

NORTHERN ITALY.

THE CONTINUATION OF AN INTERESTING SKETCH.

FLORENCE AND ITS ATTRACTIONS—PISA, ITS LEANING TOWER AND CHURCHES—GENOA "THE SUPERB" AND ITS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS—CONCLUSION OF THE NORTHERN TOUR.

WRITTEN FOR THE TRUE WITNESS, BY JOSEPH W. HECKMAN, C. E.

(CONCLUDED.)

Florence lies on both banks of the Arno, which is crossed by many bridges. On both sides of its banks are broad and handsome quays, the lungarno, where, at certain hours of the day, are seen crowds of people promenading and viewing the showy shops along its course. The Galleria degli Uffizi, near the Piazza Signoria, was given a day with the Pitti palace on the other side of the Arno, connected by the Ponte Vecchio. The numerous paintings found here of the many notable artists are from collections of the different European schools, which are displayed in successive galleries, among which, in the Italian collection, are those of Raphael, Michael Angelo and many others. Besides the pictures, there are statues and other interesting collections of art, such as the cabinet of gems, &c. The Pitti palace, the regal residence, contains a collection of paintings, which it is a known fact, cannot be excelled in all Italy for the array of masterpieces, as are seen entirely throughout. As to churches, Florence has many, and I will now try briefly to describe some of its principal ones seen. That of St. Lorenzo, founded in 390, is one of the most ancient churches in Italy. Here is some work done by Michael Angelo. The chapel of the prince, adjacent hereto, is indeed a gorgeous sight, done in costly marble, and having many valuable mosaics. Here are the tombs of the Medici family. This beautiful chapel is richly finished, having only a part of the pavement yet to complete, which is of great beauty. The new sacristy, built by Michael Angelo for Pope Clement VII. The sculptures of this artist found here are a sight never to be forgotten. The beautiful church of Santissimo Annunziata was greatly admired, the portico and courtyard a special feature. The interior is very fine, both as regards its construction and finish. The chapel to the left of the entrance, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin by the Medicis, whose altar and adornments, most exquisitely wrought with pure silver, is simply gorgeous. Crowds are continually worshipping before it and costly lamps are ever burning around it. The church of St. Croce was of great interest, containing as it does some of the most beautiful frescoes of Giotto, besides many other points of rare beauty, such as its marble pulpit. This church contains some beautiful monuments over the tombs of illustrious men like Michael Angelo, Dante and Galileo, whose remains lie buried here. The basilica of the Holy Spirit, containing numerous chapels, was one of the most attractive of the Florentine churches. Near this one again is that of St. Maria del Carmine, another interesting one, containing some beautiful paintings. Visited many others, such as St. Marco, St. Maria Maddalena, St. Maria Novella. The latter is of the Tuscan Gothic style of architecture and was very noticeable, being of large dimensions and having some fine specimens of Florentine art, which gives this church much fame. The National Museum was given a lengthy visit, containing as it does innumerable objects of interesting study, illustrating the medieval and modern history of Italian culture and art. The Academy of fine Arts ranks high in the attention of the visitor here, containing many fine paintings and statues of the noted artists such as "David," by Michael Angelo. The fine old cloister of the Recoletos is an elegant court of the early Renaissance style, whose frescoes, illustrating the history of St. John the Baptist, were viewed with much pleasure. A fine view of Florence was obtained from the piazza of Michael Angelo, from which point the whole city and its suburbs can advantageously be seen. The suburbs of Florence were visited also, as Fiesole containing a cathedral and the excavated ruins of an ancient theatre. Here resides the Superior-General of the Society of Jesus, Certosa, where I was shown through an old Carthusian monastery by one of the monks (a native of Dublin) whose church is of beautiful finish, with its magnificent monuments and fine carved halls. From the terrace here some very fine picturesque views were had, especially the valley running towards the Apennines. The monk told me Her Majesty Queen Victoria greatly admired this sight while on a visit to this monastery a couple of years ago. Other interesting features of my Florentine visit I could describe, but will stop here and continue my trip.

