



### The Pace and the Toll.

(By The Spartan.)

"Americans are the fastest-living nation on the earth. They are fast becoming a Southern people!" Such was the reflection of an artist who has lately returned from Europe, where ample opportunity was afforded for contemplation and comparison. "The Southern races have reached glorious climaxes, but invariably they have suddenly crashed to ruin."

The statements call up rather a tragic picture, but are they not after all suggestive of a very great and dangerous truth? Haste, turmoil, strenuousness, death-or-glory competition bristle forth everywhere in America. Perhaps we do not like war. Nevertheless, we prefer slaughter to slowness. Railroads kill thousands; automobiles mangle almost equal numbers.

Such madness for speed, such lust for record-breaking in everything, is the first cousin of the madness of insanity, and near kin to the insatiable thirst for excitement of the tottering Rome in the days of the Empire.

Is there any good reason why we should keep the poor, law-loving body charged to the bursting-point with dynamics? Need twentieth-century life be made a perpetual cavalry charge? And is the span of life so intolerably long that we must burn out the fires that maintain it by the very quickest and most spectacular means?

Facing these questions, moreover, stand the unquestionable facts that the great and lasting works of mankind are not reeled off a la hundred-yard-dash, nor yet trailed from the tail-end of a Bleriot aeroplane. No; they are worked out in perfect self-control and deliberation. They require the leavening influence of the days, and months, and years. Life in America need not be reduced to the basis of a quick-lunch counter, with a Beelzebub of unrest wielding an indiscriminate lash.

"A Southern people!" That is it,—nimble of foot, nerves a-tingle, aspiration hot and ceaseless even though in the attitude of calmness, passions too often on the raw edge, the meaning of rest and relaxation buried with the remotest Greek mythology.

In this idea of rest and relaxation we are more criminally careless than Southern races, indeed. For the Latin people love their siestas. Strange, isn't it?—when by all means they should be braying away on Wall street with eye single to the almighty dollar.

"The fastest-living nation on earth." If this is the case, we must pay for it. Swift transportation of all kinds comes high nowadays. If our competence in life is snatched with the greedy haste of a nomad, that competence is going to be discounted by a rival nomad,—or we might call her a rival Amazon—Dame Nature!

Yes, we can hurry in this twentieth century. Only one force in creation can beat the pace we set,—that vigilant, lightning-eyed Amazon. She will be on hand to do the discounting. We name the speed. She collects the fare.

And of her exactions these are a few,—nervous wrecks in countless thousands, cases of heart-failure with every tolling of an hour, asylums filled to the shingles, premature deaths more numerous than the sands of the Sahara. We hope the figures are exaggerated, but it is time to see the danger at all events.

And what of the opposing ideas, rest and relaxation? "Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care"—this is rest literally—and eight hours of the said knitting are none too many for the enormous "unravelling" of "sleeves" that most of us do during the other sixteen

hours. Let us further apply a more homely and more exacting rule.—Let the knitting commence at 10 p. m. There seems to be nothing in all science to give a reason, but nevertheless these hours before midnight are one of the most indefinitely-precious gifts Nature has in her whole store-house. Comic opera, and bridge, and Italian waltzes, may be preferable, but again Nature never fails to be at the vestibule with wide-open eyes and a toll-box. Rest, then, and rest literally. The "brain and brawn" that built up North America was nursed to maturity largely by these very sleeping-hours, or we should not possess so much of it to squander to-day.

And in the wakeful hours—relaxation! This need not be physical inertia. Do a day's work, not in fevered spasms, but with deliberate method! Half of the sixteen hours ought to be enough,—then relax. This is possible in many and pleasant ways. It need not be ascetic in the least. Poetry can be relaxation, and good prose, so with the piano and the world of song. Indeed, a painter's pastel and brush may take jaded nerves to Lotus-fields that are nearer than they seem, while that much-neglected art of conversation is a kindred helper.

Tempus fugit! and so do some of the aeroplanes. Nevertheless, if man had not been intended to rest and relax, creation wouldn't have included that precious pulling down of the blinds with each revolution of the haste-bidden old earth, and man would probably have been made with dynamos in his epidermis, winged, and shod with seven-leagued boots.

### Letters from Abroad.

BY MEDITERRANEAN SHORES.

XI.

Rome, April 21, 1913.

My dear Jean,—To-day, Rome is celebrating her 2666th birthday. (Quite an elderly lady, isn't she?) Flags are flying from all the seven hills; bands are playing in the piazzas and parks, and "pa" and "ma" and all the children are out for a holiday. Just 2666 years ago to-day, the mythical Romulus is said to have ploughed the furrow around the Palatine Hill, where the first wall of Rome was built, and now scientists, historians, antiquarians, and excavators, are feverishly trying to locate the exact place.

Rome is so overpoweringly historic that it is almost depressing. You feel as if you were wading through centuries of ghosts, and every stone you look at seems to have a prehistoric air about it that makes you feel as new as a mushroom. I think the history of Rome is red with blood, and based on massacres and martyrdoms. Some of the galleries are lined with pictures of gory scenes of past days—innocent people being butchered on the streets by brutal soldiers; men being burned at the stake; hacked to death with knives; torn to pieces by ferocious beasts; singed with red-hot irons, and being tortured to death in every horrible way conceivable. It fairly makes one squirm to walk past these blood-spattered canvases.

