

CHAPTER XXI

VISIT TO ITALY *

I HAD twice before visited Italy; once, while I was with the South-Eastern Railway, and took a longer holiday than usual. I went then, with my wife, my eldest daughter, and a friend, through Switzerland, over the Splügen Pass, to Milan, then on through Lombardy to Venice; and home by the Brenner Pass, Innsbruck, Munich, and down the Rhine. The tour occupied only three weeks in all. The other visit I paid, and it was only through a corner of Italy, was when I accompanied my friend Mr Milsom in his visits to the Vaudois pastors in the remote parts of Dauphiny. This journey was made mostly on foot. We walked (for there was no carriage road) from Abries on the verge of France, over the Cottian Alps to the Bergerie of Pra, then down the valley of the Pellice as far as La Tour, a journey of some 26 miles. From La Tour, we visited the scenes in the valley of Angrogna, made memorable by the hard struggle of the Vaudois in ancient times for life and liberty.

* It has not been thought necessary to print in full Dr Smiles' account of his journey through a country well known to the British tourist. Descriptions, often interesting and vivid, of places have been omitted. It seemed sufficient to chronicle one or two slight incidents of travel, as characteristic of the man and his way of looking at life.—ED.

This I have elsewhere fully described.* I then proceeded to Turin, and went up the valley of Aosta, and over the Great St Bernard to Martigny; from whence I proceeded rapidly homeward, by way of Lucerne, Neufchatel, Dijon, and Paris. Now, however, as I was free from all office duties, I could take my own time, and proceed leisurely to Florence, Rome, and Naples, which I had an anxious desire to see. In the Preface to the translation of *Character* into Italian, which I wrote at the instance of my friend M. Barbera, the Florence publisher, I stated that I hoped to be able to visit these great cities before the termination of my brief pilgrimage on earth.

I set out, with my wife, for Paris, on the 20th February 1879. Two days later, we reached Nice, then in the throes of its Carnival. People had assembled from all quarters to see the show—the mummeries, the processions, the cavalcades—as well as each other. It was not possible to pass along the streets without being pelted with confetti—which did *not* consist of confetti, but of hard lime pills. There was not much fun in this, but the people seemed to expect it; and young people were arranged on platforms or at windows along the streets to pelt the passers-by. The prettiest day was the day of flowers, when carriages drove through the streets, and especially along the Promenade des Anglais, covered with the most exquisite produce of the garden. The carriage people pelted each other with flowers, and this was by no means disagreeable.

More pleasant, however, was the visit which I paid to Mrs Evans (wife of Colonel Evans) at

* *The Huguenots in France, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.*

Cimiez, near Nice. This good, benevolent lady, had been greatly pleased with the *Life of the Scotch Naturalist*, and was kind enough to send a remittance of ten pounds yearly to Thomas Edward.

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There happened to be with us in the railway carriage as we went to Naples, a gentleman, who, if he had his way, would make quiet living in Italy as impossible as ever. He was one of the Italia Irredenta Party, and had been at Milan, taking part in a public demonstration. He had a number of flags with him, which he unrolled, and exhibited the vehement sentiments inscribed upon them in glaring colours. He claimed for Italy, not only Nice and the Italian possessions of France, but the Valais, Ticino, and Valtellina, the Italian-speaking republican cantons of Switzerland, and all the shore part of Austria as far as Pola, Fiume, and even Ragusa. In fact, there was no limit to his demands. It was of no use saying to him, that in carrying out his theory, he would set all Europe by the ears. Why not develop, by industry, the country that Victor Emmanuel, Cavour, and Garibaldi had already won? "No! no!" he said, "we must have our own—all that speak our noble language." One of the effects of the Italia Irredenta scheme of governing people according to the language they speak, would be to divide Switzerland into three divisions—and hand over one part to France, another part to Germany, and the rest to Italy. The Swiss are certainly much safer remaining as they are, and governing themselves in their own manner by their perfectly free institutions.

