

[WRITTEN FOR THE TRUE WITNESS.]

### VACATION IN ITALY.

A MOST INTERESTING SKETCH OF THE "SUNNY LAND"

NIGHT ON THE ALBAN HILLS—THE SHATTERED MONUMENTS OF TUSCULUM—THE APPROACH TO ROME—THE TRUE WITNESS IN ITALY—SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF VARIOUS LANDS, SEEN IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS—HOT WEATHER—THE IRONY OF HISTORY—RAPTURES THAT ARE NOW MEMORIES.

The following delightful sketch is continued from last November's TRUE WITNESS.

The descent of night upon the Alban hills brings our student's first day's observation of the surrounding country to a necessary close. But night has its charms as well as day, especially for those whose souls habitually stretch forth to regions of more solemn thought than the narrow world of the mercator, or artificial society individual. That unseen world of thought which we sometimes, for a moment, think we have fully entered, but immediately discover we have only heard in the distant echo of its voice, or seen through one of its portals opened ajar by the adventurous hand of some pioneer leader of mind, seems to draw near to us, and to breathe more deeply on our soul, under the majestic shadow of night. The spiritual and the material seem to approach more closely to each other, and to hold mysterious intercourse that ceases with the approach of day. It matters not what burden the night wind bears—be it the fever heat of a desert, the warm and sickly odour of a tropical vegetation, the sweet exhalation of a northern harvest, or the frost and snow of an Arctic winter—its voice that we hear round the eaves, whether in the low sigh of a passing zephyr, or the loud tone of a rising storm, has a meaning as important as it seems distant from our grasp. Under its influence the soul retires upon itself, and feels the presence of some kindred power, which draws it forth somewhere, and to something that it yearns to know, yet fears to approach. As a strain of sweet music from some distant banquet hall falls on the ear of a returning pilgrim, and assures him that friends still dwell beneath the ancestral roof, so the voice of the night wind steals over our being, till it strikes a sympathetic heart-string that answers the far off music of a fuller and more joyful life, and awakens the entire man to a fresh yearning to pass quickly over earth's dark way, in which the soul lingers and is not satisfied, suffers and nobody knows its pain, and to emerge into the light and music and genial society of its eternal abode.

Such is night the world over. Certain minor circumstances modify its effect upon us. That "charm from the sky" which, according to Payne, hallows every thing around our home, does not with day. It hangs over the dry branches of the old fir-trees that once sheltered our cottage, and around the trembling leaves of the poplar and willow we planted with our own hands; it dances on the white, moonlit gable, which looked down so invitingly on us when, as children, we returned home from an unprofitable game of "catch" amongst the neighbor's hay-racks; it rises from the lawn where we stretched our tired limbs on the sultry evenings and watched the livid heat-lightning that occasionally lit up the Cumæan on the gloomy horizon; nay, it beams in the very moon and stars, and makes us look upon them as old friends who know our needs, they have watched over us so long from the same quarter of the heavens, and have shot their pale rays so regularly over the same objects in our little chamber. But none of these will vary the character of night in the estimation of the student on Tusculum. He is a willing "Evil from home," and he must open his soul to the impressions that night under a foreign sky may give. He is not likely to retire very early his first night on the Alban hills; at least I did not. When left alone in my room, I opened the window to enjoy the night air, and to discover what there was unusual in the new surroundings; and I must confess it was fancy, with its bewitching treasures, that gave their chief attractiveness to the material objects around me. After all, what could I expect and hear that I had not seen and heard a thousand times before—a few lights peering through the darkness, the usual sounds of rural life, and the cry of some solitary night-bird? But fancy persisted (nor had I reason to disallow its claim) in associating them with the character which immortal names and world-renowned deeds have given to the place. And thus, the darkness grew more solemn when I reflected that the unbroken plain over which it hung was the lonely Campagna with its dry, broken aqueduct and fallen mausoleums, which looked down for centuries on the march and counter march of Roman legions, witnessed the splendor of triumphal returns when the spoils and conquered slaves of Carthage and Jerusalem added to the pomp of a Roman holiday; and saw the waning glory of Imperial Rome pass Eastward, to vanish forever behind the rising storm-cloud of a Byzantine empire. The clustering lights that appeared in the distance held my gaze more fixedly because they lit the narrow streets and the bleached ruins of Rome, and glittered upon the lazy waters of the Tiber. The baying of watch dogs around the foot of the hills, and the unearthly cry of the screech-owl in the groves higher up, broke with a hundred-fold force upon my ears, they seemed to assume so much to the ghastly nature of the strife and black desolation that have left their history writ in the buried and broken monuments of Tusculum's former grandeur. Even the very wind seemed to moan with a deeper and sadder voice, as it stole across the lawn and through the laurel trees beneath my window, because I knew it had kissed the splintered marbles of the old city, and waved the yellow grass above the urns of Tusculum's brave sons, before it

