

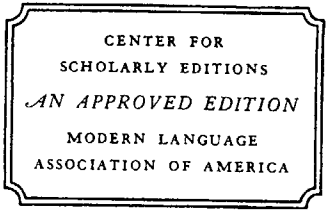
Manuscript

DG ~~COOPER~~
42C GLEANINGS
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jured, such as bronzes, alabaster columns, &c. These fragments have been preserved in the museums. You know that the celebrated equestrian statues of the Balbi came from Herculaneum.

I have only given you my first impressions on visiting these two remarkable places, as volumes exist filled with their details arranged with care, and collected with accuracy. To the American, to whom a quaint chimney-top, half a century old, is a matter of interest, I should think few objects in Europe would present more attractions than either; for though much older and even better specimens of ancient arts and ancient manners are certainly to be found, none others exist surrounded by so many of the evidences of familiar life.

The entire base of Vesuvius, which in former times, as now, seems to have been a favourite residence, offers the same species of remains, wherever a shaft is sunk or an opening made, though there are but two or three buried cities. Many villas and hamlets have been discovered, and I have seen one or two of them in the distance. A much more wonderful thing, as is said, I know not with what truth, is the fact, that Pompeii stands on lava, which in itself covers another town. This may be true, for the site might induce the occupation of the spot; but if true, what a miserable figure human annals make!

On returning from this visit I witnessed a droll scene beneath our windows. There is a small garden, with a pavilion, directly opposite the hotel. It stands on the margin of the sea, is enclosed with a high wall, and is the property of the crown; the royal children frequently coming to it to take exercise. While we were seated in the balconies, enjoying the sea-breeze, a carriage and four, with a *piqueur*, and the royal liveries, drove to the door of the pavilion, and set down a gentleman and a lady, with a boy and a girl, the latter about six, and the former perhaps four years old. These were two of the younger children of the king. They went together into the house. It was not long, however, before they all came out again. A crowd had collected by this time, and every one stood uncovered, the guards, at the gate of the garden, with presented arms. The children were lifted into the hind seats of the carriage, an open barouche, with great respect, and their attendants were about to take the front seats, when the little creatures sprang on them, with the zest that forbidden pleasures are apt to excite. The gentleman

and lady remonstrated without success; the sight of the horses overcoming the sense of etiquette. The boy, in particular, was for driving. The lady then entered the carriage, carefully avoiding seating herself on the hind seat, and finally succeeded in persuading the girl to take her proper place; but his royal highness, the Conte d'Aquila, for such is the appellation of the boy, resolutely refused to budge. At last, the whole affair consuming several minutes, the gentleman entered, seated himself by the side of the lady, took the young prince in his lap, and whispered his remonstrance; but all in vain, the little fellow struggling manfully to get a sight of the horses again. Tired with his pertinacity, he was put, by respectful violence, in his proper place, the servant closed the doors in haste, the coachman whipped his horses, and the equipage dashed off, with the obstinate little prince pinned by force on the precise spot that etiquette enjoined he should occupy. The whole time the crowd was uncovered, and the soldiers stood at presented arms.

Deference to royalty is carried very far here. W[illiam] and myself were strolling in one of the public buildings lately, and I stopped to read a proclamation. While carelessly running my eyes over it, a sentinel ordered me to take off my hat. It was commanded that the royal proclamation should be read uncovered. As this was a little too much in the spirit of Gessler, I preferred not reading any more to submission.

I do not mention these things to deride them, for they have their use, though proper substitutes exist; but simply as touches of the country. I wish there was a little less of this abstract deference for station and authority here, as I sincerely wish there were a good deal more of both (under certain limitations of common sense) in America. Society loses nothing by causing those who do not know how to reason, to feel. Besides, there is great danger that, in the absence of respect for station, men will get to have a respect for mere money, which is the most abject and contemptible of all conditions of the mind, to say nothing of its direct tendency to corruption. I should deem it a *pas en avant*, could we hear it said at home, "That fellow is proud of his descent, his manners, his knowledge of the world, his conversation, his connections," his any thing, in short, instead of the vulgar accusation of being "purse-proud."

Letter XIII.

HAVING determined to pass the remainder of the season in the vicinity of Naples, we have been employed, for the last week, in looking for a house. Our aim has been the vicinity of the town; so far from it, as to escape its confusion and noise, and yet so near as to possess its conveniences. The occupation has enabled us to see more of the modes of ordinary life, than a traveller usually gets in a hurried visit. At the same time we have given glances at the different objects of curiosity as they presented themselves.

