

century, and is formed of unhewn stones closely packed together, which were at one time covered with earth, but now protrude their heads in bold relief, to the great discomfort of the climber. This is the road chosen by those who prefer to walk or make the ascent on the back of a donkey. Though the latter *modus ascendendi* has a sort of novelty in it, it is not much better than the former; for the muscular energy wasted in beating the donkey up the hill, is far in excess of that required to make the journey on foot, not to speak of the number of times the rider has to dismount, or more properly speaking, put his feet on the ground, and help the donkey to rise after he has missed his footing on the round and slippery stones.

Immediately above the town, and to the right of this road, lies an ancient feudal castle, Rocca Janula, which was built in 949 on the site of a temple dedicated to Janus. It is noted for the two sieges it sustained against Frederic II., Emperor of Germany, and also for the fact that within its walls the anti-pope Burdino, (Gregory VIII.) was confined after his fall in 1122. All the way up, one finds small chapels or oratories on the sides of the road, each with an interesting little history of its own. Frequent crosses also mark the places where occurred some events of importance in the annals of the place. One cross in particular is worthy of note, as it marks the spot where St. Benedict, on coming in full sight of the Temple of Apollo when he ascended the mountain for the first time, knelt down and prayed to God for the conversion of the misguided worshippers. The large stone on which he knelt is still to be seen at the foot of the cross. A walk of about an hour brings the pedestrian to a miniature plateau, from which a wide road lined with shade trees leads up to the main entrance of the monastery. Two monks are waiting at the door to welcome and show to their different apartments the visitors who arrive in large numbers almost every day. By means of a long and low arched corridor the interior of the building is reached, and then the new-comer finds himself in the great *Cortile* or courtyard. The impression received on viewing the interior of Monte Casino for the first time is one of wonder at finding such magnificence in a place so barren and so difficult of access. All around the courtyard, which

is in the form of an immense rectangle 250 feet in length, runs a portico supported by pillars and arches of travertine rock. Two other open porticos perpendicular to the sides of this rectangle divide the whole cortile into three separate parts. In the centre of one of these divisions may be seen the lower part of a column of red porphyry measuring over ten feet in circumference, a remarkable size for such rare material. It is believed by some to be one of the pillars of the ancient temple of Apollo; others maintain that it belongs to the villa which Varro built at Casino. A similar column of oriental granite once stood at a short distance from the former, but at the end of last century it was carried away by the French. A few tame ravens may also be noticed hopping around the courtyard. Two or three of these birds are always kept about the monastery in memory of the fact that when St. Benedict first came from Subiaco to Casinum, he was followed all the way by two ravens which were afterwards kept and fed by the monks. Hence it is that many of the medals and pictures of Benedict show a raven at the feet of the Saint. The present representatives of their species which strut about as if fully conscious of their own importance, claim to be the lineal descendants of the pair that came to Casinum in 529.

Above the arches of the porticos is constructed an extensive promenade which is called the *Loggia del Paradiso* (Gallery of Paradise) on account of the magnificent view obtained therefrom. Directly in front of the spectator lie the picturesque mountains of Gaeta extending in the form of a semi-circle around the fertile plain which is watered by the little river Liris mentioned by Horace:

“Rura quae Liris quæta  
Mordet aqua taciturnus amnis.”

On the peaks of the surrounding mountains lie some little villages and the ruins of ancient fortresses. Among others may be mentioned Aquino and Rocco Secca, the former noted as giving his surname to the Angel of the schools, and the latter as being his birthplace. The *tout ensemble* of the scene—the quiet plain covered with vines and olives, the rugged mountains encircling it, and away beyond them in the background the Gulf of Gaeta cannot fail, especially when glowing in the light