

upon the distribution of plants, in itself an interesting study, and one which may one day help to solve the much-vexed question, the origin of species.

Apart, however, from all science there is a real pleasure in collecting plants, to be renewed years afterwards in turning over the treasures of the herbarium; and if sometimes disappointment is felt that the colours fade, or the forms crumble away, it will only once more impress the lesson which the leaves taught to the heroes who fought before Troy.

SKETCHES FROM THE APENNINES. BY THE EDITOR.

1. *The Pania della Croce.*

‘ There
 The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,
 And by the sea, and in the brakes
 The grass is cool, the seaside air
 Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers
 As virginal and sweet as ours.’

MAT. ARNOLD.

MEMBERS of the Alpine Club are sometimes reproached with being always on the look-out for some great thing, and habitually neglecting the lower hills. No charge could be more unfounded. I doubt if anywhere in England, outside our Club-list, a body of 300 men could be found so familiar not only with Snowdon and Helvellyn, but also with the puny heights which lie within a modern Sabbath-day's journey of our smoky homes. The grass on Leith Hill and Hind Head is trodden every spring by boots which a month or two later will be breaking through the snows of Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau.

Towards our own English hills we may fairly flatter ourselves that we do our duty.

About the principal European ranges—the Alps, the Caucasus, the Pyrenees, the mountains of Spain and Norway—we know a good deal. We have had papers on Iceland, Lapland, the Carpathians, and Portugal. But there is one great mountain-chain in Europe which we have most of us at different times passed close to, yet have studiously neglected. What can our members tell us of the backbone of Italy, of the mountains which stretch from Genoa to the Straits of Messina? The omniscience of Mr. Ball embraces the Tuscan

Apennine. Captain Utterson-Kelso and Mr. Tucker have climbed some of the Pisan peaks. In their absence, however, our ignorance is complete.

It is easy to suggest reasons or offer excuses for this neglect. Italian country inns have universally a reputation for much dirt and little food. The sense of insecurity which for years has hung over the traveller in too many Italian provinces lingers on even where real danger is over. A man may be bold enough to risk the loss of his finger or nose by frost-bite, and yet reasonably retreat from the chance of having a valuable member cut off and posted to his friends, with—as if he were a popular periodical—a hint that there is ‘more to follow.’ Again the towns of Italy are of absorbing and endless interest. Nowhere does Art press so closely her rivalry with Nature. And Nature responds on the spot to the challenge. The charm of the lowlands is manifold and satisfying. To see panoramas you need not leave cities; largeness of scale, richness and variety of colour are the attributes of every view. One has no need, as too often in England, to sigh for an horizon on which it shall be impossible to count the trees.*

Moreover, at Genoa, at Assisi, to a certain extent even at Rome, the hilltops glowing red and bare against a vapourless sky do not, on second thoughts, promise much either of beauty or adventure to those who feel a passing discontent at viewing them only as a background. I have very insufficient experience on which to form an opinion, and I speak subject to correction, but I believe that this hesitation is in the main justified, and that the centre and tops of the Apennines are very often less beautiful than their outskirts, bare and bleak without being sublime, and crowned by summits which rather resemble exaggerated downs than Alpine peaks. An Apennine journey planned, like a Swiss tour, on a ‘high-level’ system would most probably prove a great mistake.

If, however, we must admit that as a whole the chain is uninviting even to those who feel in a mood for a relaxation from art and antiquities, in two at least of its mountain masses the rule is proved by brilliant exceptions.

The ‘Alpi Apuane,’ better known to Englishmen as the Carrara Mountains, have, for their boldness and beauty of form and

* Fortunately we do not all see the same things. In the ten-miles-off horizon which depresses me as I write a contributor to the local newspaper finds ‘dazzling dizziness of distance.’ One trembles to think what alliterative rapture might be called forth from such a pen by the glimpse through the gates of Volterra.

exquisite colouring, long been held dear by poets and painters. Mr. Ruskin has made them the subjects of one of his eloquent panegyrics, and has attributed to their influence on the people of whose daily horizon they form so conspicuous a feature no small share in the new birth of Tuscan art. From Pisa and Lucca, even from distant Volterra and Florence, their sharp, soaring crest catches the eye. Above the waters of the 'soft blue Spezzian bay' they thrust themselves out of an unchanging belt of grey olive woods, a cluster of keen swordblades, in winter white with Alpine snows, in summer golden in the sunshine with the warm hues of weathered marble, purple in the shade with the rich bloom of a southern atmosphere.