The Bay of Naples, which is truly "*un pezzo di cielo caduto in terra*,"* is surrounded by country houses, of which a large number are to be let. We may have been in fifty of them, and we find them possessing very generally a common character; large edifices, with spacious, sometimes vast apartments, terraces that overlook the sea, and furniture that is rich though commonly decayed. Some of the chairs and tables that we have found in these places, appear to be more than a century old, being carved, gilded, and heavy. We entered houses, that are palaces in extent, in the size and in the number of the rooms, that were utterly destitute of conveniences on the score of furniture, but which were not without a certain air of comfortless magnificence. The views were almost always fine, though perhaps a majority of the situations had objections on account of their vicinity to roads, hamlets, or dusty thoroughfares of some sort or other. Others, again, were more modern, were freshly and even elegantly furnished, but they were too dear. The rents were generally high, for this is the very season when the villas are frequented; the Italians of condition, like the French, sel-

dom visiting their country houses, except for a short time in midsummer, or near the vintage. The latter is their *villeggiatura*. These residences around Naples, however, are not, of course, the old baronial hotels on the estates, but merely temporary retreats. The gardens are seldom of much extent, or very well kept, though there are exceptions.

One of the places that we visited in the course of our inquiries, was so remarkable as to merit a particular notice. It was the villa of Cardinal Ruffo; not the prelate who was so celebrated in the revolutionary movements of the last century, for he, I believe, perished at the time, but one of the same dignity, name, and family.

Naples, I have told you, in part occupies broken ground. A volcanic rock tops the city; and here is placed the well known castle of St. Elmo; a citadel, or fortress, that can almost send its shot down the chimneys of the place, as well as possessing a formidable range for its fire, in the way of marine defence. The view from this castle is singularly beautiful, and, owing to the proximity of the town, and the formation of the land, one can vary it in fifty ways, by slight changes of position. I know no other capital that possesses such a look-out, as it were, in its bosom; that of Montmartre, though fine and even extraordinary, from its extreme contrasts between town and country, wanting altogether the softened sublimity which reigns all through this region. Immediately below the citadel stands a convent, which is now converted into an hospital, I believe, on the extremest verge of the cliffs; for the part of the town that lies nearest the sea, or the south-western quarter, is placed on terraces, which are separated by perpendicular walls of tufa. From the balconies of this convent there is a terrific bird's-eye view of the more level quarter of the town;—terrific, after all, is not precisely the word I ought to use, for, as I have so often intimated, there is a softness thrown around every natural object here, that lessens all the harsher features of the landscapes. From this convent I looked into the streets, which resembled narrow ravines, and not even the sounds of a town proverbially noisy, ascended to our ears. It required no great stretch of the imagination to fancy the venerable fathers seated at their windows, now contemplating the mites beneath them, engaged in

*"A little bit of heaven fallen upon the earth;" the common Neapolitan saying.

the boisterous and selfish pursuits of their lives, now turning their looks upwards at the serene calm of the blue vacuum, through which, as habit has taught us to imagine, lies the path to heaven. This is the poetical side of the picture, for, were the truth known, I dare say the sight was as often gloating on the baskets of green figs, and luscious grapes, and other delicious objects, that are always to be seen in the streets, as on any thing else. Before proceeding to the villa, I shall add, that we went through this convent, which amply repaid the examination, by its scented and carved sacristy, its picture by Spagnoletto, and its "incense-breathing" chapels. Some of its passages and apartments were the very quintessence of pious architecture, being cool, fragrant, rich, quaint, and clerkly. Really, one occasionally finds in Italy religious retreats, that are so suited to the climate, the dreamy existence of the country, and the priestly tastes, that there are moments when a monkish feeling comes over me, and even a monkish life has its attractions. I believe, however, that I was not created for vigils and fasts.

The villa of Cardinal Ruffo lies on a terrace a little lower than this convent, facing more to seaward. I do not know the precise elevation of these rocks, but I think St. Elmo cannot be much less than four hundred feet above the bay, if it be any less, and the villa is about two hundred and fifty to three hundred. The garden is pretty, extensive, and is well shaded with trees and shrubs, though the motive appears to be, principally, to exclude the objects in the rear. The house is extensive, though low, standing also on the verge of the cliffs. It was in good order, neat, and reasonably well furnished, having just been occupied by an Englishman of rank. But no language can do justice to the scene which presented itself, when we reached its balconies. I shall attempt to describe it, however; for, having heard so much of the beauty of this spot, you will feel some desire to get more distinct ideas than can be gained by general eulogiums.