swept down the face of the hill, and hurried out to the empty plain. But "the sitting stars invite us to repose," as Virgil says, and after gazing idly into the dark for a while, I closed my window and sought the sweet absence of all human cares—sleep. One precaution, however, I always took before retiring, on the first evening of vacation, viz., to see whether a hungry scorpion had established a quondam domicile in the mattress of my bed during the preceding nine months. He sometimes finds his way into unoccupied houses, and even if he should not assume an aggressive attitude, unless provoked, nevertheless, it counteracts in great measure the tranquillizing influence of a good night's rest, to learn in the morning that a scorpion has been a sharer of your couch.

The first weeks of August are not suited to excursions through the neighboring districts. Pure and comparatively cool as the air is at this elevation, the sun is strong enough to remind one how fiercely it beats on Rome and outlying country, and to dispel all thoughts of physical exercise. Indeed, one may be well satisfied at this season of the year, in central Italy, to find shady groves and pure air in the day, and a cool sea breeze at night, even if one must refrain from field sports, or pedestrian excursions. This time will come later on. In the meantime the students seldom stray far from home in their morning and afternoon walks. We frequently went lower down the hill to the palaces of the old Roman nobility, which are surrounded by gardens and shaded walks. These gardens are pleasant spots in which to pass a while of the forenoon. Rustic seats stand around under the spreading branches of the oak and the plane tree; falling water imparts a coolness to the air, and supplies small marble-banked ponds, in which the lazy gold fish dream idly about, till aroused to activity by the thrust of some mischievous student's mountain staff; marble watch-dogs gaze out mildly, though fixedly, from their stonily posts on the grassy lawns; large basins catch the spray of clear water shot from the mouth of a sea monster, or falling in a cylinder like shower from a hollow, perforated sphere that is sustained on the shoulders of a towering Atlas; struggling cutwaters rise midway above the surface, and muscular giants sit on the designedly shaly banks, with their ponderous toes dipping in the water.

However, notwithstanding the happy blending of nature and art, around the palaces that dot the foot of the hills, we usually preferred to ascend towards Tusculum, and pass our recreations in the shade of the pine, maple and chestnut trees, which grow abundantly in this vicinity. There is more of the freshness of summer here. The condition of the weather, left time for another important factor of vacation life—the reading of newspapers. The scholastic year is no time for this; too much else has to be done, and the college student, as well as every body else, if he wishes to succeed, must harken to the old adage: "age-prodigis, one thing at a time. But now, during these months among the hills, they can learn the freshest news from their respective homes, and can discuss the politics of the world. The London Standard, The Dublin Freeman's Journal, The Scottish Highlander, The Philadelphia Catholic Times, The Montreal True Witness, The Vaterland, (German), The Aropolis (Greek), La Patria (Swiss), and scores of other journals, were daily untold on the slopes of Tusculum, and pursued with an eagerness that can be verified only by people who are far away from home. For my own part, when I received a paper from home, I read it from beginning to end, the advertisements not excepted. One class of advertisements, however, I left out against the last, a class which in years gone by, often built up the hopes of my unsuspecting youth by the deep mystery they promised to reveal, and then dashed them to the earth by ending like Milton's sin, "I had in many a deadly coil" at "Jaco's Oil" or some body's "Pink Pills." Ever since that time I have proceeded with great caution, whenever I observed a sensational heading—"A Startling Discovery," "An Afflicted Mother's Tale," and the like.