Yet the only spot within them known to pleasure-travellers, and that but to few, is Carrara, the seat of the most famous modern quarries. The town lies deep in a green basin, in which several mountain-glens unite. Low fertile hills surround it, opening on the west to admit sea-glimpses and breezes, overhung on the east by the rude crags of the central mass of the 'Alpi Apuane.' Round the walls the slopes are green with vines and orchards; the snouts of red marble rock which overhang the torrent are covered with ferns, flowers and mosses, and draped, in May, with a golden fringe of laburnum blossoms.

A walk of a mile or so towards the quarries suffices to change the scene. On turning the corner beyond the last village we enter a new country. A long, narrow glen opens in front, hemmed in on all sides by barren marble precipices. Huge white fans spread downwards from gashes in the red mountain-side. These avalanches mark the position of the quarries. The glitter from the freshly-exposed fragments of pure statuary marble is as unendurable to the eyes as any snowslope. The savage nakedness of the scene is emphasised by the busy human life which fills it. The quarries seem a great penal colony, where men toil shut out from all the softness of life. Some compulsion, surely, must be at work to force these stalwart labourers to leave the pleasant haunts and works of their homes—the care of the olive and the vine, or the mending of nets by the seashore—for monotonous toil between a burning sun and shadeless crags. The miners would laugh at your pity. They are here because—although modern sculptors can for the most part only put the flimsiest thought into stone, and builders too often misuse what they take—marble is in good request and wages are high—so high that Carrara prospers and gains wealth, while the neighbouring villages can only manage to live from hand to mouth and pay taxes.

We shall meet, however, other labourers, who gain no recompense for their toil. Long teams of oxen, ten or twelve to each creaking load, advance slowly along the uneven road, dragging, with painful effort and frequent halts, huge masses of marble. Peasants perched across the pole, and facing towards the cart, urge on with blows and curses the patient beasts, whose sides pant and quiver under the cruel strain.

In Dickens' 'Sketches from Italy' will be found a fierce outburst of indignation called forth by the same pitiful spectacle. On 'the genius of the country and the spirit of its institutions' he lays the blame. The genius has awaked from slumber; the institutions are all changed. The railroad, which in the stagnant atmosphere of the olden times might have seemed, in his phrase, 'flat blasphemy,' is now completed, and at the time of my visit only the rails were needed to bring it into use, and put a stop at once and for ever to this miserable cruelty.

Those who, on sentimental or artistic grounds, are prone to rail against an 'United Italy' can scarcely consider the material progress and moral awakening it means, or they would be ashamed of their outcry.

Of all views of the Carrara chain that from the beach of Gombo is the most exquisite. The road from Pisa leads across a flat, fertile plain, past a royal 'cascina,' or dairy-farm, through oak-glades full of deer and pheasants, where one may meet a troop of camels, soberly plodding, and roped head to tail, like a file of gaunt mountaineers. Beyond the oak-glades lies a broad belt of stonepines. It is cut by long, grassy rides made for sportsmen, over which deer roam and rabbits scurry. Across the end of the long avenue there rises at last a bank of solid intense blue—the Mediterranean.

The sea is divided from the pines by a narrow beach, strewn with the tiniest and most delicate shells, and half-covered above winter-storm mark by high tufts of brown, feathery grasses and reeds. This seashore is one of the most supremely beautiful spots in all Italy. Unlike most Italian landscapes, it owes little or nothing to man or human associations. Victor Emmanuel has a small bathing-villa and a large stable near at hand, but they are seldom occupied, and fortunately easily lost sight of. The only interruption to the solitude is when half-a-dozen tall, sunburnt fishermen launch a small boat and sail away across the ripples into the sunset.

Their craft is soon only as a bird on the waters; and for lonely hours one may gaze on the double line of white foam and yellow sand stretching away for miles and miles to the mouth

of the Magra and the low hills which enclose the Gulf of Spezia. Behind the dark wall of pines which guards the shore and hides all the coast country the earth surges heavenwards in huge billows. Out of their rounded tops marble pinnacles shoot up with keener aspiration into the deep western sky. These crags rise nearly 7000 ft. above our heads. Let not any reader be misled by the figures. Seven thousand feet is the height of Monte Rosa above the Riffel: the twenty-thousanders which enclose the central valleys of the Himalayas are not really any higher. Summer clouds—such as Shelley must often have watched—rest with folded wings on their shoulders. As the sun sinks opposite them the mountains are wrapt for a moment in every glory earth can catch. Then the glow fades off the chain leaving it a mass of dark blue, lustrous at the base, where it is bathed in the rising mists of the lowlands. Only about the peaks there still lingers a subdued radiance which seems rather to issue out of them than to be a reflection from the sky.*

In the centre there is a cluster of peaks; a solitary tower stands out clear at either end. The northern of the towers is the Monte Sagro; the southern the Pania della Croce, the Pietra Pana of Dante, whose mention of it is, I believe, the first in Italian literature. What Giotto's Campanile is to Florence this marble mount is to all Val d'Arno. Go where you will its bold outline still rises against the horizon like some huge watchtower. From the Carraja bridge its snows shine in winter mornings like bright gold, its rocks glow through autumn haze red as a carbuncle. There are slightly higher crests above the Carrara quarries, but for its prominence, isolation and shapeliness the Pania † claims ever the first place in our minds when we remember the Apuan Alps. It is a landmark from Genoa to Florence, a beacon on the Tuscan sea as far as Corsica. It is natural to long to look down on the lands and seas below from a peak which forms a link between so many memories. If there

* Mr. W. Richmond has made a noble picture of this landscape, which, I hope, will be exhibited this year at Burlington House.

