

DODGE WALTER PHELPS

AS THE CROW FLIES

Walter Dodge
As the Crow Flies

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Содержание

INTRODUCTION	5
A GLIMPSE OF CORSICA	6
ALONG THE RIVIERA	8
SAN REMO	11
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	14

Walter Phelps Dodge As the Crow Flies / From Corsica to Charing Cross

INTRODUCTION

IN Summer, particularly in travelling, one is very apt to prefer a simple glass of ice-cold lemonade – not too sweet, – to a bumper of burgundy or a tankard of ale; and it has been the author's experience that the mental processes are not unlikely to follow the example of the physical, in this particular. For this reason he is encouraged to submit these slight sketches of divers persons and places to an indulgent public.

He may say that the sketch entitled "Sandringham House" has been submitted to the highest authority, and that its substance is approved by the Personage with whom it is chiefly concerned.

W. P. D.
New York,

April 1st, 1893.

A GLIMPSE OF CORSICA

BASTIA. – Nice is too attractive to leave without regret at any time, and we felt particularly sorry for ourselves one evening towards six o'clock when we saw the disreputable little tub of a steamer that was to take us over to Corsica; and as we penetrated the odourous mysteries of the cabin we devoutly hoped that we might see Bastia in the morning without foundering, for the berths were suspiciously like the long, narrow coffin shelves in family vaults and had been built apparently for children, so cribbed, cabined and confined were their proportions. We said little as we put away our portmanteaux and cameras and took our rugs from the strap, but our looks spoke volumes and we were careful to sprinkle plenty of Keating's powder about the place.

A fine, drizzling rain soon began and we were compelled, much to our disgust, to leave the comparatively unobjectionable deck where sturdy, bare-legged sailor boys were shouting and singing and throwing ropes and chains about to no apparent end. As soon as we had reached the depths of the noisome little cabin, dinner was served, and oh, the mockery of that dinner! Everything was scented with garlic, and when the flavour of that questionable delicacy was absent it was replaced by the taste of rancid oil. We did not sit the meal out, and although it was barely nine o'clock, threw ourselves on our shelves to try and forget the too perceptible motion as the little boat quitted the sheltering harbour of Nice. Although the sea was calm enough, the small size of the boat unconsciously suggested the idea of a rough sea.

Our sleep was more or less broken – generally more, and at six we were awakened by a fiendish blast of the whistle which was near our berths, to an overpowering sense of certain strange and gruesome odours. The cabin had been hermetically closed on account of the rain, and on the floor about the tables were stretched in various attitudes of *abandon* several human forms, who proceeded to rise and shake themselves. It is needless to say we had thrown ourselves down fully dressed, and we made a sudden rush for the companion way, for if ever there was an odour that could be cut it was the one in the tightly closed little cabin of that dirty little steamer off Bastia in the rainy, chill darkness of that December morning.

A hasty fee to the steward – and the next moment saw us on the quay at Bastia, holding fast to our valises, threatened by a ragged mob of urchins who would have had but little respect for the doctrine of *meum and tuum*. We scrambled into a musty, damp hotel 'bus and, half asleep still, were rattled over the badly-paved streets to our hotel. And what a hotel! We were received in a mouldy courtyard by an antiquated porter in undress uniform, with a farthing tallow dip, who gruffly informed us that we could get no coffee for two hours and who then ushered us upstairs to the grimy little room reserved for us. I don't know yet how high the hotel was, but it seemed as if we were never to reach the top as we struggled after that wavering candle. No wonder tourists who think nothing of a run to Colombo or Aden or a trip to New Zealand shudder at the thought of doing Corsica or Sardinia, for anything more uncivilized than the ways of getting there I have never seen.

The time passed drearily on as we waited in the cold, stone-floored room, but eight o'clock finally came and we hurried down eager for coffee and eggs. The dining room was *sui generis* and the cloth and napkins were not above reproach, but we managed to make out a fair meal with the exception of the bread, which was hard and sour; and then sallied out to do the town.

