in others it is sufficiently diverse to need a word or two of description. The arena is nearly 200 feet long by 130 feet broad, and there were trap doors or covered openings in various parts of the arena, by which the carcasses could be speedily removed from sight and the games and shows as little interrupted as possible. In the lower story, or portion beneath the level of the arena, is a small chapel dedicated to St. Januarius, Bishop of Beneventum: the ancient tradition is, that when he was exposed in this amphitheatre to bears to be devoured, the ferocious animals fell down at his feet and left the saint unharmed. Several thousands were converted by this miracle, which so exasperated the lieutenant of the brutal Dioclesian that he caused the venerable bishop to be decapitated at once. This amphitheatre was no doubt capable of holding 45,000 persons, as we are assured by ancient writers.

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