Whoever wished to learn something of the social and political conditions of the various countries represented amongst us, had a favorable opportunity of doing so, on occasions of this kind.

The Germans gleaned the latest political news from the pages of the Vaterland, and were most ready to explain the nature of the Reichstag, and the relations between Prussia and the German States; but, above all, they were ready to make known the noble work that was being done by the "Centre" party, under the leadership of the great Windthorst. In fact their fondations of Windthorst were so frequent as to severely test the patience of those of their companions who had made no provision in their vacation programme for peripatetic lectures on the "Lives of Great Men"; and the upshot, as is common in such cases, was that one of the more venturesome victims very dogmatically asserted, without adding any reason, that Windthorst was not half what he was cracked out to be. He generally obtained the desired effect.

The Swiss too were happy when they found anybody interested in the history and governmental machinery of their democratic Patria. I have heard it very strongly urged, that the inhabitants of mountainous countries are always brave. It was in the course of a St. Andrew's Day speech by a Highland Scotoman, who quoted with muchunction the words which Scott makes the mountain address to the hardy Celt:

"To you, as to your sire of yore; B-lough the target and claymore! I give you shelter in my breast, Your own good blades must win the rest."

Life on the mountains is calculated to develop physical strength and the power of endurance, without which national bravery will not survive long. However this may be, the sons of the real Italy of rugged mountains and dreamy lakes are emphatically brave and patriotic in word, and I think nobody will deny that they have proven themselves equally so in deed. While intensely patriotic, however, they are not at all boastful, and the expression of their loyalty to country never takes the

form of "Jingoism." Their attachment to their own democratic form of government, which is the nearest actual approach to the ideal democracy, disposes them to look with disfavour on all terms that savour of centralized authority, when applied to the government of Switzerland. The exceedingly harmless word "parliament" is ostracized from their political vocabulary. "We Swiss do not use the word parliament, we prefer the word council," was the remark with which a companion of mine preceded his answer to my query concerning the power of their parliament. Nor need we be surprised at this, when, in some of the cantons, every adult male appears every year as a member of the legislative assembly, and when, in others, no measure of the deputies can become law without the approval of the people.

But the German and Swiss form only a small percentage of the sheets that are daily perused in the unroofed reading room of the Villa Rufinella. Newspapers printed in languages of which very few Americans ever saw a line, or heard a word spoken, are flung to the mountain breeze as soon as read, and hang like winking sheets around the withering ferns and crumbling marble pillars. The Armenians, the Russians, the East Indians and others, regularly receive journals in their respective languages, and form into groups to hear and comment upon the latest news from their homes.