Bastia is rather a decent town to the view and the architecture is solid and not altogether in the flimsy stucco of Italy. There are no handsome public buildings, except the theatre, which is built on the lines of an old Greek temple. In the square on the water front, where the raw recruits are drilled, is a huge statue of the first Napoleon in the toga and laurel wreath of a Roman Consul. It is of heroic size and dazzlingly white and seems to dominate everything in its immediate neighbourhood. Of course the Corsicans are inordinately proud of Napoleon, and one cannot converse for five minutes with

an ordinary inhabitant without his remarking nonchalantly that Corsica has produced the greatest military genius of the world.

The islanders are a curious cross between the French and Italian types, perhaps inclining more to the latter. The language is a *patois* of French and Italian, with a few Spanish words, and is hard to comprehend, but anyone understanding good Italian can easily manage. It is really yet a question to what country Corsica should strictly belong, for it has tasted the rule of many nations. It knew the yoke of both the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and belonged in turn to the Republics of Genoa and Pisa in the middle ages; when the short-lived King Theodore raised the standard of revolt, too soon lowered. Then the patriot, Pasquale Paoli, ruled the island from 1755 to 1769, when the Genoese transferred their claim to the island to France, which has since annexed it.

It is absurd to say that Vendetta has died out, for it is still popular in the island to an almost incredible extent, and anyone refusing to continue a blood feud when his plain duty would be to avenge his ancestor would soon have the Rimbecco sung under his windows. A thirst for blood seems ingrained in the Corsican nature, and few families in either the upper or lower classes of the island are without their hereditary feud. This custom is said to be worse now than under the Second Empire, and is particularly prevalent round about Corte. It originated when the Genoese ruled the island and male members were obliged to take the honour of their family into their own keeping. There are several strict laws in existence enacted against this barbarous practice, but they have fallen into disuse and are unregarded.

I have several times been asked what the principal industry of Bastia was. The only answer that occurs to me is to say stilettoes, for really all the shops seem to have inexhaustible supplies of this keen, murderous little blade. Not only are they sold in the guise of weapons, but as charms, as brooches, as sleeve buttons, as scarf pins – in coral, lava, gold, silver and brass. Even the pawnbrokers display second-hand stilettoes in their windows, several of them covered with a rust that has been blood. To a stranger, all this gives Bastia a savage air, and when he thinks of the hotels and the food he is apt to start for the station or the dock. But Vendetta is confined strictly to local affairs, and it is very rare to find a case where strangers have been brought into family feuds. The literature of Vendetta is rich. The famous “Corsican Brothers,” “Mr. Barnes of New York,” Marie Corelli’s “Vendetta,” and Prosper Merrimée’s delightful “Colomba” all dwell on the subject.

But besides Vendetta, which exists only in this island; Corsica shares with Sardinia the honour of being the only place in Europe where the moufflon is now found, and so attracts numbers of English sportsmen, who, however, land usually at Ajaccio. Few tourists reach Bastia. Ajaccio is a sort of health resort, modeled after the places on the Riviera and is only a second-rate imitation at best; but Bastia is a quiet, semi-commercial little town, on the sea, with huge mountains at its back, and content to dream away its time in ignorant obscurity. All traces of the old island costumes have disappeared and one does not know whether to be amused or sad at the pathetic attempt to imitate French fashions. The older streets in Bastia are curious. They differ from those of most old Italian towns in being paved with large, flat stones and are kept scrupulously clean, showing their French origin. The old citadel, built in 1383, is worth a visit for the sake of its curious walls. In poking about among the old curiosity shops I unearthed a valuable souvenir. It was an old bronze medal, bearing on one side “Louis Napoleon Bonaparte,” with his portrait, and on the other “Pour Valeur.” It had evidently been given as a reward of valor by Napoleon III. in the eventful two years when he was Prince-President, before the *coup d’état*, and I have since ascertained its rarity. A drive in the country about Bastia shows a landscape rich in hills and pines, but in nothing else.

A diligent search among the grocers’ shops finally unearthed a tin of “picnic tongue,” and we feasted on that and on some Albert biscuits to save ourselves a return to the too odourous hotel dining room. We did not regret sailing for Sardinia that night, as we hoped to find there what we had missed in Corsica – clean beds and decent food.