You know the position and magnitude of the bay, and the exquisite beauty of its water. No American who has never been off soundings, can appreciate the latter beauty, I repeat, for I know of no blue water in all America. Our most limpid lakes are nearer the colour of amber than any other, and the entire coast is a sea-green. The Mediterranean, on the other hand, is un-

usually blue, and its bays and gulphs appear to have as deep a tint as the open sea.* The house commands a view of all that part of the bay which lies in the direction of Capri, the opposite coast, with the open sea, in the distance. The foreground was the lower terraces, and the portions of the town that were not hid by the cliffs, on the side of the Chiaja.

The bay itself was asleep, with its bosom dotted with a thousand boats, and crafts of different sizes. The deathlike calm that pervaded everything was in exquisite accordance with the character of the entire view. The mountains were dreamy, the air was filled with a drowsy repose, while the different objects of historical interest over which the eye rather lingered than glanced, gave the whole the semblance of a physical representation of things past, adorned and relieved by a glorious grouping of so much that is exquisite in the usages of the present.

Of fishing-boats alone, I feel certain of being within bounds when I say, they were out in hundreds. A long line of them stretched away from near the town, in the direction of Capri, not one of which appeared to have motion. Clusters of them lay scattered about in every direction, and the sails were drooping on board of vessels of nearly every sort of rig known in this picturesque sea. These elements of beauty might have been assembled elsewhere, though scarcely in such numbers and in so much perfection; but you will remember that, besides the peculiarities of the vessels, their varieties, the boats, the union of sublime land and glorious water, there was also a coast teeming with places over which history, from remote antiquity, had thrown its recollections and its charms. That bewitching and

*Soon after the return of the writer to this country, he was shown a view of the Bay of Naples, painted by Mr. Chapman, which was taken from a spot near the house he had inhabited most of the time he dwelt on its glorious shores. On being asked if it was faithful, he answered, "Perfectly so, *except that the artist has not done justice to the hue of the water, which is not sufficiently blue.*" He was then told, that the ordinary criticism was to complain of the element as *being too blue for nature.* The same objection is often made to the skies of Italian and Grecian landscapes, and to the other tints, as exaggerated. All this is a consequence of judging of Nature by a rule that is applicable only to her laws under particular circumstances. These hues certainly vary, but the writer has often seen the lakes of Switzerland and the bay of Naples almost as dark as ultra-marine itself.

almost indescribable softness of which I have so often spoken, a blending of all the parts in one harmonious whole, a mellowing of every tint and trait, with the total absence of everything unseemly or out of keeping, threw around the picture a seductive ideal, that blended with the known reality in a way I have never before witnessed, nor ever expect to witness again.

Travellers often come to this place on a hasty visit, and, encountering bad weather, or an unpropitious state of the atmosphere, they go away with false notions of the comparative excellence of things. We have now been ten months in Italy, and, certainly, had we gone away without visiting this portion of the country, we should have formed no accurate opinion of Italian nature. Had we come here during the bad weather, it is equally probable that, by transferring to a time of the year when no nature is seen to advantage the descriptions that refer to the more genial months, we might have felt disposed to accuse those who made them of exaggeration and fraud. Even now, the atmosphere is not of extraordinary purity. It has a sleepy haziness about it, that I find in admirable harmony with the season and the region; but experience has taught me to distinguish between months, and to look for its most peculiar and its greatest charm at a still later season of the year.

It is not an easy thing to find a residence for a family that has no material objection. The price was the great obstacle to taking the villa of Cardinal Ruffo, and we reluctantly turned our eyes in another direction. We had now been three weeks in taverns, and one must experience it to feel the relief that is afforded by getting out of these public places into a private dwelling with a family. Our inn, notwithstanding, offered fewer objections and more attractions than any I was ever in. It was nearly empty at this season—a great advantage in itself, was well kept, had noble rooms, and overlooked the bay.