Those fellow-subjects of ours from East India constituted an important element of our community, and by reason of their political relationship with us, may well deserve a special comment. I must confess that at first meeting with them I was a good deal surprised. Like most people who have not been accustomed to the companionship of our brown checked brethren, I felt my way carefully into their friendship, suspecting that I should find "ways that are dark and deeds that are vain" concealed beneath their smiling countenances. But I soon got my ideas widened, and learned the salutary lesson of looking rather to discover the good and admirable in human nature, whatever the outward form by which it is concealed. By observing this principle we shall seldom be deceived. These Indians, especially the natives of Malabar, on the West coast, are honest, straightforward people. They are just as far above a mean act as the average European that I have met; they are intelligent, industrious, and make first-rate companions either in labour or relaxation. They exhibit a great interest in the affairs of the kingdom, and are ever ready to learn something about the conditions of the colonies. I shall never forget the first time I met one of them in college. I, no doubt, looked a little awkward, as people generally do who are abruptly thrown into the company of strangers the greater number of whom speak a foreign language. A few English-speaking students were already in the division in which I was placed, and immediately that I entered, they gathered around to welcome me to the old halls. Students of a dozen other nationalities were there too, and did their best, by means of a language then foreign to me, to express their pleasure at meeting a new comer. Some who had picked up a few words of English, tried to make me feel at home by attempting, even with the provision of failure and a hearty laugh at their own expense, to inquire about my country. But when the first interchange of greetings was ended, a small chestnut-coloured youth advanced, and extended to me his yellow-palmed hand, smiling as one might who had known my forefathers for two generations. He stood near me, the others dropped away, then inviting me to take a walk along the further end of the corridor, he "unbridled his tongue" (as the Latin poet would say), and hastened to inform me that he was like myself, which I thought he intended for a joke on either his own or on my personal appearance, until he explained that he was a British subject

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and a colonist. I was not in his company for ten minutes before I felt as if I had been acquainted with him all my life, so undisguised did he show himself, and so ready to interest himself in any topic I chose to introduce. The character he revealed to me on that day was the one that distinguished him throughout the period of our subsequent acquaintanceship. We lived together for six years, then parted. I have no doubt the zeal and purity of purpose that marked him as a student still live in the Indian Missioner, and that he is striving to spread the knowledge he laboured so hard to acquire throughout that strange country of the out-lawed pariah and the sacred cow.

But to return to the reading room in the groves of Tusculum. We by no means employed all our time on questions of local interest. We learned the latest news from the four quarters of the globe, and then fell to discussing questions of world wide interest, on which grave plebipotentiaries might sit in international congress: the chafing, for instance, between France and Germany, the value of preserving the peace of Europe, the upshot of Russia's design for the extension of her empire towards the west, the Egyptian question, and the like. Our ideas would, perhaps, appear crude, and our technique faulty, in the eyes of a far-seeing politician or a skilled diplomatist; but we cared very little for that. We freely exchanged our views; and it is just probable that, if we never expressed a correct estimate, we never expressed a false one than retired politicians and ambassadors sometimes do. A snatch from my diary for Sept. 5th, 1891, will give an idea of the subject matter of our political study. It appears to be an abstract of an article I had read that day:

"I learn that there is much reason for amazement and indignation on the part of the European Powers at the alleged violation by Russia of the treaty, which, in time of peace, excludes all foreign warships, and all ships carrying military stores, from the entrance of the sea of Marmora, at either end. It was, and is, the right and obligation of Turkey to see that this regulation should not be violated. Nevertheless, the Turkish government not only permitted a Russian warship to pass through the Daranelles, but has also dismissed its commandant of the Daranelles for temporarily detaining her; and has offered an apology to Russia, and an indemnity for the detention. Whether Turkey, which has virtually been the ward of England for the last fifty years, has yielded thus shamefully to the violation of treaty rights from sheer fear, or from a desire to sting England for her refusal to negotiate regarding the Egyptian question, it is not quite clear. The right on the part of Turkey of having the Straits free from foreign warships, in time of peace, was acknowledged by the Powers in the treaty of July 13th, 1841, made in London; afterwards by the Congress of Paris, signed by the Plenipotentiaries of the Great Powers, on March 30, 1856; and, if I mistake not, corroborated by the Conference held in London, July 17th, 1871; and finally by the Berlin Congress, January 13th, 1878."

But the rocks of Tusculum received the discussion of a question far more intimate to a large section of our party than a stoppage of Russian warships in the Daranelles. I should not venture to claim it was Tom Moore, had in future perspective when he sang to Erin: "The strangers shall hear thy lament on his plains."