ALONG THE RIVIERA

CANNES. – Any one with a liking for titles, that is, English titles, which are the only ones worth having, is sure to be gratified at Cannes. For Cannes is like Bournemouth, select and expensive. At the *Prince de Galles* Hotel in Cannes the other day, when the register was brought to me to sign, I noticed that for five pages mine was the only name of a commoner. Earls were as thick as blackberries and there were Viscounts galore. This explains why so few, comparatively, are met with at the other Riviera resorts. Cannes is *par excellence* an English resort, and woe betide the *bourgeois* Frenchman or spectacled German who innocently happens upon one of its mammoth hotels; and many are the shivers that shake his *Jäger*-clothed frame at the numerous open windows and delightful draughts of fresh air that are so home-like to an Englishman or a civilized American.

Like Bournemouth, Cannes is rich in pines and poor in shops and cabs. But here every one brings their own turn-out, and few teams are to be seen without both footman and coachman in some well-known London livery. For amusements Cannes is a poor place, that is, for theatres; but there is plenty of tennis, which one may, if properly introduced, play with Russian Grand-Duchesses or Austrian Archdukes; and the Grand Duke Michael is working up some excitement over golf links. He did me the honour to ask for my subscription, but as I am not in Cannes *en permanence* I was not obliged to subscribe. One can go to twenty teas in an afternoon, if one is so disposed, and “*picniqués*,” dances and dinners are almost too numerous to count. At Rumpelmayer’s the “*Hig-lif*” of Cannes, as the French call it, is to be met between five and six o’clock, when most of the *habitués* of Rotten Row happen in for a cup of the delicious chocolate tempered with whipped cream of which Rumpelmayer makes a specialty. All the villa owners at Cannes (for there are very few villas rented here; if one wants a house in Cannes one must build it) send to Regent Street for whatever they want, consequently no shops at Cannes but those making a specialty of kitchen necessities or provisions have any *raison d’être* and they are not missed. Most of the hotels have good libraries, and one can lounge away days in the palm-shaded garden, watching the sunshine dance and sparkle upon the rich blue sea. There is a restful feeling about Cannes, an aristocratic repose and seclusion not shared by any of the other resorts on the coast, except, perhaps, in a modified degree, by San Remo; and physicians say the air here is not so stimulating as at Nice and Mentone. Of course, it is not so stimulating as at Monte Carlo, either, but that is for a different reason!

No one can get a footing at Cannes unless their social record is unassailable, and as it costs a small fortune to live here for even a week, objectionable people are kept away, and one does not meet the cockney Londoner who drops his h’s promiscuously or the shoddy American who speaks with a twang and is always looking for a spittoon. Even the cooking is English at Cannes, and cold “*ros-bif*” and pickles with a tankard of ale and a bit of apple tart (than which there is no more palatable luncheon) often forms the meal of some hearty party of Britons. One leaves Cannes with regret; and a sigh for its quiet pleasures as one is whirled into the noisy, huge station at Nice.

One finds here a very different atmosphere. All is gaiety, noise and bustle. Splendid shops thrust their wonderfully arranged windows upon one’s notice. Redfern’s name appears in gilt with the Prince of Wales’ plumes above it, and many names familiar to frequenters of the Paris jewellers’ shops are met with. Strolling along the Quai Masséna one could spend hours simply looking in the shop windows at pearl pins marked at £1,000, or at some little pink emerald worth a fortune simply because it does not happen to be green. And the famous Galignani library is not to be ignored, with its fascinating display of all the latest London books and the Christmas numbers of the English papers with their half-hidden pictures of Santa Claus; nor the huge Casino and Winter Garden where one pays two francs for a ticket of admission, good for the whole day, where reading-rooms and the latest telegrams of Reuter’s Agency tempt one to settle down for several hours. There, in the domed central

garden, among hundreds of palms and tropical plants, one can listen to a capital band while having an ice from the Nice Bignon's.

