

Our Contributors.

NOTES OF VISITS TO FLORENCE, ITALY.

Dante, many centuries ago, called Florence "La bellissima e famosissima figlia de Roma"—the most beautiful and most famous daughter of Rome. Poets of the present century have written of it in language equally laudatory. One says:

Of all the fairest cities of the earth
None is so fair as Florence. 'Tis a gem
Of purest ray; and what a light broke forth,
When it emerged from darkness I Search within,
Without, all is enchantment! 'tis the Past
Contenting with the Present; and in turn
Each has the mastery.

Another writes:

O, Florence! with thy Tuscan fields and hills,
Thy famous Arno, fed with all the rills,
Thou brightest star of stars—bright Italy.

Many writers have told of her palaces, churches, campaniles, etc., and of their builders. Many volumes have been written to describe her art treasures—printings and sculptures—among the finest the world contains; of her faction fights between Guelf and Ghibellins, and stories such as "Romola" have painted her manners and customs centuries ago, have told of her martyrs who suffered for being in advance of their age; and poets at different periods, from Dante onwards, have added their contributions, to invest the whole with a glory possessed by few other cities.

Let me now describe some of my rambles round the fair city during several visits, and tell briefly of such places and those associations as are likely to interest readers generally.

I shall begin with some notes made during the

FESTA OF ALL SAINTS

which occurred here, as in all Roman Catholic countries, on the first and second days of the present month. The first day of November is always a strict Festa, when the people visit a number of churches, at least six or seven, and the second is occupied in carrying fresh wreaths to the cemeteries to be placed on the graves of relatives and friends. What a crush I have often seen on such occasions in Paris! Here I found that several, to avoid crowding, took advantage of the first day to deposit their offerings. I went to the

PROTESTANT CEMETERY,

situated on one of the broad viales or promenades which, under various names, surround the city. These occupy the site of the old fortifications long since removed, though the old gates are allowed to stand. My chief object was to renew my acquaintance with the elegant tomb erected over the grave of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose residence, 9 Via Maggio, where she lived, wrote, and where she died in 1861, I had previously seen. Some admirer had placed a wreath of roses on the artistic structure ere I arrived. I am sorry I cannot describe it; it only has the letters "E. B. B." in black on the white marble, without any other inscription of any kind. Alongside is the tomb of the wife of Holman Hunt, with an inscription to the effect that she had died in the first year of her married life.

The day was beautiful and I lingered long, and found the names of many sculptors and painters who had come here to study, and who here found their graves. Many military men, too, who had fought for Queen and country in foreign lands, have here laid down their swords and rest peacefully in this lovely spot.

I next visited

SAN MINIATO,

the Campo Santo of Florence. It is upon a hill to the southeast, looking down upon the Arno and the city. Both the church and the hill are filled with monuments, from which can be learned the taste of modern sculptors, who seem to copy faithfully dress, lace, ornaments, etc. The church is one of the few existing examples of the Pisan Florence style, which preceded the Gothic, and probably dates from the twelfth century. It is situated on one of the finest promenades in Italy, the

VIALE DEI COITI,

or promenade of the hills, which begins at the Porta Romana, ascends the heights in many windings, leads along the slopes to San Miniato, and then descends in a long curve to the Arno, where it ends. It is

nineteen yards wide and four miles long, and is bordered with beautiful pleasure grounds, containing various trees and hedges of roses. It bears different names, such as Viale Macchiavelli, Viale Galilei, etc., and where it passes San Miniato a large projecting terrace is formed called

PIAZZALE MICHEL ANGELO,

immediately overlooking the Arno, and from which the whole city and its environs can be seen. In the centre of the piazza stands a copy of Michael Angelo's "David" in bronze, the original of which, now under glass, is in the Academy of Fine Arts, after having stood in front of the Palazzo Vecchio from 1504 to 1873. Near the promenade stands the

TORRE DEL GALLO,

which contains several reminiscences of Galileo, who is said to have studied the moon from this bower:

The moon whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the top of Fiesole
Or, in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.

The "Star Tower" is still as graceful, as simple, as homely, as closely girt with blossoming boughs, and with tulip-crimsoned grasses, as when from its roof, in the far-off time, its master read the secrets of the stars. At another place on the same hill is seen the

VILLA OF GALILEO,

marked by his bust and an inscription. Here he passed the last years of his life (1631-42), surrounded by a few faithful friends, and latterly deprived of sight, and here he was visited by Milton, who went to Italy in 1638. Perhaps your readers will bear with me if I close this letter with a rather long quotation from Rogers' "Italy"—always a favourite poem of mine. The following is at least appropriate

Nearer we hail
Thy sunny slope, Arcet i, sung of old
For i's green vine; dearer to me, to most,
As dwell on by that great astronomer,
Seven years a prisoner at the city gate,
Lest in his grave clothes, sacred be
His Villa (justly it was called "The Gem")
Sacred the lawn, where many a cypress threw
Its length of shadow, while he watched the stars!
Sacred the vineyard, where, while yet his sight
Glimmered, at blush of morn he dressed his vine,
Chanting aloud in gaiety of heart
Some verse of Aristotle! There, unseen,
Gazing with reverent awe—Milton, his guest,
Just then came forth, all life and enterprise,
He, in his old age and extremity,
Blind, at noonday exploring with his staff;
His eyes upturned as to the golden sun,
His eyeballs idly rolling. Little then
Did Galileo think whom he received;
That in his hand he held the hand of one
Who could requite him—who would spread his name
Over lands and seas—greater as himself, nay, greater;
Milton, as little that in him he saw,
As in a glass, what he himself should be,
Destined so soon to fill on evil days
And evil tongues—so soon, alas! to live
In darkness, and with dinger, compassed round
And soil wide.