But I will say the prophecy was never more literally fulfilled than when the Italian peasant of Campagna stood and turned an ear, to hear the needs, the dangers, and the hopes of Ireland discussed in a language that attracted his attention only by its rough and halting accents, so unlike his own soft tongue. Yes; the lava peaks of the Alban hills have resounded Erin's lament. I learned more English politics in August and September of 1891 than in all the rest of my life. The troubles consequent on the Parnell breakdown were then agitating the Irish party. Tim Healy was the "man in the gap" (as his admirers aptly put it). Dillon and O'Brien had just been released from prison, and Parnell was carrying on that final and desperate struggle for supremacy, in which his calm courage, unrelenting perseverance, and re-awakened energy, almost made us forget his errors and remember only the former champion of Ireland's cause. In such circumstances, not even the charms of mountain villas, nor the lazy heat of central Italy, could divorce the mind of the Celt from the question of Irish self-government. The Irish mail regularly brought us the latest campaign speeches, which were read with greater natural elocution, and far more earnestness than that which, on the self-same slopes, Cicero practiced his Philippics before an audience of dumb trees, nearly two thousand years before. It was a cause of much amusement to the Italians and others who did not understand English, to hear the Irishmen so often repeat the names of Gladstone and Parnell. The mention of these names was to them a sign that Home Rule was under consideration and they listened for a while with an amused smile on their faces, then shrugged their shoulders and said: "Questi Benedetti Irlandesi Semper Parlano di Ome Rule." "These blessed Irish are always talking about Home Rule! I remember how a facetiously disposed Greek from Syros used daily to ask a towering, jovial hearted Kerry man, from Listowel, the question 'Well, Tom, has Ireland got Home Rule yet?' For about a month it was next to impossible to find two Irishmen, or two English colonists, together, who were not calculating the probable result of the strife. If they only met by night on the brow of some hill, with the College had been conducted to take in the fire-works with which a neighboring town closed its festival day, they immediately gathered around one of the leading spirits, till the mimic meteors were forgotten, and the cool night air was bur-

dened with the old refrain, which was carried in echoes down to the Campagna, and "The stranger could hear the lament on his plains."

Another primary factor of our employment in hot weather was the study of languages. Naturally, this work did not reveal itself so emphatically as the study of local or international politics. Anybody who had a taste for languages had ample opportunity here of laying up a store that would carry him through every country of Europe, Asia, and Africa. However, the desire to acquire a large number of them was not universal. Some overlooked the opportunity, because they saw no adequate reason why they should consume the precious summer months over tables of irregular and defective verbs that they would never after have occasion to use. Others disregarded it on the principle that it is better to concentrate one's forces on a few subjects and master them than to divide it between many and know them only superficially. "I have for some time been tempted to apply myself to the study of languages," said a thoughtful companion of mine one day, "but I have finally decided to devote my spare time to something for which I have more taste and talent. Life is too short to learn everything, and the habit of thinking correctly is more desirable than a store of facts whose value we do not understand. If we have the ideas we can express them without many languages. If we could speak a dozen languages and had no depth of thought, we should be like so many dry cisterns with many outlets." This was how he thought. Still there were comparatively few who did not learn some new language. Nearly all the Asiatic students learn a little English; a large number of all nationalities learn French. Not a few English-speaking students, who were destined for missionary work in South Africa, prepared themselves with German and Dutch. Others went further, and took private lessons in Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew. One classmate of mine who had already proved his special talent for languages by acquiring a conversational knowledge of ten, crowned his former achievements by setting to work at Chinese during our last vacation. Within two weeks from the time he began he could make a very successful attempt at short conversation; or, to put it in a popular phrase, "You could not hang him in Chinese."

The irony of history, it seemed to me, was forcibly exhibited in these vacation scenes on Tusculum. The old Romans retired to this very spot, attended by "barbarian" slaves from Germany, Gaul and Britain; and among these very groves conversed of the powers of the Roman eagle, or recorded the deeds of their great soldiers; and now the descendants of these same "barbarian" peoples laugh thoughtlessly over the buried ruins of Pagan Rome's grandeur, and analyze the cause of her hasty decline.