Amidst the glades of the neighbouring pinewoods we are carried back to older art. Here, it seems likely, Botticelli found the vivid colours and, to an English eye, strange scenery of the landscapes lately sold in the Barker collection.

† The summits of the range are often designated collectively by Italians as 'le Panie.' The principal peaks have each, however, distinctive names of their own, and the Pania della Croce may be called simply 'the Pania,' without much fear of confusion.

is one hill in Italy which provokes and challenges ascent, it is the Pania. In Switzerland it would have been sought out long ago, and by this time ringed with 'pensions' and converted into an ant-heap of tourists.

But in Italy, as I have said before, mountains are, or were till within the last year or two, decidedly out of fashion—'Cælum et animum mutant qui trans Padum currunt,' to spoil an old hexameter. The change of climate is often given as a reason for the change of disposition. Yet mountain freshness is to be found south of the Po, even although we may not always, as in the Alps, sleep as well as walk in it. The traveller dazed with the splendour of art is in Italy a too common sight. At Rome he finds relief in foxhunting on the Campagna; at Naples he flies the Museum for the rocks and ravines of Amalfi, or the orange-hung cliffs of Sorrento. Why should he not brace himself for Florentine galleries in the Alpine seabreezes which play round the crests of Carrara?

My friend Mr. Tucker has already given some practical hints as to the ascent of the Pania della Croce from the seaside-railroad.* From the station of Querceta, between Pietra Santa and Massa, a good carriage-road turns into the mountains. It leads through a narrow defile to Serravezza, a prosperous little town of nearly nine thousand inhabitants, lying about the meeting of the two torrents which combine to give it its name, and shut off from the plain by a chestnut-draped spine of rugged rock. Michel Angelo was forced by Leo X., very much against his will, to obtain marble in this neighbourhood instead of from Carrara, and lived some time in the town engaged in superintending the quarries opened under his directions on the Monte Altissimo, and in making them accessible by means of new paths. One of his letters in the 'Vita' lately published at Florence records how he nearly lost his life by the bursting of a fastening while moving a large column.† According to a certain Ascanio Cordini, who wrote his life in 1746, he contemplated carving out of one of the hills a colossus, which might be seen from far out at sea by sailors. The legend—it is nothing more—is, at least, a happy one. After the Italian fashion, a tablet marks the house he inhabited; another records the sojourn of Massimo d'Azeglio in 1840, and the fact that he here completed his novel, 'Il Niccolo dei Lapi.'

* See Alpine Journal, vol. vii. p. 214.

† Vita di Michelangelo Buonarroti da Aurelio Gotti, Direttore delle Gallerie di Firenze. Florence, 1875.

We now followed the Serra, leaving on the left the *Vezza*, which falls from the flanks of *Monte Altissimo*—despite its name, only a lower spur of the chain. Beyond some large ironworks, at the hamlet of *Ruosina*, our driver turned up a narrow side-glen, where the road soon came abruptly to an end. About an hour's steady ascent through chestnut forests led to *Levigliani*, the highest-perched hamlet on this side the mountains, which owes its size to the mercury and cinnabar mines opened near in the days of the *Medici*.

In the hills near *Levigliani* are two large caverns, the '*Tana dell' Uomo Selvatico*,' and the '*Tana d'Eolo*.' The former is more than a mile long, and contains galleries, chambers, two streams, a lake, and stalactites of every form and description. Ropes are said to be necessary to explore it completely. The cavern of *Æolus*, situated in the valley of *Acereto*, and so called from the blast of air rushing outwards from its mouth in summer, in winter in the opposite direction, is the most remarkable of all the caves. In some of them traces of human residence are stated to have been found.*

In so remote a spot one feels no right to expect anything but a hayloft. But the quarries, the caves, or the *Pania* bring an occasional stranger, and the owner of the village shop has a couple of spare—and absolutely untenanted—beds to offer to guests. The chief waiter of his establishment—he had two or three female subordinates—was a youth of remarkable conversational power. He combined with Italian volubility the German habit of saying everything two or three times over, in order to make sure of his audience grasping it. His tongue, in consequence, was hardworked. Nor was he active only in one member. His whole body was as restless as a child's, and our glasses were full or our plates carried off before we had time to gather up enough Italian to breathe a remonstrance. We expected and half hoped that after all his exertions our friend might fall into a sleep sound enough to prevent his carrying out his proposal to come with us up the *Pania*—for the pleasure of our society. However, he was awake as soon as we were, and eager to carry a knapsack. It would have been cruel to refuse services volunteered with so much good grace, and, I truly believe, with little expectation of payment.

