

Those who have not seen the Acropolis of Athens can scarcely realize the beauty of this immense marble pile; the sublimity of color is in harmony with the subtlety of form. It is not the cold blue white marble of Italy, so common with us, but a translucent warm ivory tint, becoming often ocher yellow; this deep color, which is only surface, is usually attributed to great age, but this is not correct, as is proved by the coloring of recent fractures on the Parthenon, and by modern buildings in Athens, a good example of which is a high slab plinth round the Royal Palace. This marble already is nearly as yellow as the Parthenon. The marble contains minute crystals of iron pyrites, the decomposition of which colors the marble a yellow ocher. In the Greek temples of Delphi, Sicily, and Pompeii the common worked stone was plastered over with a marble-like stucco, which is thought to be marble dust with lime and albumen. I think now, from what I saw recently in Greece, that it may be white crystalline marble not quite burnt through into lime; this I saw being finely crushed with rollers by horse power for plaster work.

WHITE MARBLE.

Roughly speaking, perhaps, three-fourths of the white marble used in the world at the present day comes from the Carrara district of Italy. The marble mountains extend some twelve miles; they consist of mountain peaks going up to an altitude of 6,000 feet. The sides of these mountains are scored with valleys and ravines which have only three outlets — Carrara, Massa, and Seravezza. On the sides of these valleys are the different quarries, of which there are some 600, "producing annually about 200,000 tons." The water coming from these ravines turns innumerable sawing mills, which slab annually some 60,000 tons of marble. The towns are full of workshops and studios. The marble businesses support in the district some 10,000 people. Any young man who likes mountain scenery, with picturesque sketching and architecture, cannot find a hunting-ground anywhere to surpass this. He will find beautiful Byzantine, Mediæval and Renaissance work in marble that cannot be surpassed, or rarely equaled, even in Italy. It was the land of the

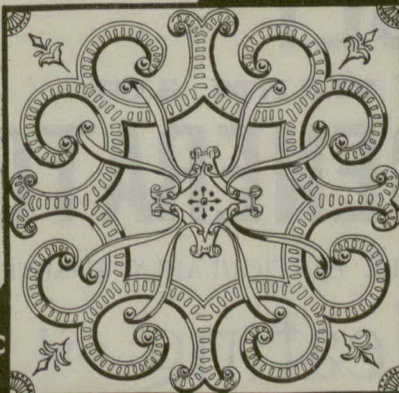
Medici, the playground of Michelangelo and Donatello. I believe a young man could spend a month, pay his fare from London and back, hotel accommodation, including food and Chianti wine, ad libitum, for less than it would cost at an English seaside town. He would also pick up a little Italian. Nearly all the best statuary of the world is quarried at Mont Altissimo, Seravezza, near Carrara. This is the famous H-marked statuary of commerce, H. being for Heuraux, the proprietor. In Italy there are also old white quarries near the coast not far from Grossetta, between Pisa and Rome. The Cathedral of Milan was built from quarries above Baveno.

Spain has several extensive deposits of white marble. The best is the one the Moors used at the Alhambra, the quarries of which I visited some years ago; they are at Macael, between Lorca and Baza. There is good white marble in Trazos Montes, Portugal, where an enterprising company ten years ago quarried £20,000 worth without any prospect of getting the blocks away, and there they are now. France has some white marbles, but there is little demand for them, although there is a considerable duty on foreign produce in France. Norway has extensive deposits, though very little of it is good. Some was used for ashlar at the Junior Constitutional Club; it seems to be standing very well. The finest quality is at Velfjord; it is only about 100 feet off very deep water for shipping. There is further north a crystalline white marble, which is a dolomite.

The late war of the Greeks and Turks would seem to have enriched the Athenians, for they are pulling down their old buildings and erecting lofty Pentelic marble ones in their places. These are full of architectural detail, which is very well done. The marble is chiefly obtained from the south or Athens side of the mountain, near the ancient workings. A company is now working the north or Marathon side. I have examined the different quarries very carefully, and am of the opinion that they are the same beds as the south side, but the famous old cave statuary marble is not yet found. They are extracting large blocks, some of which are being used in the safety repairs of the Parthenon.

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