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In Rome, among my various visits, I went to see that excellent artist and sculptor, Mr Warrington Wood. He has a beautiful residence and studio at the Villa Campagna, close to the church of St John, Lateran. It happened to be his afternoon for receiving company. There were many ladies and gentlemen present. Among others was Mr Adolphus Trollope. Mr Wood received me with great effusion. After some conversation, he turned to Mr Trollope and said, "Ought I to tell Mr Smiles of how I happen to be here?" "Oh, by all means," said Mr Trollope, "he says it is all through you." "How is that?" I asked. "Well," said Mr Wood, "I will tell you. When I was a very young man—it must be now some eighteen or twenty years ago—I read your *Self-Help*. I sat up nearly all night to read it. I was inspired by the example of Flaxman, who, notwithstanding every difficulty, *would* go to Rome. When I went to bed, the thought of his determination pursued me: if he could do it, why should not I? Unlike him, I was comparatively free and unfettered. It is true, I was poor; for I was only a working mason. Before moving, I had made up my mind to go to Rome too. I wished to be a sculptor. I had done a few little things, tried to do more, and struggled hard for improvement. At length I saved about a hundred pounds. When I told my friends of my intentions, they opposed me all that they could. I was getting on: I would yet succeed as an architect. It was of no use. I pursued my determination. I came to Rome, and now (pointing to his works round the studio) you see what I am." Among other things, which he mentioned with gratitude, was the kindness of Gibson, the sculptor. "When I first came to Rome," he said, "I went to Gibson, and asked him to

recommend me to some working sculptor. He asked for my drawings and works, to see what I could do. "No! no!" he said, when he had seen them, "do not go into any one's service. Take a place for yourself, no matter how humble; work for yourself, and cultivate originality." I took his kindly advice; and went on from one thing to another; and now, he concluded, "here I am, with my works around me. Such as they are, they are my own." It was exceedingly pleasant to myself to listen to those delightful recollections.

Another visit that I paid was to Rossetti's studio. Signor Rossetti had executed a statue of *Self-Help*—a girl—seated, with a book upon her knee, diligently perusing it. The work was considered very successful, and Rossetti had executed three replicas of it for England. The sculptor was very much moved and excited when I visited him; although I am ashamed to say that I could not exchange an intelligible word with him. His assistant Ceccarini, however, who had lived for a time in Belfast, acted as our interpreter. On parting, Rossetti pressed my hand with emotion to his beard, and asked me to do him the honour of sitting to him for my bust. I accordingly returned more than once, and Rossetti executed an admirable model of me in clay, and afterwards one in marble, very much to his own delight, and to my satisfaction.

During my visits to Rossetti's studio, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Signor Cairoli, then the Italian Prime Minister. Rossetti was executing a little memorial in marble, to be placed over the tomb of his infant daughter who had lately died. Signor Cairoli kindly invited me to visit him at his house, and to see the Signora, who

was a great admirer of my works. She had even translated one of them. I found the Signora a most estimable and intelligent lady; and as she spoke English admirably, I felt at once quite at home. I may mention that Signor Cairoli still had his arm in a sling—the one that had been wounded while defending the king from the attack of an assassin in the streets of Naples.

It happened that, during my visit to Rome, General Garibaldi paid one of his last visits to the city, for the purpose of having an interview with the young king. The general, though not very old, was so crippled with rheumatism that he could not stand, and his right hand, which had so often wielded the sword, was shrunk up almost into a knot, and could not be opened out. On hearing of my being in Rome, he sent a message to me through Signor Rossetti, informing me that he would be glad to receive me at the house of his son Menotti, who lived, with his wife and family, at No. 6 Via Vittoria. I accordingly proceeded thither about mid-day, on the 10th of April, 1879. The house was on the second floor, and it was a very humble dwelling. There were present, Colonel Canzio, the general's son-in-law, Colonel Forbes, and Signor Rossetti.

The old man was still dressed in his red shirt, and lay on his bed almost helpless. He could barely shake hands with me—his arm was so shrunk and weak. But his eyes lightened up when he began to speak of the goodness of the English people to him. "The English," he said, "have helped me in every way. They have been so good to me that I can never forget them. But they shake one's hands very much. They shake hands from the heart. What

a day that was at Trafalgar Square, when I passed through the tens of thousands of your people. And then I went to the Duke of Sutherland, who is such a humane man."