Three hours and a half suffice a good walker from the village to the top of the *Pania della Croce*. A well-paved path leads to the ridge dividing the glen of *Levigliani* from the head

* The authority is *Curo Regnoli's* '*Recherche Paleœtologique nelle Alpi Apuane*': Pisa, 1847.

waters of the Serra. It is half an hour's nearly level walk over grass to the crest of the chain, the watershed between the Serchio and the western streams, at the base of the peak.

Here we halted to watch the sunrise break over the grey land and sea. We looked along the sides of Monte Forato, a rugged mass of rock which owes its name to a natural window in its crags, conspicuous from the coast. Beyond it, between us and Pisa, lay the broad upper basin of the Versiglia, lifted up on the shoulders of the southernmost spurs of the range. The green slopes were everywhere varied by white haybarns and villages. Even on the most remote meadow-shelves, or on the narrow crests of the highest spurs, hamlets had perched themselves, as if to catch the view and the seabreezes. Their bells ringing for early mass, mingling with the voices of a multitude of cuckoos, sent up a cheerful sound through the bright morning air.

A goat-track leads up the lower portion of the marble pyramid; above it is a rough but easy scramble. In early May we found the highest crest a fine edge of snow.

The panorama of the Pania is bounded by two great horizon-lines, converging to the north, the sea and the central Apennine. Tuscany, 'islanded with cities fair,' lies under-foot. The distant hollow, flooded with morning sunshine, contains Florence and Pistoja; on the high opposite hill to the southwards sits Volterra of the Etruscan walls. Lucca appears as a dark patch amongst its olive gardens. Close to it—close, that is, in the scale of the vast prospect—the clustered marbles of Pisa shine out as the first sunbeams shoot over the Colline Pisane. On the edge of the land lies Leghorn, as English sailors are pleased to call Livorno. We have just seen the fire put out in its lighthouse.

The keen breeze which rushed about our peak fell also on the Mediterranean. The gusts swept wide shining paths across the grey waters. Caught by them, the white ships flitting out from port took in half their sails. As the sun climbed higher the air on the surface of the water seemed to seethe, sea-mists curdled above the waves, sprang upwards and swam inland, like the mythic company of the Oceanides, blotting out for a time the towns and fertile fields of the coast-plain, and then melting again into thin air as they touched the mountain-sides. Far out in the deep rose the lofty hills of Elba. Gorgona and Capraja were purple patches flecked by some far-shining human homes. Corsica's mountain-tops ought to have fringed the western sky, but

the horizon was too misty for us to distinguish them with any certainty.

Following the coastline northwards, part of the Gulf of Spezzia shone in blue calm, with Porto Venere—familiar to readers of 'Elle et Lui'—guarding the entrance. Behind the hills of the Cinque Comuni—famous for a wine grown in vineyards which overhang the sea, and are believed to draw virtue from its salt breezes—we looked far into and across the Gulf of Genoa to where the last spurs of the Maritime Alps fall seawards. In this direction Monte Viso might possibly have been seen in a clearer state of the atmosphere. It has been made out from one of the Carrara peaks, fifteen miles further north.

The mountain view consisted of the naked crags of the Pisanino and its neighbours, and the long undulating ridge of the great Apennine with its rounded tops, above which the Cimone was very distinguishable. Between the two chains lay the broad valley of the Serchio. The landscape it offered to our eyes might have been the summary of Italy of a painter's dream. It had not the splendour of the southern slopes of the Alps, where Swiss grandeur, however buried in vines and chestnuts, lies always near at hand. This Val d'Aosta of the Apennines had a southern, sunny, calm aspect. A spreading, green veil covered the lowest slopes beside the stream. At a little height on the hillside it melted into dusky red, where the spring growths had not attained a luxuriance sufficient to cover the soil. Along the upper limit of the opened buds, where the two colours met, many little towns and hamlets stood out on the tops of the spurs, which fell as it were in folds from the crests. We recognised the walls of highperched Barga, an unchanged specimen of a mediæval hill-town with nothing new about it except the roads which zigzag up for miles to its gates. Loftier still, Coreglia clung on to the side of the Rondinaja. Broad stretches of winter snow left on high served to complete the national tricolour.

