

Church puts forth claims and pretensions which are unique and supreme. They may seem to be suspended for a time, but they are never abandoned or lowered. The clergy of that Church cannot reasonably complain if their pretensions are kept in remembrance by those who refuse to concede them.

C.

LETTER FROM ITALY.

WE are now in the country of what our Parisian friends would call *l'homme de cœur*. Men's blood here seems at once thicker, darker, warmer, than that of the Transalpine nations. One may find no mean index to a character in the treatment of an enemy—British boxing, French ridicule, Swiss sarcasm, and Italian—murder. "These dear, interesting, picturesque, loveable, lying Italians." As one contemplates their soft, glorious eyes, and listens to their exquisitely musical tongue, the same effect is produced as that by beautiful, dangerous ravines, and glinting torrents—they are all best seen in the sunlight.

From Geneva to Turin there is not much time for the study of guides, which, a foreigner once laughingly remarked to me, the English invariably consult at the very moment of passing the object of interest, seeming rather to prefer the description of a mountain to the mountain itself! Following the right bank of the Rhone, we must wait till we cross it, and, having entered Savoie some time before, we now come into the midst of rugged scenery, the wild grandeur of which is only enhanced by the recent falls of snow. On either hand it is but a succession of giant mountains, with lonely little villages crouching in the valley at their feet. Before reaching the Mont Cenis the only town of interest is Aix-les-Bains—bare and desolate enough now, but very fashionable and popular in warmer months, on account of its sulphur springs.

If in our New World we bow in admiration before the works of nature, here a thrill of no mean pride passes through us when we contemplate the achievements of man. Humanity is not of such base metal after all, thanks to the few worthy souls that save it. Shortly after passing Modane we enter the wonderful tunnel, seven and three-quarter miles in length, that pierces the Col de Fréjus. For thirty minutes we rush along the dark passage with feelings not a little peculiar! And when once again the train issues into the free air, a sensation is experienced as of having passed through the Valley of Death, for in truth a veritable promised land is reached. It grows toward evening, and the land assumes that silent, solemn air given it by snow and slowly rising mists. Far below, every here and there, are clusters of melancholy houses, and beyond, like mighty waves of a troubled sea, the mountains break upon the blue shores of the sky. Ere long a single silver sail is descried upon this fantastic ocean, and the foam-capped billows and dark vales are bathed in moonlight.

It is an infinite relief to be at length in a country where the people are by nature what they are, and see no reason for torturing themselves into foreign states of feeling. If men sing here, it is because eating even is hardly more necessary. An artistic sentiment needs not to be implanted, and then fostered and encouraged, by a thousand and one lectures, all of more or less maudlin calibre. No, it appears as little surprising to discover frescoes in a farmhouse as in a palace, and every available inch is decorated. To the Italian, beauty and sweet sounds are as natural as—dirt. One has a right to doubt a disputed talent. This child-like nation, with its naïve, unquestionable genius, gives one all the pleasure of an unspoilt prodigy. Instead of the bristling British damsel, with her "we are artistic," we have the passionate sun of Italy, in whose every word and gesture lies a world of inspiration. Most estimable Gauls and Englishmen, it is a bad sign when you attempt to persuade the world of your capacities.

A very serious, busy little town Turin. The wide streets intersect each other at right angles, and are lined, the principal ones at least, with arcades on either hand. We are no longer in the land of disrobed churches, where nothing is lacking in the *mise-en-scène* which everywhere is of bewildering beauty. The most curious feature of the Duomo, or cathedral, an edifice in the Renaissance style, may be considered the Cappella del Santissimo Sudario, which, standing above and behind the high altar, is separated from the body of the church by a huge glass screen, so that viewed from below, while any service is being conducted in it, nothing can seem more strange than the effect produced—a sort of martyr's vision. This chapel contains, besides the tombs of the Dukes of Savoy, the Santissimo Sudario, part of the linen cloth in which Christ's body was wrapped.

An interesting and exquisitely beautiful monument, that commemorating the completion of the Mont Cenis tunnel. Situated in the Piazza dello Statuto, one of those picturesque squares that abound in Italian cities, a bronze Genius of Science soars above a pile of granite rocks, clinging to which the conquered giants of the mountain look towards her with vain defiance.