He went on to speak to his friends by the bedside of his escape from Rome in 1849: how, after hard fighting with the French under Oudinot, Rome was forced to surrender, and he made for the coast of the Adriatic with his followers, his dear wife Anita accompanying them. "We put to sea," he said, "in thirteen fishing-boats; it was a dark stormy night when we started. But the clouds at length dispersed, and the moon shone forth. An Austrian corvette hovering about was directly upon us; and as our little squadron of boats scattered and took to flight, the Austrians fired in all directions; backed, and fired again and again. They captured nine of the boats with their crews; but the boat in which I was, with Anita, and the three other boats, escaped. We landed on the Italian coast, near Ravenna, and fled into the country. But the Austrians were at our heels. We scattered and hid ourselves as we could. Anita and I took refuge among some standing corn by the roadside. The Austrians, however, took some of my friends prisoners. They shot nine of them at Ca Tiepolo, and buried them where they fell. Among these was the gallant Ciceruacchio—the dear fellow!"

The general shed tears, and pointed to the photograph of Ciceruacchio's statue hung up against the wall. Angelo Brunetti was his real name. He was only a woodcutter, and dealt in wine and forage, but he was a true patriot and lover of the people. Not only so; he was a man gifted with extraordinary powers of eloquence; and when Garibaldi appeared

in Rome, he donned the red shirt, and became one of his most enthusiastic followers. He was with him all through the siege of Rome by the French, and conducted himself with great bravery. Years after the violent death of Ciceruacchio at Ca Tiepolo, with his son, who was only thirteen years old—and after Italy had become free, the Italians had the ashes dug up, with some medals and fragments of red shirts and handkerchiefs, and removed them to Rome for interment. It was proposed to erect a statue of the People's Tribune, and Rossetti had executed a spirited model; and it was to the photograph of this design that Garibaldi pointed with tears. But whether anything has yet been done to erect the statue, I do not know.

The visit which I paid to Garibaldi was made the subject of reports in the newspapers; for the press in Italy is becoming as ubiquitous as it is in England. I quote from one of the reports, in which I am described as an "old man." I had never before thought of myself as "old," though, taking my years into account, it must be true. The reporter must have been present at the interview, but I do not know who he was.

"I think I told you," says the writer, "that Samuel Smiles was here. The papers are busy with him as they were with Garibaldi during the first days of his visit. He is here with his wife, and is profiting by his visit, taking notes for his new work, which is to be called *Duty*. He has paid a visit to the Queen, who has quite fascinated him, as she indeed fascinates all who approach her. He has been to see Garibaldi, and is having a bust made by Rossetti. He is very much pleased, it seems, to find that he has inspired more than one sculptor with models taken from his works. He is a fine-looking old man, with silvery whiskers encircling a kind and genial face.

His interview with Garibaldi was particularly impressive. You will read a full account of it one day, for he intends to write it himself, and in his own particularly happy style. Garibaldi, as a witness of the interview told me, was quite expansive, and seemed quite electrified when he heard Smiles's name. He spoke of his past, and described in powerful tones the terrible days of his early life. He spoke of his never-forgotten Anita; and he depicted vividly the scenes of his pursuit by the Austrians. Those who heard him felt the blood freeze in their veins. Even those who did not understand English, caught the impression from others, and saw from the listeners that an extraordinary conversation was being carried on by these two men. Smiles will never forget Garibaldi."

I suppose it was from the reports which appeared in the Roman newspapers of my presence in Rome, or perhaps from some conversation with Signor Cairoli, the Prime Minister, that I received a communication from the Palace of the Quirinale, intimating that Her Majesty Queen Margherita was desirous of an interview with me, being an admirer of my works. I felt this to be a great honour, and paid my visit accordingly. It was quite private, and I saw only the Queen herself. As the reporter has stated, I was quite fascinated by Her Majesty. I admired her grace, her manner, and her intellect. I need not speak of her beauty. But she is a true Queen, if it be one of the functions of a Queen to excite admiration and enthusiasm, and make her subjects in love with the institution of monarchy, of which she is the fairest outcome.

I had seen Her Majesty before in the streets of Rome, where she was followed by admiring eyes. For the Queen rides about a great deal, takes part in the philanthropic work of the city, and is never wanting when Royal help is necessary. She visits the

poor schools and hospitals, attends public lectures, and is often seen with her young prince, on the Pincio or at the Villa Borghese.

