

## VISIT TO ST. ELMO.

"We went to St. Elmo. You know from pictures that the fortress is built on a rock, three sides of which shelve steeply down; the fourth merges into the hill behind, still standing somewhat higher than the hill.

"From the ramparts you see the whole of Naples like a map spread out. The huge walls of the fortress, growing straight out of the rock, look imposing enough; but none of us had an idea, till we were there, that they form only the fourth étage as it were of a four-storied building. We were taken about the great square which they enclose, with its barrack buildings, its mounds of shells, its great guns and big mortars. When we had seen the top part, which covers an immense space, they asked us if we would like to see the covered batteries. They opened a large gate in the middle of the enclosed square, and with a lantern we began to descend a wide paved road, almost as steep as a staircase. When we reached the lower level we found ourselves among immense tunnels, very wide and lofty, which follow, at a varying distance of from ten to thirty feet from the outside, the shape of the great rock on which the upper building stands.—Wherever the tunnel approached near enough to the outside, the intervening mass was pierced with a great round hole, at which stood a cannon, (they now have all got their noses turned inwards); and from the heavy mysterious gloom of these huge caverns you caught sight of the most exquisite little vignette views framed in black rock, sometimes fringed with maiden-hair fern—little pictures perfectly painted. The effect was wonderful, from the concentration of light caused by looking through a tube, perhaps fifteen feet long, with black darkness on our side. At one time it was the Red Palace with its arcades; at another a museum or church; then a bright bit of sea with men-of-war riding at anchor. The maiden's hair was not growing at all; for some had been newly chiselled out, to enable the guns to be better pointed down into the street. There were, perhaps, thirty in all. Then they showed us the big ovens quite at hand to red-heat the balls that they might set fire to any building they struck, and balls

standing near, waiting to be heated. Some of the guns swept the draw-bridge and causeway by which one ascends from the outer wall; and there are all the necessaries for a body of troops to live down there, even if the outworks were taken—mills for grinding corn, bread-ovens, sleeping-huts, &c. This place is perfectly bomb proof. They talked of destroying St. Elmo; but none of us could understand how they could destroy this place, except by blasting away the entire hill.

"Here and there were trap-doors which led down to a lower étage just like the upper one: that makes three floors; and now come the dungeons.

"These have no communication with the batteries. To reach them we went a long way down the sloping covered road which leads to the Castle from the drawbridge. I think the door we went in by was on a level with the mouths of those wicked gun-holes. After entering it we went still further down steps and sloping passages cut roughly in the rock, until we came to a large circular dome-shaped cavern, the light of which was very dim. At one side of this cave-hall, there was a funnel-shaped opening, beginning wide and growing narrower, until it reached the face of the rock and open air, where it was heavily barred. I think it looked towards the sea and islands of the west, but we could not see anything distinctly. All around this hall were little huts of mason-work, detached one from the other, that there might be less chance of communication. They had heavy doors faced with iron, if I remember rightly, and in each door a little window with a heavy shutter and bolts; and it was only through this window that the cell could borrow a little light from the large cave which was already so dim, and from which not a speck of green or of sky could be seen. I imagine, from the shape of the bars in the little window, that the door was never opened even to give food. The windows had an opening into which you could have slid a soup plate, which will give you an idea of their size; and the people there confidently assert that the shutters were closed by day. Inside each hut was a bed made of two boards, fixed in the corner, a little sloping, to save a pillow; in one the bed was of stone, with