The choice was finally made at Sorrento, a town of a few thousand inhabitants, directly opposite to Naples, and at the distance of eighteen miles. The house we took has a reputation from having been the one in which Tasso was born, or, at least, *is said* to have been born; and although it is not the villa of Cardinal Ruffo, it is little inferior to it in scenery. The greater part of the plain on which Sorrento stands is surrounded in a half circle by mountains, the segment facing the bay. The whole for-

mation is volcanic, large fissures of the tufa appearing in the shape of deep ravines in various places. Advantage was taken of the accidental position of these ravines, so as to form a deep natural ditch around most of the place, which stands on the immediate margin of the plain. This plain is six or seven miles in length, is a continued village, very fertile, and extremely populous. Its elevation above the bay varies from one to two hundred feet, the verge being a perpendicular cliff of tufa nearly the whole distance. Sorrento lies near the south-western extremity, the heights overlooking it. The house we have taken is on the cliffs, within the walls, and in plain sight of every object of interest on the bay, from Ischia to the promontory of Vico, Castel-a-mare and a short reach of the coast in its vicinity excepted.

Having settled the material point of a residence for the remainder of the warm months, we passed a few more days in looking at sights. I shall say nothing of the Museum, and of similar things, for you can read of them at any time, but confine myself to what has struck me as peculiarities. The first of these shall be the Campo Santo, or the place of interment. A large proportion of the people of Naples die in the hospitals; and even of those who do not, perhaps half are unable to leave means for their interment. A place has accordingly been provided for those who are interred at the public expense and this is the spot to which we will now go.

The Campo Santo is a short distance from the city, enclosed by high walls. There is a chapel near the entrance, with a few rooms for the use of the officials. As I understand the arrangement, the earth was removed from the entire area, when the cavity was walled up into three hundred and sixty-five separate vaults. As there is, however, so much of that soft material in this vicinity, I am not certain that the desired number of vaults has not been cut in the tufa, the effect being the same in the two cases. Each vault has a large hole in the centre, that is covered by a stone fitting closely. This stone has a ring, and a movable lever, with its fulcrum, all of which are on wheels, is in readiness to remove it. Each night the lever is applied to a new ring, and a stone is removed. At an appointed hour the dead arrive in covered carts. Our guide affirmed that, after the religious service, they were then *dumped*, to use a New York term, from

the cart into the hole; and judging by what I witnessed, I think this probable. The bodies are next sprinkled with quick lime, and the stone is replaced and closed with cement. At the end of the year, little is found besides bones, which are removed to a bone-house, or vault, kept for that purpose. The hole, however, is not closed for twenty-four hours, the fees paid by the curious being an inducement to keep it in readiness to be opened during that time.

When W[illiam] and I presented ourselves, we were received by a cadaverous-looking priest and sexton, on whose appearance this constant communication with the remains of mortality had produced anything but an aspect of devotion. Our wishes being known, after examining the place generally, we were desired to look into an open vault: it was quite empty, and indeed clean. The lever was then applied to the ring of the covering of the vault last filled, and a more revolting and hideous spectacle has been seldom witnessed than the one we saw. Seventeen dead bodies were lying naked beneath the hole, in a way that I can only compare to the manner in which Jack-straws fall! If they had not actually been dropped from the cart, no care had been taken even to lay them side by side, but they were placed just as chance had ordered it. A few rags served as apologies to decency, and even these were not always used. Whether they were actually brought from the hospitals in this state, I cannot tell you: the guide affirmed that they were; but one cannot confide in the information of guides.

While the poor meet with the fate of the "unhonoured dead," the taste of the Neapolitans of means is for gorgeous funerals. I have met several in the streets, in which there was more of pageantry than about any private ceremonies of the sort I have ever witnessed. Led horses are one of the standing honours of a gentleman,—I presume, from some connexion with a chivalrous origin. We observe the same usage, even to this day, in all our own military funerals of field-officers. The body, I find, is often exposed here, as in other parts of Italy, though I have not yet seen it on any of the great occasions just named.

Naples has a corso in the Toledo; but at this season the carriage promenade appears to be by the Chiaja, and along a road that leads to the south-western point of the bay. This is one of the most delightful drives in the world. The road follows the

strand for two miles, having houses and villas on one hand, and the water on the other. It passes the Villa Reale, one of the prettiest gardens imaginable, and the celebrated gallery of Pozzuoli, or the grotto, as it is usually called. This passage, which is of great antiquity, is of immense convenience, though of no great cost or labour, the rock through which it is cut being soft. The effect on looking through it is singular, for it is never empty, during the day at least; and as a proof of its utility, it smells like a stable. The reputed tomb of Virgil is on the side of the hill, immediately over the entrance of this grotto. The best reason for believing it to have been erected in honour of the Great Mantuan, is, that if it be not his tomb, no one can say whose tomb it is. After all, Virgil had a tomb, he died here, and this is an ancient work. It may be the tomb of Virgil.