Queen Margherita is charming not only as a queen, but as a woman. She embodies Wordsworth's description of—

“The perfect woman, nobly planned.”

I found her simple, gracious, dignified, and yet thoroughly *simpatica*. She conversed with me freely, without the slightest assumption of patronage—spoke about English Literature, and told me of her favourite authors. I may mention that Her Majesty speaks English perfectly, as well as most other European languages. I saw the *Nineteenth Century* on her table. She liked the tolerant Catholicity of England, where Cardinal Manning and Positivist Harrison can meet in the same columns—state their thoughts, and argue out their views without let or hindrance.

She turned the conversation to literature generally. German novels she thought “flat”; French were naughty; and English novels were, of all others, her favourites. Of past writers, Scott was the greatest: then Thackeray. And of the living, she preferred the works of Hardy, Blackmore, and Black. She spoke with emotion of the *Princess of Thule*. Although she greatly admired Tennyson, her most favourite poet was the late Mrs Barrett Browning. She was an immense admirer of the historical works of Lecky.

As I conversed with the Queen, who sat close to me, and before me, my eyes commanded a view of the spires, and towers, and domes of Rome, with St Peter's in the distance. Her sitting-room is beauti-

fully situated in an angle of the palace, and the windows look down upon the ancient parts of Rome, over to the Palace of the Cæsars. But the interest of the conversation prevented my taking note of what was to be seen outside. After about an hour, I kissed Her Majesty's hand, and left the palace delighted with my interview, not less pleased with the Queen's high-bred tact and graciousness of manner, than with her goodness, sweetness, and intelligent conversation. And thus ended my first and last interview with Royalty.

I had now many callers, letters, and invitations. I was desired to visit the schools and public buildings of Rome by persons of distinction. But I had no wish to become a "lion"; and I thought it better to avoid further excitement, and leave Rome as soon as possible. I give only one of the letters which I received, from a very humble person; and I select it as being one of the shortest.

"PREGIATISSIMO SIGNORE,—

"Un povero giovane di Corinaldo (Provincia d'Ancona) orfano sin dall' infanzia, di professione domestico, deve alla lettura dei di Lei scritti se ha potesto realizzare qualche risparmio, per il quale spera meno incerto il suo avvenire. Memore del suo benefattore, verso cui nutre sensi di profonda venerazione, gli invia un ossequioso saluto che ha feducia non verra disdegnato.—Mi creda, devotissimo servo,

"VALERIO VALERI."

Before leaving Rome, however, I had the honour and pleasure of calling upon Augusto Castellani, the distinguished antiquarian and goldsmith. I found him in his place of business, close by the Fountain of Trevi. He received us most kindly, and opened

up to us his immense stores of antiquarian art and knowledge. We were careful not to enter upon matters of business. If we had asked the price of an article, he would have shut up at once; it was art, and art only, that took us there; and our conversation was entirely confined to that subject.

Signor Castellani took us upstairs and showed us all over his treasures. He entered with enthusiasm into a description of the most precious. This Etruscan jewel had been dug up in the Campagna, that in a village among the Apennines, and that Greek bronze near the villa of Hadrian. He told us how he had transported to Rome some local goldsmiths from a remote part of Italy, who had preserved, in what seemed to be an unbroken tradition, the art of fabricating granulated gold jewellery after the manner of the Etruscans. In the course of conversation he gave us his ideas as to the races of men who had from time to time imported their art into Italy—the Greeks, the Romans, and the Etruscans, who were the oldest and best of all.

Signor Castellani was anything but a tradesman. He was a historian, an antiquarian, and a philosopher, though with these accomplishments he combined the shrewdness of a business man. But his talk was never of orders, never of trade. Like many of his spirited countrymen, he was an ardent politician; and took pride in the renewed freedom of Italy. His conversation was immensely fascinating, and he kept us until long after the time when he should have left his place of business. At parting, he presented me with his "Della Orificeria Italiana, Discorso di Augusto Castellani," which I greatly treasure.