Over the whole shone the pure Italian heaven, and out of its heart the searching sun sent his rays, here veiling the slopes in a flood of quivering light, there giving an individual existence to every nook and corner of the hills. Utterly unlike any Swiss panorama of snowy ranges, the prospect before our eyes came nearer in arrangement and mixture of sea and land to that from Snowdon, surpassing, however, our home mountain, in so far as Italy exceeds Wales in form, colour and associations.

From the broad saddle west of the Pania a glen falls northwards into the valley of the Turrîte Secca, which joins the Ser-

chio at Castelnuovo, called 'di Garfagnano,' to distinguish it from other Italian Newcastles. A broad path skirts the north-west base of the Pania. Heavy snow avalanches had recently fallen down the gullies, cutting deep tracks through the luxuriant beech-copses. The path turned down suddenly to cross the stream and gain Puntalto, the first hamlet on this side of the mountains. Hence it would have led us back to the sources of the Turrîte Secca in Val d'Arni, one of the most remote glens of this country. Its villages were formerly only to be reached by rude and almost dangerous ladderpaths down faces of marble cliff. Lately its mineral wealth has caused it to be linked to the seaside by a good road. According to Professor J. Cocchi, traces of ancient moraines may be observed in it, especially near the hamlet of Campaniletti.

A goat-girl pointed out to us the 'strada della Pania,' by which we had to make the circuit of the peak. It was a very slender footpath, with innumerable branches leading to charcoal-burners' platforms. It was impossible not to take a wrong turn sooner or later. We got too low, and to continue had to make our way along very steep wooded banks with cliffs above and below us. In many places to miss one's footing would have been fatal; and François' ironshod staff was far more serviceable than my rotten umbrella. However, we recovered the proper track without any serious loss of time. It keeps at a great height above the narrow gorge of the stream. The hillside was broken above us by bold rocks, below by steep cliffs; it was covered everywhere in a dense mantle of fresh green beech-woods. On the opposite slopes, however, the chestnuts were still brown and bare. At length we turned the last spur of the Pania, and ran down gentian-starred banks on to a narrow hog's-back crowned by a group of cottages. Instead of descending to the left to the bed of the Turrîte Secca, throughout only a narrow defile, the path bears away in the opposite direction round the head of a tributary glen. A steep plunge and climb made François suggest that we had not descended a valley by so many ascents since we left Svanetia. They led to a meadow, white and fragrant with narcissus blossom, almost on the top of the ridge which looks down on the next valley to the southwards—that of the Petrosioiana. From this point it would be easy to reach Gallicano by a very direct route.

Henceforth the path is a terrace cleverly carried at a level along the backbone of the hills at a height sufficient to avoid all trouble with their many spurs. We turned at last downwards towards the twin villages of Sassi and Eglio, where

whitewashed houses with gardens full of flowering shrubs and plaster statues reminded us we were in the heart of Italy. The wayside shrines were gaily decked with jonquils or narcissus blossoms, varied by a bunch of lilac or a dark-blue wreath of gentians. By making May the Virgin's month the Roman Catholic calendar has firmly attached the old flower festival to the Christian creed. One at least of the old goddesses lingered on earth, and having somewhat carelessly disguised herself remains among us immortal as spring itself.

From these heights the views over the Garfagnana were enchanting. The universal sunshine lit up its high towns and hamlets, and streamed into the hollows of its crumpled hills, throwing out their spurs in relief against a background of golden air. A sharp, sandy zigzag led us down to Castelnuovo. This remote country-town lies across the junction of two streams at the foot of a broad hill, the end of the spur we have been pursuing, which here projects towards the main Apennine, so as almost to block the Serchio valley. In the background the snowy range of the Alpe di San Pellegrino* rises beyond a broad fertile basin, celebrated for its pure air and healthiness in summer and its cold in winter.

Entering the town we enquired of a peasant who was loitering on the old bridge over the Turrite Secca for the best inn. He suggested a house which did not on nearer approach look inviting, and I thought it prudent to take other advice before committing ourselves. There was no want of advisers at hand, for the day was cloudless, and all the business of the town was being carried on 'sub Jove' on the shady side of the street. Hammers clinked on brass, wheelwrights knocked, shoemakers tapped, tailors stitched, children sprawled and cried, and through all ran a buzz of conversation varied by a laughing appeal to the dark-haired girls who sat stitching under shelter of their blinds on the opposite balcony. Italians are only at home out of doors. They work as naturally as others play in the sunshine. We decided to appeal to the shoemaker, and he recommended us the house with the balcony opposite. It was a thorough country inn, with a large kitchen out of all proportion to the work done in it, and a high stone staircase, leading to a little sitting-room with a very ancient Empire

* Many of the Apennines are known as 'Alpi' in the neighbourhood, and the Cimone, the highest of the Tuscan ridges, is also called the 'Alpone' or 'great Alp' by the shepherds. In the Apennines it is the crests, in the Alps the lower shoulders of the range, which are locally called 'Alpi.' In both cases, it will be noticed, it is the part of the chain which affords pasturage which gets the title.

clock and patriotic prints, amongst them a Victor Emmanuel in royal robes, looking mightily uncomfortable, and like a king in private theatricals. The young mistress soon gave us a sufficiently good dinner of pork chops and abundant vegetables. Having engaged a carriage in an hour, we strolled about the place.