The mole of Naples, and the entire strand from the Castel Nuovo, near it, to the eastern extremity of the town, offer extraordinary exhibitions. This was the region of the Lazzaroni; and finer-looking or merrier vagabonds than those who are now found in it, it is not easy to meet. The streets that they frequent, and in which they may be said to live, lie in this quarter, and are altogether unique. Brawling, laughing, cooking, flirting, eating, drinking, sleeping, together with most of the other concerns of life, are all transacted here beneath the canopy of heaven. The throng resembles the quays of Paris in the neighbourhood of the Pont Neuf during a fête, with this difference, that as *everybody* of a certain class appears to be out in the French capital on such occasions, the streets of Naples also include every *thing*. The serenity, and, what is of more influence, the security of the weather, convert the streets into dwellings; and if these people have lodgings at all, they must be far less agreeable than the open air.

The veritable Lazzaroni, however,—the houseless fellows who look to Abraham's bosom as their first regular lodgings,—have greatly diminished of late years, if they exist at all. Murat made soldiers of them, and otherwise gave them something to do, and they are now less averse to regular employment than formerly. I saw many at work, quite as near a state of nature as our Indians in a war dress, the paint and feathers being so much the more in favour of the latter. The only garment was a pair of very unsophisticated breeches, that did not cover a

fourth of the thighs. The colour, as may be imagined from exposure under such a sun, was not essentially different.

The day we arrived, while the felucca was hauling into her berth, I observed a pair of feet, soles uppermost, just out of water, not far from the shore. Watching them for some time, they gradually sunk, when a swarthy face came up in their place. This was one of the Lazzaroni getting his dinner from the smaller shell-fish. A long resident here tells me that these people can exist in summer on incredibly small sums; such as three or four *grani* a day. Coarse bread, grapes, and most fruits are cheap; "and recollect," added my friend, "when you give a Neapolitan beggar a *grano* (which is less than a cent) you give him a meal." The figs are delicious, and I make it a point to eat one of the luscious little green fellows, with a blood-red interior, every day immediately after the soup. This has got to be a matter of conscience with me. The water melons are much like our own, and about the same price; but the musk melons are greatly inferior to those of New York. The peaches seem to be merely tolerable. Notwithstanding this, fruits are abundant, and, so far as the markets are concerned, better than ours; though he who judges of the fruits of New York from the public-houses and the markets, knows nothing about them. We have tried the ices in the Toledo, and, notwithstanding their reputation, think them greatly inferior to those of other towns we know. Contoiti need not hide his head in comparison with anything, in the way of simple creams, that are to be found in Europe. But I have found good coffee in one café here, and it is the first I have found in Italy. The house is kept by a Frenchman.

Naples and New York lie within a few miles of the same latitude. There are marked differences between the climates, certainly; and yet there are also, at this season in particular, marked points of resemblance. Our proximity to the West Indies gives us some advantages as regards the markets, as does the mixed character of our temperature. I believe America to be almost the only country in which the peach and apple come to perfection in the same field without resorting to forcing.

The streets of Naples at night are like our own, or rather like one or two in America, when there is a bright moon, and there has been a warm day. The absence of side-walks here, and the

greater throngs, make the difference. But I know no place that offers a scene like this towards the setting of the sun. Imagine the effect in a street, or perhaps on the side of a hill, where the houses are six or seven stories in height, the windows all opening on hinges, and having balconies, and these balconies filled with people enjoying the cool air. I have literally seen streets with scarcely a balcony unoccupied. Fancy also the pleasure of sitting in such a spot, at such an hour, and overlooking a town like Naples, and such a bay! Most of the houses that face in the right direction, and which stand on the hill-sides, possess this advantage.

The common public vehicle for single passengers is a sort of sulky, which is driven by the passenger, the keeper standing behind him and using the whip. It goes with great velocity; and what struck me as daring in streets so crowded and with chance drivers, the horses have no bits, being entirely controlled by a noseband, like a halter, to which the reins are attached.

The population of Naples is generally short, and both sexes, as a rule, incline early to obesity. This applies particularly to the class of the *bourgeoisie*. But I have never seen so fine a display of muscle anywhere else as among the labourers of this place. The habit of ascending and descending the precipices of the coast gives to all the porters on the bay an extraordinary development of the muscles of the legs. Those of Genoa have a reputation in this respect; but I think them, though of larger proportions in general, inferior to those of Naples, or rather to those of the Bay of Naples.