There, too, one may see a good exhibition of marionettes, a sort of glorified Punch and Judy show, where all the gilded infancy of Nice congregates to enjoy the fun. And one can waste hours over the *petits chevaux*; where, on a huge, green-clothed table, six small horses are wound up, and race around a circle, bets being made upon the colour and number of the winner. In the height of the season the management is said to make 3,000 francs per day out of this simple amusement. At the far end of this pleasant Jardin d'Hiver is the entrance to the small play-house connected with it; but the companies who perform here are not above reproach; except during Carnival, when no expense is spared to secure the best talent, and the Paris play-houses are called upon to contribute their best actors for the edification of the visitors. A stroll among the Nice shops in the evening is delightful, in the warm balmy air, with the moonlight over all and the echo of some mandolin concert in the distance. One can listen to street musicians in this sunny land without any fear of hearing "Comrades" or "Ask a P'leeceman," and may even reasonably expect something decent in the way of selections from "Carmen" or "Dinorah," both of which are prime favorites among the lower classes. Nice has long had a municipal theatre, but this is not well supported, and the most flourishing establishment of this sort in the town is a huge music hall or *café concert*, which does a roaring business. Sweetshops abound in Nice and are a never-ending surprise to English folk, who very sensibly put them down to the increasing number of Americans who come here. A huge Casino has just been built on the end of a long pier stretching out into the sea, and they tell an amusing tale of the way in which the gambling privilege was secured. An unsuccessful appeal had been made to the Mayor, M. Henry, and the speculators were in despair until it suddenly occurred to them that their establishment was not on land, but at sea, and so they appealed to the Minister of Marine at Paris with better success. Charming drives abound in every direction around Nice, and coaches go over to Monte Carlo every few hours. There is but one drawback to Nice as a place of residence – the increased number of the descendants of Israel who are making it a seaside synagogue. Fashion has deserted it for Cannes, but it will always be the favoured resort of the gay and the bored – those who do not care for society, and for whom society does not care. The change to the small station of Monte Carlo and the gaudily-ornamented lift that slowly rises to the bluff above is marked. For pure luxury and the highest degree of comfort Monte Carlo ranks next to Paris. Take the Hôtel de Paris, next the Casino, for instance, an establishment owned and conducted by the Casino company. Soft velvet carpets into which one's foot sinks, Wedgwood toilet sets, and easy chairs that would not look out of place in Belgravia, are the distinguishing characteristics of the bedrooms; and there is not a gas lamp in the place; hundreds of little wax candles, each shaded by a deep red shade, give light; and when one is enjoying the cooking, which is a dream in itself, and drinking in all the beauty and elegance, it is hard to remember that one is in what has been called the most wicked place on earth. The Bishop of Gibraltar considers it so abandoned, in fact, that he has refused to license a Chaplain or consecrate a Church – queer logic on His Lordship's part, who seems to go on the principle that the worse the place the less necessity for a Church. And yet the villa holders of Monte Carlo form a very respectable class. The late Mr. Junius Morgan had a villa here and many other well-known names might be cited. The place is charmingly small and centres round about the immense and beautiful Casino. Ask the inhabitants of the Principality of Monaco what they think of the Casino and the gambling company. They will reply that it is an unmixed blessing. For the company pays the taxes of the little realm, keeps all the roads and public works in good repair; and poverty is almost unknown. The inhabitants are allowed to enter the gambling rooms but one day in the year – on the fête day of the Prince of Monaco. Strangers gain admission to the rooms by presentation of their visiting cards, and without them are not allowed entrance. A droll tale is told of the application of this rule to the Marquis of Salisbury. He was going to the rooms with a party and not having any visiting card with him was stopped by the gigantic doorkeeper. He was somewhat angry at this and drew himself up, saying, in very English French:

“*Mais j’ai ne pas besoin d’une carte de visite. Je suis le Marquis de Salisbury, Premier d’Angleterre.*” But the doorkeeper still refused and would not let him in. He afterwards explained his incredulity by saying to a friend: “How could I believe he was Milord Salisbury and the Prime Minister of England? He wore a tweed suit and had his trousers turned up.” This brother evidently derived his idea of the appearance of a Marquis from the Italian article of that name, which is usually greasy, and fearfully and wonderfully attired.