But evening is once more lowering over the Alban hills. The prefect, whose care it is among other things, to give the signal for the mustering of the scattered party, picks up his hat and staff (nobody travels over these hills without a staff) and calls aloud in prolonged, modulated tones: "Au—di—u—no," "away we go." In a moment papers are folded, books are closed, and black cassocks, relieved by red trimming and girdle, come forth from every shade—

"As if the yawning hill to heaven A subterranean host had given."

But see, one fingers still. He rests upon his left elbow, his hat hangs over his eyes, and with his stick, which he holds in his right hand, he picks mechanically at a piece of mason-work—the wall of Cato's parlor, perhaps—which protrudes from the ground.

What is he thinking on, or where are his thoughts, that he seems so heedless of all around him? Ah! where were the thoughts of Azim, as he sat half entranced listening to the sweet song that once more opened up to his mind the long vista of the past?

"There's a bower of roses by Bendormer's stream And the nightingale sings around it all the day long; In the time of my childhood 'twas like a sweet dream.

To visit in the roses and hear the bird's song.

That bower and its music I never forget, But oft when alone, in the bloom of the year, I think—is the nightingale singing there yet?

Are the roses still bright by the calm Bendormeer?"

Yes we all have our Bendormeer watering the budding flowers of our earlier life. It may be our first childlike hope of unclouded contentment and peace with all mankind, which expected its fulfillment just beyond the narrow bordered lane that still separated us from manhood; it may be that first and spotless desire which children sometimes conceive of doing great and noble things—of sacrificing self, and of passing through the world forgotten and unknown, if only we could lift the burden of suffering from a few human hearts, and make them glad; or it may be peace with all their associations of friendship and of family joys that time has broken but can never restore. Fresh needs, new designs, and a life of wider activity, as well as Time's noiseless ear in which we are being continually hurried along, separate us more and more from all these elements of our earlier life; but the chord that binds us to them is never severed: the sweet music of Bendormeer's lapping wavelets falls lightly on our souls, and is heard whenever the din of anxieties has abated; it is sweeter now than ever we knew it in reality.

The past always is. It lives in memory chastened of everything that is disagreeable or painful. The disappointments that marred the complete realization of our hopes; the bereavements we suffered when we thought our joys securest; the anxiety for the well-being of others, or the sorrow for their woes, that weighed upon us, when all around us was most cheerful; the little short-comings and imperfections of friends, which intimacy revealed and emphasized into positive annoyances,—these no longer appear when memory draws the curtain aside from the old picture of the past; or if they do they are so touched by the brush of fancy that we could not wish

them absent. "Arduum Subire, Jucundum Memento." What wonder then if "Oft when alone, in the bloom of the year," we should wish to withdraw for a while from the stern realities of the present, and, emerging into the silence of the past, retrace our steps to the "calm Bendormeer" of our former joys?

But where is he who remains unmoved by the noisy gathering of his companions? Is he once again in the yellow harvest field with his brothers and sisters, away in the West, where the sun that now sets upon Tusculum beams down from the midday sky? Is he hurrying back from school through a grove of gum-trees in Australia, or reposing at noon beneath an umbrageous mango beside the Indus? Is he tending his flocks again on the banks of the Jordan, or among the hills of Moab? Is he planning resistance to the Turk on the mountains of Albania, or is he standing by a panicle of rich grapes in a vineyard by the Rhine, watching the tourist steamer pass down to Cologne? That depends who he is. At any rate the pleasing spell will soon be broken. A gray rock falls with a heavy thud a few paces from his ear. Starting up, he looks around him, and sees the long shadows of evening stretching across the valley below, and feels the soft breeze from the Volscian mountains eddying round his cheek; and then he knows the raptures of the last few minutes were only a memory.—Rev. C. A. Campbell, St. Mary's Cathedral, Halifax, N.S.

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