At last, with many regrets, I left Rome. The evening before, I went down to the Fountain of

Trevi by moonlight, and drank of the waters; as they say one who does that is sure to return. But I have never returned, and there is no probability, at my time of life, that I will ever do so. We left the station, laden with flowers, presented to us by many of our kind Roman friends.

I spent some time in Florence, inspecting the pictures and the churches, but to my mind, the most interesting of all the buildings connected with the Church, is the Convent of San Marco; for there the great patriot and martyr Savonarola nursed his heart and mind, and prepared to give up his life for his country and his religion. It is not to be compared in magnitude or splendour with the great ecclesiastical buildings of Florence. But it will be remembered when they are forgotten. You see there the cells of Fra Angelico and Fra Bartolomeo, who were disciples of Savonarola; and pass on to the cell of the patriot martyr himself. There is the little Bible from which he read and preached in the pulpit of the Duomo, his portrait and bust, his manuscripts and devotional emblems, and other interesting memorials. You are taken to the Hall, where Savonarola was engaged in prayer and exhortation when the people broke in, thirsting for his blood. He was taken away, and you may follow his march, amidst a shouting crowd, down the Via Ricasoli, past the Duomo—where he had so often bravely struggled for religion and liberty—and down the Via Calzauoli, where he was eventually strangled and burnt. But I have already described his life and fate, and need not repeat my description here.*

* In *Duty*, pp. 132-154.

The neighbourhood of Florence is also full of interest—the summit of the Piazza of Michael Angelo, from which you see the whole of the city lying sleeping at your feet—Fiesole, still further away, on the north side of the Arno, where (besides the lovely drive) one may see the prodigious remnants of the Etruscan architects; but my favourite visit was to the Villa Coreggi, where Lorenzo the Magnificent breathed his last, shortly after his memorable interview with Savonarola. The place lies in the wide valley of the Arno, about three miles to the north-east of Florence. Spring was at its height, and in the gardens the nightingale was singing loudly, even at midday. We were taken to the room where Lorenzo died. From the windows we saw the top of the Duomo and the Campanile, and the spires of the many churches in Florence, rising above the trees; while towards the north were the heights of Fiesole and the soft outlines of the Tuscan hills in the distance. The room contains a picture of Savonarola exhorting the sovereign. Lorenzo is represented as in the agonies of death—his hand clutching his bed-sheet. The picture is perhaps too terrible for the place; but it is very characteristic.

Before concluding this short account of my visit to Florence, let me add a short statement of personal interest to myself; illustrating also the peculiar kindness of my Italian friends and well-wishers. Signora Giglioli, a lady of literary eminence in Florence, called upon me shortly after my arrival. I was not at the hotel when she called, but she left her card, on which was written—“I do not think you can realise with what feeling of deep gratitude every Italian who has read *Self-Help* and *Character* thinks

of you. Books like these were so much wanted among us."

I had the pleasure afterwards of seeing the lady, and making her friendship. I was introduced to her husband, a professor in the School of Medicine, who, by the way, was a pupil of our own Dr Huxley of London. They furnished me with an introduction to Professor Mantegazza, the author of some works of great popular interest. He showed me over the fine collection of skulls in his museum — among others, the skulls of the Etruscans — which were beautifully formed, though small and round (*Brachycephali*, or broad skulls), evidently showing a connection with the Greeks.

The professor, like myself, was interested in the subject of race, and was about to make a journey into Finland, for the purpose of seeing the Finns, and making photographs of the people. He was trying his hand with the apparatus, and made a photograph of me, which, as some of my friends tell me, is "villainously like." The professor, like most of his fellow-countrymen, was pleasant, agreeable, and full of intelligent conversation.

I had afterwards the pleasure of being introduced to Pasquale Villari, the author of the well-known *Life of Savonarola* and *Niccolo Machiavelli and his Times*, as well as to his charming wife, Linda Villari, daughter of an old friend of mine, Mr White, formerly Member for Brighton—showing again how small the world really is. At Baron French's, I met some peculiarly interesting people—the great Greek scholar, Marchese Ricci, Gaetano Camerota of the Educational Department, Professor Eccher; and last, not least, the Misses Horner, daughters of the late Leonard Horner of Edinburgh.