The 'città' boasts its hospital and its 'elegantissimo teatro,' besides a large church containing, according to books, some Luca della Robbia work, which I somehow overlooked. The 'new castle' has in the process of years become a very rusty old fort, and is now used as a granary and Monte di Pietà.

A high-flown inscription in the picturesque street records the governorship of Ariosto, sent here to his great disgust in 1522. Considering the terms in which the poet spoke of their ancestors as 'questa gente inculta,' this shows some large-mindedness and absence of family pride on the part of the Castelnouvans. The poet thus describes the spot:—

'La nuda Pania tra l'Aurora e il Noto,
Dall' altre parti il giogo mi circonda
Che fa d'un Pellegrin la gloria noto.
'Quest' è una falda ov' abito profonda,
D'onde non muovo i piè senza salire
Del selvoso Apennin la fiera sponda.'

And he goes on to deplore the tales of

'Furti, omicidii, odo, vendette ed ire,'

to which in his official capacity he had to listen. At the present day the people are peaceable, polite, and—if I may judge by their bookseller's window—cultivated enough even for a poet's society.

In quantity the literary food displayed was not, perhaps, equal to an English country bookseller's stock, but the quality was certainly superior. In provincial England we seldom see an old author. Everything, from the Proverbs and the Gospels to 'Gulliver's Travels,' has to be boiled down or warmed up to the taste of the day; that is, of habitual leading-article readers. Here the classics had suffered nothing from modern adapters and illustrators. Tacitus, Lucretius, and Homer represented the ancients; Tasso, Alfieri, and Machiavelli, with Vasari's 'Lives of the Painters,' the middle ages; the only modern admitted was a translation of Dickens' 'Christmas Carol.'

I had fully intended to spend ten days in the Carrara and Pistoja Apennines, to recross to Massa by the mountains, and to explore their northern flanks. By the second week in May I had counted on finding the hillsides fully clothed. But although

at Castelnuovo all was green, and the copses were already gay with laburnum-blossoms, 500 feet above the chestnut-woods were only in bud. Without their woods the bright and many-winding glens of the Tuscan Apennines look bare and parched. The brown ribs of the earth are not clothed, like a Swiss alp, in turf watered by perennial springs. But in full summer and through autumn the ruddy soil contrasts finely with the green cloak thrown over it. The foliage, too thin to conceal any crease in the hill-sides, sets off their variety of shape and emphasises each bold line or graceful curve of the mountain-spurs. Contrasted to northern forests the woods of the Apennines are as the clinging intricately-waved drapery wrought by some Greek master-sculptor's hand to the simpler and heavier handiwork of Michel Angelo.

The wise traveller pays as much attention to time as to place. He is most reluctant to be 'out of season' in his wanderings, and takes pains to see every country at its best and most characteristic moments. With regard to Italy, it would not be difficult to argue that tourists are as a rule the reverse of wise.

In winter, life in Italy is at a stand-still. The first frost-laden 'tramontana' puts an end to out-of-door existence, wraps all the men up in their great cloaks, and sends the women shivering indoors to their little pots of charcoal. But under its wings it bears another crowd to fill the streets. Americans in families, English in pairs, Germans unattached, all the Hyperborean tribes from behind the Alps pour down the passes. One finds in the Pitti more fellow-countrymen than Florentines, and, what with the crowd and the copyists, can only get near the great pictures once a week for a few hours on Sunday morning. In place of the Campagna peasantry who crowd St. Peter's in May, rubbing their noses fondly against the saint's bronze toe, like their own cattle against a post, there is a buzzing of personally-conducted swarms, which even the most polite and genial of pontiffs could scarcely pretend to mistake for angels. No processions of tall peasants and oxen dragging carts, out of which the unfermented grape-juice oozes and drips, slowly scale the high hill of Perugia, but between the trains shivering tourists with hands buried deep in their pockets and noses as red as their guide-books rush in and out of the icy town.