Leaving Florence early one morning for Genoa, I made a stop over for some four or five hours at Pisa, in order to view the piazza del Duomo with its three fine buildings, namely, the Leaning Tower, Cathedral and Baptistery, which I photographed. The Leaning Tower, at the east end of the Cathedral, took some seventy-five years to complete, consisting of eight stories, surrounded with half columns. The height is 179 feet with an inclination of 13 feet outside of the perpendicular. The general opinion, as now exists, is that this incline occurred during its construction, and subsequently, the upper stories were added in a curved-line and strengthened. Galileo, it is said, used this tower to experiment for the theory of the laws of gravitation. Seven bells are placed upon its top. The Cathedral is some eight centuries old and built entirely of white marble. Its facade is particularly fine, while its well proportioned interior, with its elaborate decoration of inestimable cost, is indeed beautiful, especially those of the sanctuary, with its fine altar and carved halls and mosaics of rare beauty. The Baptistery,

another building of marble at the west end of the Cathedral, is also a fine sight; it was begun in the 12th century. Its plan is circular, having a diameter of 100 feet and encircled with columns. The Campo Santo, or burial ground, is another of the Pisan sights. Pesa seemed to me a quiet city, though its population is some 27,000. The river Arno, which divides Florence, divides this city also. The view from the Ponte Solferino is very pretty, up and down the river. Near it is the famous little church of S. Maria della Spina, built in the French Gothic style, erected for the mariners in the early part of the 13th century. After seeing these mentioned sights I boarded the train for Genoa. The view from it, outside of the eighty tunnels, is very fine, as we rush along the shores of the Mediterranean. The large City of Spezia is passed whose situation upon a bold promontory, is strongly fortified, and where, as a naval station, many war ships were seen. Genoa was reached after five hours from Pesa, and as this city was the one from which I was to embark for Gibraltar, I will try to briefly describe it.

Genoa was taken as the centre of my tour while in Northern Italy, coming to it from Naples, Cannes and Pesa. This city is the great shipping port of Italy, in whose fine harbor are numerous slips from all parts of the world, a fine view of which was seen from the lighthouse at its western extremity. Genoa, though an old city, is gradually being modernized in a way, for here the electric power is used for lighting the streets and as the motor for the suburban train cars. With regard to the churches, it has many very fine ones, the prominent among which visited were the following: The Cathedral of S. Lorenzo, erected in 1100, with a fine interior finish, containing many chapels, having statues and paintings of several of the Genoese and other masters. The sacristy, containing many relics, was of deep interest. Near this church is that of S. Ambrogio, an old one, built by the Jesuits, is profusely decorated and has some beautiful paintings over its many altars. S. Maria, in Carignano, after the style of St. Peter's in Rome, has a fine location, from which a splendid view of the city can be had. SS. Annunziata is perfectly magnificent, which I oftentimes visited. The interior has fine proportions, being built with various colored marbles, especially noticeable is its twelve marble columns of great splendor. That of S. Siro is also of grand beauty. The small Gothic church of S. Mateo claimed also my attention, having, besides its fine interior, many memorials of the Doria family, whose palaces lie opposite this church, having marble fronts of rare beauty. The palaces found in Genoa are many and beautiful, one of which, the Rosso, I visited. This one was presented to the city some twenty years ago, and is noted for its valuable contents in way of its library, paintings, etc. The statue of Columbus, near the railway station, is one of the many fine monuments Genoa is proud of. I noticed the city has applied the name of this discoverer to many of its public buildings, etc., as Genoa claims his birth-place. The Campa Santo or burial place is also one of Genoa's main sights. Here are seen innumerable monuments in various designs, peculiar to Italy, of most costly workmanship. The circular mortuary chapel is finely finished, especially the massive columns of dark marble supporting its dome, under which is the High Altar.