On the 27th of April, the Rev. Mr Macdougall, who knows everything that is going on about Florence, sent me a note intimating that he had a very gratifying piece of news to communicate to me, namely, that a presentation was to be offered to me by a number of Italian friends who greatly appreciated my works. This was a thing altogether unexpected ; for the kindness I had already received was ample enough reward.

But the presentation was made. It consisted of a handsome album, its cover inlaid with beautiful Florentine work, and on its front were these words :—

“Al Dottore Samuele Smiles.

“Alcuni tra i molti che in Italia sentono la gratitudine pel bene fatto dai suoi libri.

“FIRENZE, 28 *Aprile* 1879.”

To this interesting inscription were affixed the signatures of Villari, Mantegazza, Giglioli, Barbera, Baron F. Reichlin, De Gubernatis, and fifteen more notable Italians. It seemed as if I must cross the Alps and come a long way from home, to have my small services in literature recognised. It was indeed a most kindly and generous act, for which I shall never cease to be grateful.

I placed in my album photographs of the King and Queen of Italy, of Garibaldi (which he signed with his crumpled hand and presented to me), of Signora Giglioli and her husband, of Cairolì, and my other honoured friends and well-wishers ; and the book shall go down to my descendants as an heirloom.

I left Florence, and went on to Bologna by the route along which Savonarola came on his first journey southward. The country was little

changed. The houses were all old, and the Apennines were the same as ever. I took sketches as I went along, though we were annoyed by some English "vampires," who got into our carriage. But that need not be dwelt upon.

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One of the most interesting things in Bologna was the University, where we found that female professors had been ornaments of learning, almost from time immemorial. For instance, there was Signora Calderini, Professor of Jurisprudence in 1360, more than five hundred years ago; and at a later date, there was Laura Passi, whose brows are represented surmounted with laurel, Professor of Philosophy; Tambroni, Professor of Greek, and Manzolini, Professor of Anatomy—all learned and celebrated women. I brought away a collection of the photographs of these illustrious celebrities. So that what we are now working for—the emancipation and intellectual improvement of women—was effected by the Bolognese in the days of their greatest liberty. Their ancient motto still continues to be "Libertas."

After a visit to Padua—where women were also celebrated for their learning in olden times; and a second visit to Venice—always full of interest; we went on to Verona, Milan, Bellaggio on Lake Como; then across the country to Stresa on Lago Maggiore; and after a few days there, home to London by Turin and Paris. Our entire journey occupied a little over three months.

I cannot, however, refrain from mentioning the honour which I received a year later from His Majesty the King of Italy, who conferred upon me the rank of Chevalier of the Order of SS.

Maurice and Lazare. This was done in the kindest and most complimentary manner through his Minister in this country, His Excellency Count Menabrea, a gentleman of great distinction, well worthy to represent his nation. I was informed that the King had conferred upon me the honour, "as a token of His Majesty's appreciation of my very valuable works."

I may mention that, while Count Menabrea was Prime Minister, he had issued a letter to the Consuls of Italy in all countries, pointing out the valuable examples of encounter with difficulties, finally overcome by courage and perseverance, published in *Self-Help*, and requested them to furnish accounts of the lives of Italians, from the countries to which they had emigrated, in order that a similar book should be published at home, for the encouragement and benefit of Italian citizens.

In my communications with Count Menabrea relative to the above matter, I desired to be informed whether any satisfactory information had been received from the Italian Consuls, and whether anything had been done towards publishing the work which he had proposed when issuing his circular. His Excellency was pleased to say that my work, and another of merit by M. Sessona, "Volere è Potere," were still the books principally read; and that no work, such as he had proposed, had yet been published. He concluded as follows:—

"Du reste, Monsieur, vos ouvrages sont bien venus dans mon pays où ils ont excité et excitent encore un vif intérêt. Ils appartiennent à cette saine littérature qui a pour bût le bien et l'amélioration des conditions de l'humanité, et ils sont dignes de votre belle devise: *Industria, virtus, et fortitudo*.

Moi aussi j'ai une devise analogue: *Virtus in arduis*, qui m'a servi de guide dans ma carrière, car je prétends être le fils de mes œuvres."

I hope I may be forgiven the little vanity of quoting this flattering passage. And with this I leave my ever-memorable visit to Italy.