If you care for this company and like being cold and wish to see Italian towns and country in their least characteristic aspect by all means travel in winter. At every time the country is rich in delights. But if you want to enjoy them in the most delightful way, remember that there are three months

both of spring and autumn when Italy is itself again; when the sunblinds come out and the stalls under the old palaces are piled with flowers or ripe fruit; when the olives get a new meaning amongst the fresh green leaves; when the huge well-like churches, where you nearly caught your death of cold, become pleasant resting-places from the buzz and glitter of the outside street, and their old frescoes shine out upon you with a wealth of detail and expression unrevealed by low December suns. I have been warned that I am a salamander, and must not lead others under a summer sun. Spring and autumn are undoubtedly for strangers the best seasons in Italy, but it is difficult to prefer one before the other. Spring, south of the Alps and the kingdom of east-wind, is a new thing—not, perhaps, in all ways so loveable as the northern, but with a beauty entirely her own.

There is amongst us a school of artists who if they go back some centuries for their mode of treatment, carry us back many more by their choice of subjects. In their, to our age, somewhat strained passion for symbolical figures we see a remnant of the tendency which led the young world to personify all the seasons and forces of nature, and was the source of Greek myths, and through them of Greek art. I venture to suggest to one of these painters—what the dealers they hate would doubtless call ‘companion subjects’—two figures, embodying respectively the Italian and English May. The contrast ought in good hands to be effective. Some hints might, perhaps, be got in carrying it out by a perversion of the melodious lines in which Mr. Swinburne has profanely contrasted the goddesses of the Christian and Pagan world. We in England know by heart her who comes under rainy skies—

‘Pale, and a maiden, and sister to sorrow,’

gathering her faint-coloured robes round trembling limbs, decked with buds half-opened, yet already nipped by cruel frosts, and trailing a garland of wind-tossed, weather-beaten blossoms. She has a sweetness and a meekness under suffering which makes poets long for her, even while they linger under the spell of her southern sister. An Italian spring bursts upon us in frank, flaming beauty, gliding over the hills unhooded, with breasts bare to the sunshine, like Venus of old. The earth is her temple, and under its sky-roof of stainless blue she fears no cold or storm. She bears in her hand for sceptre a tall shoot of maize, the young, grey-green corn waves about her knees, and from her shoulders trail long, delicate vine-tendrils. Before her feet the Campagna spreads a carpet of blood-red

poppies; in the hedgerows which have been blooming timidly all the winter, 'the roses grow rosier' at her approach. Over the mountain-crags and the mountain-like ruins she throws a shower of pink and yellow blossoms; in the fields of Val d'Arno the Florentine lily shoots up amongst the corn-blades, under the great oaks of the Alban hills the cyclamens come forth in thousands at her call. The sun does her children double service, sending down through the long May days fresh streams from the snows of the Apennine to refresh and sustain them under his rays. She is a goddess, passionate yet painless, triumphant over blasts and blights, and strong to ward off the chances and changes of other skies from the sweet new births she loves.*

Autumn in Italy is borne down and overgrown with fruitage and vegetable wealth. Then the luxuriance of the year is at its height, grasses wave their loftiest crests, the vines spread their amplest shade. Long after England has lost its crops, and seen its blossoms moulder, and its dripping woods grow brown with moisture, the Apennine is still, Bacchante-like, girdled round with grape-clusters, and clothed in oak and chestnut forests green as in June. In the south autumn is a riper summer—the season of mature life, not of gathering damps and incipient decay. There the year does not, as with us, die away slowly and sadly in a long decline. Even in late October there is little sign of the approaching fall; a sense of mellow ripeness alone pervades the air. It is a feeling more in harmony with the human associations of the country, its grey towers and time-worn ruins, than the bright, youthful promise of spring; and we may feel tempted to prefer the autumn months for our rambles.

Yet spring has practical advantages for the traveller. A fresh breeze breaks through its fiercest sunshine. There are long days, cool nights, and no mosquitoes. Autumn suffers from sirocco and stinging insects. From the latter pest, however, the hills and hill-towns—such as Siena and Perugia—are free; the former is felt in them in a very modified form.

I have ventured to insist at length on the proper seasons for visiting Italy. For until English travellers modify their present habits the beauties of the mountain districts will

* I have given a few outlines here of the typical Italian and English spring. Of course, anyone who cares to make the sort of criticism may say with truth that a brilliant May is sometimes seen in the North, and a stormy wet one in the South. But these, when they occur, are always greeted as 'exceptional' seasons.

necessarily be displayed in vain. A winter ascent of the Pania, like a winter ascent of Snowdon, may be both possible and pleasant. But few people will find in the icy breezes of a Florentine January encouragement to venture among country inns and on bleak mountain-tops.