Florence, Italy, November, 1888.

T. H.

IMPRESSIONS OF SCANDINAVIA.

The Scandinavian tour is becoming more popular every year. Norway had a larger number of visitors this season than ever,—drawn, doubtless, by the increased facilities offered by the steamship companies for the enjoyment of its magnificent scenery. Sweden welcomed many foreign guests, who came to attend the International Conference of Young Men's Christian Associations in her capital, and who must have returned with most pleasing impressions of one of the least known of European countries. Denmark presented the special attraction of an exhibition in Copenhagen, and so many were induced to include it in their round of summer travel.

In the present article I propose giving a few impressions that have fixed themselves on my mind as the result of a run across Scandinavia. In about three weeks' time I traversed the three countries included under that general term, covering a distance of about 2,000 miles, visiting the capitals, and seeing the distinctive scenery of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. I do not claim that in so brief a period, and so cursory a tour, I succeeded in reaching results that can only be attained after long residence in, and thorough acquaintance with the countries and the peoples of Northern Europe; but I can at least vouch

for the vividness and the reality of what I did see during my holiday ramble, however feebly I may convey my impressions to the readers of the *Magazine*.

And first, as to the scenery of the three countries. Norway easily carries off the palm in this respect. Indeed it has been objected that the attractions of Norway are so exclusively of a scenic kind, that its seemingly endless succession of fjords, mountains, and waterfalls becomes somewhat monotonous to the traveller. There is force in this objection if the tourist confines himself to the regular route of the coasting steamers, and only leaves the ship occasionally to visit some notable valley or glacier. To the jaded worker there may be a charm even in this monotony. He does not want the perpetual movement and mental unrest of ordinary sight-seeing, and may therefore be amply content with what he can enjoy at leisure from the deck of the steamer. But this is certainly not the way to see Norwegian scenery to full advantage. By all means sail up and down one or two of the great fjords, especially the Hardanger and the Sogne; do not miss a visit to one of the stupendous waterfalls; seize the opportunity of seeing a glacier; and on no account leave the sublime Naerodal out of the programme of your tour. All those things are distinctive, and can be seen during a short holiday without diverging from the beaten track; but there yet remains one most necessary item, if anything like a complete view of Norway is desired. That is a drive by carriage or stolkjaerie across country, and from personal experience I can recommend the magnificent road from Laerdal-soren, at the head of the Sogne fjord, to Odnæs on the Randsfjord—a journey of 150 miles, which forms the main link in the great land route from Bergen to Christiania. Three days are required to cover the distance, and not only is the scenery most picturesque throughout, rising at times to the wildly grand, but there is an element of romance about the style of travel which recalls the old posting days that have been superseded, nearly everywhere, by the iron-horse. No one can complain of monotony on this route. Now you are driving down a valley enclosed by sterile mountains, and again you find yourself ascending by a winding road to a lofty plateau. The next morning you are spinning downhill to scenes of smiling verdure, and there suddenly opens to your view the prospect of a lovely lake. After some miles along its precipitous banks you pass into the depths of glorious pine-forests, which clothe with beauty the lake-studded valley of the Valdres. Looking back after awhile, you obtain an entrancing retrospective view of the whole stretch of the richly wooded dale, with the Alp like summits of the Jotunheim range as a noble background in the far distance. This and the view down the Naerodal from the height of Stalheim will live in my memory as the grandest prospects I enjoyed in Norway. Nor in enumerating the features of this route must I forget the crossing of the hill of Tonsaasen, most interesting as a feat of road construction, and most pleasant as exemplifying the softer beauties of Norwegian landscape. The nearer you get to the eastern boundary of the country the tamer does the scenery become. There are some fine fjords in Southern Norway, and the view from the train above Drammen, on the way to Christiania, is superb of its kind; but the capital, however pretty in its surroundings, must, on the whole, be pronounced rather a dull place. It has one fine street, Karl Johan's Gade, which has been compared to the Princes Street of Edinburgh, but not many Scotchmen would concede pre-eminence in this or in any other respect to the capital of Norway over their own romantic town.

Before passing from the subject of Norwegian scenery, I might venture to compare it with that of Switzerland. I would say, that while Norway possesses something quite unique and unsurpassed in her fjords, and can boast of waterfalls far exceeding in number and in volume those of Switzerland, her mountains are too uniform in their level, and too rounded in their outline, to compare advantageously with the majestic peaks of Central Europe. In Norway one has, however, a sense of greater vastness and expansiveness than in Switzerland. Nature has, in the northern country, carried out her work on a broader scale, while she has achieved more astounding results in the lesser area at her disposal in the south. Those who love large effects on an extensive canvas will probably prefer Norway, while Switzerland will retain her special charms for those who delight in the