

ST. PETER'S.

HOW THE WORLD APPEARS FROM THE GREAT DOME.

Old Sensations at this Point of Vantage
—A Kaleidoscopic View of Rome's Grandeur and Poverty.

It becomes necessary to scale the dome of St. Peter's. One has not seen Rome until he leans from that airy pinnacle, and finds the world spread out below him swathed in the warm mists of the deepening spring. I suppose everybody has been through this ordeal; but it is the privilege of each to tell his own story, and so I tell mine.

You enter the door at the left, passing at once from the serene, delightful atmosphere of the church into a kind of winding alley, that worms its way up to the roof of the building. It is wide, and floored with Italian bricks; and so easy and regular is the grade that one might ride a donkey on to the broad roof without difficulty. Here a multitude of domes, small and great, cluster about the vast dome, that seems still as far from us and as inaccessible as when we looked at it from the great piazza below. The statues along the facade are so clumsy and so monstrous that they appear almost shapeless when we stand like pygmies under their shadows. Throngs of people are wandering about the vast inclosure, that is not unlike some new quarter of the city; for the walls that shut us in are just high enough to hide the view and we can scarcely realize that we are not on *terra firma*.

The next move ushers us into the dome itself. From the heavy cornice that surrounds it on the inner side we look over into the awful depths below us.

THE THOUSAND LAMPS THAT BURN FOREVER

before the confessionals seem like sparks of fire. Little black figures creep to and fro across the marble plains, looking so small and insignificant it seems impossible that they are of our kind. The splendid mosaics are here seen to great advantage; and though monstrous, they are still beautiful.

Again we ascend some hundred steps. We enter a narrow passage that slopes with the curve of the dome, and it is as though we were thrown upon our beam ends. The passage grows so close and narrow that the thought of being wedged in here by some panic-stricken party is not pleasant. When we have again come into a little chamber that lies under the great globe that crowns the cupola, we all breathe more freely and try to appear excessively jolly. We looked into the dome from the second gallery, but looked only.

It is not exhilarating to feel one's feet clinging to a smooth ceiling like a fly, and with only four feelers as one's support. From the window directly over the centre of the dome we peer down upon the top of the *battacchino*, and had a hideous sensation in the region of the waistcoat. I wonder how birds manage to get used to this sort of thing? Birds and sailors—but sailors have no stomachs. Who ever heard of a sea-sick sailor?

From the balcony above this dreadful hollow we looked out upon the lonely landscape. How near the hills seemed, how low the hundred domes of Rome? On one hand

THE WONDERFUL VATICAN

with its immense gardens spread like a map. The Tiber flowed down between the glaring wall of the old city, looking positively splendid in the sunshine—though, Heaven knows it is a hideous stream. There were many people with us in the dome. Iron gates, in charge of keepers, are kept closed at several stations in the way to the summit, and only a few—perhaps twenty—people are permitted to enter at once; thus all the passages are kept free, and the way is plain, though fatiguing.

A dozen good people, with hardly one good lung full of breath between them, awaited their turn to enter the hollow ball that tops the dome—beyond which no man desires to go in the flesh. A plump gentleman preceded me; three ladies of assorted sizes followed. The steps were now so narrow that it was convenient to mount them crab-fashion. We are at least entering the throat of

the globe; having wedged our way to the corkscrew steps, we came to a perpendicular ladder that led to the goal of our ambition. The worthy leader valiantly sprang onto the first round of the ladder. He managed to work his way into the narrow tube that communicated with the globe, and there he stuck fast and firm. I helped him to return in a very stony condition, and full of indignation at the absurdly small entrance to that most desirable chamber.

Somehow, we—he and I—managed to pass each other, miraculously perhaps; and I started to enter the ball alone. The ladies, terrified by the ill-fortune of our corpulent friend, relinquished the chase. I squeezed through the aperture at the top of the ladder, and found myself alone in the ball on the top of St. Peter's.

THE COPPER GLOBE IS CAPABLE OF CONTAINING SIXTEEN PEOPLE

at one sitting; but deliver me from meeting any friends in such uncomfortable quarters. The sun had been shining upon the thin copper walls for five hours. The place was as hot as a caldron. I crouched in one corner of it, and wondered how it would seem to be suddenly set a rolling down the great mountain side of the dome, and how much of me would be left to tell the tale when I came to a standstill at last. It was singularly silent up there; it was a kind of silence with a hole in it—if you can conceive of such a thing. I seemed to have the strangest music that ever charmed these ears; sounds that were born of the air—solid sunbeams, or moonbeams, perhaps, for they were not as sharp as a sunbeam; a kind of tinkling and droning, as if I heard the hum of the planets and the far-away clash of stars when they cross one another's orbits. I don't know where that sound came from; I don't want to know. Shades of Wagner! It was as unlike anything earthly as anything heavenly can be. I merely listened and wondered, and was lost in a kind of reverie that was not so light and airy as the atmosphere that surrounded me; in fact, I fell to dreaming over modern Rome.

The roof of St. Peter's is so far above the city that

ONE MIGHT EASILY FORGET THE EXISTENCE OF A CITY.

The noise is lost, at all events; for the dome towers three hundred feet above the roofs. I think of Rome now as a whole—as a city of tangled, dirty and very ugly streets; of the people as a mass of cheerful souls, who work hard for a living—it is hard work leading in this climate—and who have no home life according to our notion. The Roman houses are great bars as ugly and as inconvenient as possible. The palace—any large house that has once been occupied by a dignitary is a palace for ever more—the palaces are a little less ugly, a little less inconvenient than the rest of the buildings, and this is the only difference.

You occupy a room or a suite of rooms in a flat, and it is by no means necessary to be on speaking terms with the rest of the house. You have your servants, who provide for your table in the house. Or you go out to a cafe, as you please. The rooms are usually furnished with cheap and gaudy trimmings, a quantity of very bad paintings, and a large proportion of useless, ugly and antiquated furniture. Here you receive your guests, who are directed through a dark or badly lit hall by the porter or portress sitting at the hall-door, which is nearly always suggestive of a stable.

You go of an evening or by day, walk in the middle of the street, or drive if you prefer it; haunt the three or four villas that are thrown open to the public. There is no seclusion, no rest for the spirit, no comfort for the body.

IT IS ALMOST FATAL TO BATHE IN ROME; you may moisten yourself occasionally, but there is an everlasting fear of fever, and the fever is almost as serious as death itself.

The hotels are like all hotels—a kind of conventional life without any of the gracious benefits of a convent. There are innumerable petty *cliques* in this poor old city—modern innovations. The young Protestants, who here spring up like mushrooms and flourish like them; the Catholic party, having a grand contempt for the outsiders; the Court party, chiefly represented by young officers resplendent in gold lace, and with the slim legs so common in Italy—most of them disappear mysteriously at night, but re-



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PUBLIC NOTICE.

Public notice is hereby given that the Fabrique of the Parish of St. Louis of Montreal will apply to the Legislature of the Province of Quebec, at the next session of the same, to obtain a Bill granting civil erection of said Parish and the power to impose an assessment to complete the construction of the Church. Montreal, 3rd November, 1894.

P. G. MARTINEAU,
Attorney for the Petitioner.