I had, as I have said, intended to spend more time in the mountains; but, with all Italy before us, it seemed perverse to loiter in the one region where the finger of spring had as yet only touched the flowers leaving the woods still wintry. So we turned southwards, putting off the Pistojan Apennine to the June or October of another year. We did not start from Castelnuovo until about 4 P.M.; but, thanks to our country horse and driver, we had before dark got over the 40 kilomètres between us and Lucca. Nothing can be more pleasant and exhilarating after a long day's walk than a drive in one of these distance killing Tuscan carts, behind a pony which only leaves off trotting to break into a canter. It is the exact reverse of the return to Pontresina in an Engadine 'berg-wagen.'

I append for the use of others a modified edition of the route I had mapped out, with notes on inns derived partly from personal experience, partly from local handbooks—the 'Guida alle Alpi Apuane' of Prof. Zolfanelli and Cav. V. Santini (Florence, Tipografia di G. Barbera, 1874), the 'Guida della Montagna Pistojesa' of Prof. G. Tigri (Florence, Tipografia della Gazzetta d'Italia, Via del Castelluccio, No. 8, 1875); and the 'Al Cimone' of the Marchese F. Carandini (Modena, alla Società Tipografica, 1875), useful little volumes which will give a good deal of information to the traveller and form a foundation for the complete knapsack-guide to the central Apennines with which the activity of the Italian Alpine Club will, no doubt, some day furnish us. The sheets of the great Austrian survey of central Italy, on the same scale as the map of the Lombardo-Venetian provinces, should also be procured by a traveller intending to wander among the mountains. They can be bought at Stanford's, Charing Cross, but not at Florence, except after much difficulty, owing to some stupid arrangement between the Austrian and Italian staffs.

1st day. Genoa to Carrara. Visit quarries. Albergo Nazionale, fairly comfortable.

2. To Ponte a Monzone (I. Bombardi's inn); i. By the Via Provinciale to Soliera; thence by mule-roads, the easiest route. ii. By the Dogana della Tecchia and Tenerano. iii. By Colonnata and Vinca; a rough walk, the most mountainous path.

3. Visit the Solco d'Equi, the wildest valley of the chain, encumbered by enormous fallen blocks, and overhung by the marble precipices of the Pizzo d'Uccello (6,150 ft.). Ascend this peak and sleep out in the Gremolazza valley for the Pisanino (also called Pizzo Maggiore).

4. Ascend the Pisanino, the highest of the Apuan Alps (6,722 ft.), descend by the valley of the Frigido to Massa. These peaks were

both climbed in 1873 by General Ezio da Vecchi and Signor Arnaldo Pozzolini. The Pizzo d'Uccello had often been reached before, but the Pisanino, it is believed, never. The gentlemen describe the ascents as 'for practised climbers easy, for amateurs difficult, for people unaccustomed to mountains dangerous, for those subject to giddiness impossible.'

Inns at Massa: Buon Gusto, fair, but tricky people. Il Giappone.

5. By rail to Via Reggio. Visit Gombo or Val d'Arni.

6. By Serravezza to Levigliani to sleep. Fornari's house offers two clean beds.

7. Over Pania della Croce, 6,102 feet, and by Forno Volasco to Galliciano (in the church a fine work of Luca della Robbia). Drive to Barga. Good clean inn outside the gate, used as luncheon-place by excursionists from Baths of Lucca. Interesting specimen of a mediæval walled hill-town in an exquisite situation. Ancient duomo with curious pulpit.

8. Walk over Rondinaja (6,364 ft.) to Boscolungo (A. del Abetone, new inn and pension), 4,265 ft. The Florentine section of the I.A. Club are doing their best to make Boscolungo a comfortable summer resort. The excursions and walks in the neighbourhood are described as pleasant, and the flora as particularly interesting to botanists. See Professor Tigri's useful guide for topographical details, as well as much local information, including specimens of the rustic poetry for which this district is famous.

9. Ascend Cimone (7,080 ft.), the highest of the central Apennines. The ascent takes about 3 hours from the inn.

10. Drive by San Marcello (A. della Posta and several other inns) to the railway station at Pracchia, or (more to be recommended) over the Apennine to Pistoja or Pescia.

TEN DAYS' HARD WORK IN THE ZERMATT DISTRICT.
BY THE REV. F. T. WETHERED. Read before the
Alpine Club, December 16, 1875.

'Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.'

FOR the last fifteen or twenty years Zermatt has been such a nucleus of mountaineering, that the peaks encircling it, their difficulties and essential peculiarities, have become as well known, either from personal experience or from the graphic accounts which others have given us of them, as any part of the Alpine chain. I feel, therefore, some diffidence in offering the present paper, descriptive of ascents made last summer in that district. There will soon, however, be nothing new of any sort for Alpine narrative. With such ever-increasing vigour is mountaineering prosecuted nowadays, that if the *raison d'être* of the various Alpine Clubs be merely the search for novelty, we shall soon have to seek it outside, or