In conclusion, I may here say, in the hurried description of this tour I have tried to make, I feel I have not done justice thereto, for I have embraced eight cities, and, as your readers are well aware, they are large ones, and contain hundreds of fine sights I have not alluded to. Again, I would like to say, any of your readers anticipating an Italian tour, would, I am sure, be perfectly satisfied with it. Now-a-days the mode of travelling is so comfortable and cheap, any one having some spare time should make this tour. Many people think Italy, being so far away, is outside the question! Not so, from Montreal to Naples via New York and Gibraltar can be done now in twelve days in palatial steamers with cheap rates, besides good living in Italy can be had at most reasonable rates to suit the taste. Again, there is the sea-voyage, which is a fine accessory to an individual's health; these items, with the numerous Italian sights, should be well considered, before any one makes a European tour elsewhere.

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THE CATHOLIC PRESS.

The Duty of Maintaining the High Standard Does Not Devolve on Editors Alone.

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One of the main functions of the newspaper is, of course, to give the news, to tell what is happening throughout the world. Modern scientific discovery has so changed the relations of time and space that the morning paper has been called the world's daily history.

The Catholic journalist, however, has a higher duty than to merely relate facts. His vocation bears with it a grave responsibility. It is his duty to present these facts in the light of Catholic truth which will show their relation to the eternal destiny of man. He must seek to elevate the taste of the people by supplying them with sound, wholesome reading. He must vindicate Catholic doctrines and defend the Church from the insidious attacks of her enemies. One of the most encouraging signs of the times is that Catholics can get a hearing. Presented to people willing to examine it, Catholic truth must prevail. Nine-tenths of the prejudice against the Church is the offspring of ignorance; and were Catholic aims and Catholic doctrines put clearly before the people, this prejudice would quickly disappear.

From the days of the venerable William Caxton the father of the English press, down to the present time, Catholics have ever made use of this powerful lever for the advancement of the people. For the last forty years, since which time journalism has become a real profession, Catholic newspapers have kept pace with their non-Catholic contemporaries. In Europe and in America Catholic editors and contributors to magazines occupy the foremost places in the ranks of the profession.

But not on the editors alone devolves the duty of maintaining the high standard of the Catholic press. Since the usefulness and excellence of the press is so evident, it is manifestly the duty of every Catholic to accord to it his generous support. Every man is, to a certain extent, his brother's keeper, and he must look to it that so powerful a means of spreading truth is assisted in every possible way. His duty does not consist merely in paying his subscription, and as frequently happens, in permitting his paper to remain for days unopened. It is incumbent on him to avail himself of the good therein afforded, and by fitting himself to appreciate good Catholic literature, to lend his influence towards the maintenance of a sound and elevated Catholic press.—Pittsburgh Catholic.

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THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN ITALY

From a purely political point of view we doubt very much if the political situation in Italy has not assumed a gravity in which a directorship pure and simple, acted upon and proclaimed, would not be preferable to the anarchy to which the country seems to be drifting. If the Parliamentary tension which now exists is not relieved by some force which does not seem to be of organic root in the Constitution, a portentous period is imminent. Signor Crispi has made Parliamentary government a mockery. The burden of the army changes is leaving the people of Italy in a condition the most deplorable of any on the face of the earth. Signor Crispi's shady dealings with the Banca Romano we shall not examine. We think that a man of his years has had some other object to serve than mere personal gain. However, such allegations are made every day, and unfortunately for Crispi and King Humbert, there has been no unequivocal repudiation of them. A country whose chief minister is accused of the most flagrant abuse of power, and who takes no effective steps to meet the charges of his accusers, may continue to hold the reins of power, but he can scarcely fail to lose the respect of the people.

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Patience is a virtue for which there is no substitute. There is often no other way out of a difficulty than the way of patience. But this really is a most gracious way when the sufferer finds it. Nor is it a way which anyone need be ashamed to take, for our Lord recommends it: In your patience ye shall win your souls. He knows that there is nothing left to us but this one thing—patience. We must use it: we must win our souls, our very lives, by it.

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