It would be difficult to imagine a church more ideal in every respect than the Duomo of Milan. Embodying all that such a structure should possess, there is a fitness, a beautiful uniformity, a vast, dreamy grandeur, that must fulfil the desire of the most ardent worshipper in art as in religion. Picture to yourself a marvellous pile in marble, a pile adorned with ninety-eight Gothic turrets, and upwards of two thousand statues, all glistening under an Italian sun, and rising, as it were, a maze of petrified lace against an Italian sky. In the interior of this cathedral, the largest in Europe after those of Seville and St. Peter's in Rome, one experiences those delicious feelings of wondering awe, of peace, the resurrection of a thousand sweet beliefs and visions which, after all, but few scenes on earth can recall. As we wander in the dim light, listening to the dull roar of the city without, that for nearly five centuries has beaten like some sullen sea about these mighty walls; as the notes of the organ "fall like rain upon the longing, pleading hearts," for a moment in the incense clouds and soft lights, the mists and rosy tints of faith and love that floated round us in life's morning make once again the dear, long-lost, unreal world.

In Milan a new face has been put on the clock, its pulses beat with all the nervous action of modern towns, and its inhabitants, some three hundred thousand, appear proudly aware that they belong to one of the wealthiest manufacturing towns in Italy. Nowhere is the Milanese taste of to-day manifested to better advantage than in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, a huge glass-covered arcade in the form of a Latin cross, in the centre of which, over an octagon, rises a cupola, one hundred and eighty feet in height. The gallery is lined with shops that exhibit endless pretty and original ideas which even Parisians might envy.

Facing the Teatro della Scala stands a beautiful monument to Leonardo da Vinci—a statue of the master in Carrara marble, surrounded by four of his pupils. The vast theatre is now in wild confusion preparing for the approaching opening at Christmas, as only then and during the Carnival do performances take place.

In 1457 Francesco and Bianca Maria Sforza founded the Ospedale Maggiore, one of the largest hospitals in existence. Half Gothic and half Renaissance, the artist's skill has unfortunately been expended only upon the exterior, which, however, with its exquisite mouldings in terra-cotta is remarkably fine; interiorly, the arrangements are primitive in the extreme, and a surprisingly pauper air pervades the whole.

To the north-west of the city, the Alps in the far background, lies the Cimitero Monumentale. Through a beautiful entrance we come into this Campo Santo, a cemetery fifty acres in area. It is cut into huge sections by rectangular paths that are lined with the tombs of the richer classes, while in the centre of these sections the countless graves of the poor, arranged in regular rows, are marked by small, dark head-stones. Similar Campi for the children, or *bambini*, present an appearance strangely pathetic, the tiny tombstones, frightfully numerous, being plain white. Quite at the extremity of the cemetery stands the Tempio di Cremazione, an edifice constructed for the cremation of the dead of Milan—a very simple building, in the style of an ancient temple. The porch of semi-circular shape contains several urns, and an inscription above the door informs us that the structure was presented to the town in 1876 by Mr. Albert Keller, a Swiss resident. The first room we enter holds a glass case, beneath which the few bleached, crumbling bones show to what our bodies can be reduced. The walls of an adjoining chamber, from floor to ceiling, are divided into scores of "pigeon-holes," on the slabs of marble closing which the names of those whose ashes lie within may be inscribed. Below the pavement is a space assigned to the poor, who, by the way, are cremated gratuitously. In the largest apartment of this temple we find two ovens built into the side wall, and heated with fuel placed at the back. The first of these is more recent, three flames at the head consuming a body in fifty minutes; the second takes two hours to perform its work. Cremation seems here to be by no means unpopular, and one may only hope an ill-directed sentiment and childish conventionality, will not long hinder its universal favour in other lands.

Among the sad proofs of unscrupulous rapacity which Napoleon has left at every turn, it is no small pleasure to come across some of the results of a gentler humour. The Arco del Sempione, begun in 1804, was destined as a termination to the Simplon route. Like the Arc de Triomphe, standing up against the sky, it is worthy to be an entrance of Paradise. On the glistening white marble, of which the arch is entirely made, are sculptures mostly of Marchesi's.

But only "in the after silence on the shore" can one begin to realise this labyrinth of beauty, through which, alas, it is the fate of so many to rush wildly. Sometimes we may be half inclined to feel that in hope and dreams alone we live our happier life.

L. L.

Melano, Dec. 12, 1886.