We have been doing considerable sight-seeing since we came here, and do not feel such a vivid green as we did at first. I often wish one could take hypodermic injections of history just before starting out to visit monuments of past ages. It would be so much easier than digging small-type facts out of Bedeker, because, for some inscrutable reason, you can never find the right page when you are in front of the object you wish

to read about. There is a sad story told of one earnest student who systematically "did" every room in a certain museum according to his guidebook, and when he had finished, discovered, to his horror and dismay, that he had made the awful mistake of starting on the wrong side of the building, and taken the last room first.

We are very pleasantly located here in a pension on the slope of the Pincian hill. Our suite opens on a balcony purple with wistaria, which overlooks a charming Italian garden with a rose-covered pergola down the center leading to a quaint fountain in the wall. Prim little paths, guarded by white statues of ancient Romans, intersect the garden. I am not acquainted with any of these ancients except Nero, that imperial lunatic who fiddled while Rome burned. We have our afternoon tea in the garden under the lemon trees, and it is really quite delightful except for the baneful presence of the aforesaid Nero. We are within a stone's throw of the Piazza di Spagna, which is the center of foreign life in Rome. It really looks more like a slice of England than a bit of Italy. The street signs are mostly English; there are English libraries; English tea-rooms; English chemists, and other shops of all kinds, and a big department store called "Old England." Nearly every person you meet on the piazza is speaking English. I haven't heard so much of my native language any place else in Europe. It makes one feel quite at home to see so many English signs on the street, but I must confess I was startled one day when I was suddenly confronted with this: "Presbyterian Church." I had a sort of queer, Sundayish feeling come over me, which carried me back to those by-gone Sundays on Uncle John's farm. I felt real good and pious for a few minutes.

Appropos of churches, I just want to tell you that there are over four hundred of them in Rome. The amount of wealth lavished upon the interiors is something fabulous. They are perfect museums of art, but colder than Greenland. For that reason we do not linger long in any of them. We have adopted the plan of peeping into every one we pass, although sometimes, if the temperature is not too arctic, we stay for a service. One afternoon when we were out walking we went into fifteen churches. That is our highest record. It was on that particular afternoon that Miss Morris distinguished (or extinguished) herself. She wanted to know the name of the church we were about to enter, and calmly approached an elderly Italian gentleman who was standing by the door and questioned him in her best Italian. I may say confidentially that her Italian has marked peculiarities, and is confined to a few words and phrases which are sometimes not understood by anyone but herself.

"Quanto nova?" said she to the man, under the impression that she was asking the name of the church.

The man looked at her blankly.

"Quanto nova?" she repeated, pointing to the church.

"Non capisco" (I don't understand), said the man, and then added in very good English, "I know not about eggs."

"Eggs!" she exclaimed, in surprise. "Si, si, madame. You ask about eggs."

"No, no! I asked the name of the church."

"Ah!" he said, smiling amusedly.

"I understand—you make one little mistake, madame. You say nova (eggs), instead of Duoma (church), and, of course, I am very astonished."

I have been studying Italian a little myself, but must say that I find the

coat-tail method much easier to acquire than the oral. It is very simple. All you have to do is to pull the coat-tail of the driver and point in the direction you wish to go, and when you reach the desired spot, pull his coat-tail again and he stops the carriage.

While I am on the subject of churches (and you can't get away from them in Rome), I would like to tell you about the Church of the Capuchins here. It is very much visited by tourists because of the curious anatomical display in the crypt. There are four large rooms there, each one ornamented with fantastic wall and ceiling decorations made with the bones of departed monks of the order. The monks were buried at first in the plot of earth brought from Jerusalem, which occupies the middle of each room, but the space was limited, and in time became so crowded that there was no room for the new arrivals, so to speak. So, thousands of the oldest inhabitants of the consecrated ground were exhumed, their bones sorted out, and used for mural decorations. Quite an ingenious idea, wasn't it? Some of the results are very curious. In one room there is an altar of skulls, before which is suspended a hanging lamp of assorted bones. In the walls are niches, and in each one is a skeletonized Capuchin monk in a dusty, brown robe, and ancient rosary.

The Capuchin art craze seems to have taken the peculiar form of hideous mortuary exhibits. This one was less nauseating than the one in the catacombs at Palermo. It seems very strange that the monk who conducts you to these gruesome places is invariably big and fat, and healthy-looking. Can it be that plump guides are selected with the special idea of emphasizing the contrast between the living and the dead?

When we first came to Rome we patronized the street-cars extensively in our daily peregrinations, but one day when we were in a great hurry to get some place, and all the cars were packed, someone suggested taking a cab. Harmony demurred at first, and said she was under the impression that cabs, like matrimony, should not be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. We debated the question, and concluded it might be more expensive, but would save time, and time was precious. So we all piled into a taxi, and when we reached our destination it registered just one lire (20 cents). Since then we have abandoned cars and taken to cabs. It is much more interesting as you drive through all sorts of curious little back streets, and see more of the native life of the city.

One of the most charming things about Rome is the fountains. They are of every size, variety, and age. Every piazza has its fountain. One of the most famous is the Trevi. Into its broad basin many pennies are thrown by enthusiastic tourists, because there is a legend that if you drop a penny into the Fountain of Trevi, you will be sure to return to Rome. The small boys in the neighborhood are good divers, and the money does not stay long under water. There is a saying that in Rome one is never out of the sight of a church, or out of the sound of running water, and I really believe it is true.

Several times a week we go up on the Pincian hill in the afternoon to see the view, and the people, and hear the band play. From the terrace one looks down on hundreds of roof-gardens, and away across the housetops to the big dome of St. Peter's, behind which the sun goes down. Here and there beyond the roofs one gets glimpses of the Campagna, looking like a great gray sea. The late afternoon is very gay on the Pincio.