The Casino at Monte Carlo and its tables have been often described; but the crowds that linger three deep about the green cloth are always fascinating to watch. *Grande dames* and *cocottes* elbow each other, and English statesmen rub shoulders with Parisian blacklegs. The day I was there I saw the Duc de Dino (who married Mrs. Stevens, of New York,) philosophically drop £2,000, and stand it better than a young man who lost five francs at roulette. But the saddest thing of all was to see young girls of eighteen or twenty (the rule is not to admit anyone under twenty-one, but of course the officials are often hoodwinked) with “systems,” pressing close to the table and pricking number after number on their cards as they eagerly follow a run on the red or the black. These people are always sure they will some day break the bank, and linger on from day to day and from week to week leaving whole fortunes in the maw of the remorseless “Administration.” Each additional week seems to add to the strained, eager look in their eyes, the drawn, pinched look about the mouth, and the tell-tale wrinkles about the temples that proclaim an habitual gambler. The *croupiers*, too, are curious studies, as they whirl the ball or deal the cards that mean so much to the eager crowd; cool, calm, impassive, there is something devilish about the monotonous way in which they call “*Faites vos jeux, Messieurs,*” or “*Le jeu est fait. Rien ne va plus.*” Some of them, it is easy to see, have come down in the world; and one man was shown to me who had filled a high position in a crack British regiment, before he had been detected cheating at cards and had been ruined for life. I may not give his name or all the facts in the case, but it bore a striking resemblance to Sir William Gordon-Cummings’ “accident.”

There is a peculiar class of harpies in the Casino, but very well dressed harpies, who make their living by “living up” to the table, so to speak, and grabbing the winnings of the lucky but slow players. Enormous sums are lost in this way by careless winners, for the ball (in roulette) rolls so quickly around, and the *croupiers* toss the gold so quickly in the general direction of the winners, that a very quick eye is needed to spy one’s property. The “*Série Noir*” has already begun at Monte Carlo, and two suicides have occurred. Of course the “Administration” policy is to hush up these little matters, and whenever a dead body is found in the lonely gardens surrounding the Casino (about one a fortnight is the average during the season) its pockets are pretty sure to be filled with gold and notes, placed there by the wily detectives of the Casino, to show that the poor man could not have shot himself on account of his losses at play. And rumour says that they have an admirably prompt way of getting rid of the bodies of those who are thoughtless enough to commit suicide on the company’s grounds without noise or scandal. An eye witness told me the following tale of a tragedy in the rooms last year, which he vouches for: about ten o’clock at night, when everything was in full swing and the rooms were crowded with well-dressed people (no shabby-looking character is ever admitted; and the devil in this case is certainly “in society”), a shot was suddenly heard, and a handsome young fellow, pale as death, staggered from the *Trente et Quarante* table with his hand to his bleeding side. He fell with a crash, and at once, like lightning, a crowd of the Casino detectives had closed around him, opened a window overlooking the sea, and thrown him out upon the rocks below. So quickly did this take place that not six people saw it, and the people who inquired about the disturbance were told that a lady had fainted from the heat and from the explosion in a gas pipe. The next morning the dead body of the young man was found on the rocks, with his pockets filled with gold and no trace of a wound about him.

Lovely Monte Carlo! It is like a decayed lady-apple – lovely to look on, but rotten at the core.

SAN REMO

SAN REMO. – There is a certain apparent similarity between Bournemouth and San Remo. Both are “winter resorts” and both are popular with invalids. But this similarity is only apparent. Frost and snow were rife at Bournemouth a month ago. Sunshine and ripe oranges on the trees are *en evidence* at San Remo now. One shudders here, to think of Bournemouth in winter, just as in Bournemouth the idea of the Lake District out of summer was repelling.

The climate of the Riviera is not perfect, by any means, but unless one goes to Honolulu or to “the Cape,” it is hard to do better for the winter. And yet it is not a tropical climate – or even sub-tropical, simply one with a more or less genial warmth in the winter time.

San Remo is not so “mixed” in its society as Nice, so renowned for suicides as Monte Carlo, or so vault-like as Mentone.

Cannes is the only place on the coast that approaches San Remo (and, indeed, outdoes it, so far as exclusiveness in the “English Colony,” which includes the small American contingent, goes); but Cannes is really a slice cut out of Belgravia and set down by the Mediterranean, and one may be in the height of the London Season all winter there. Cannes is popularly referred to as the “Dukeries,” on account of the number of English Dukes spending the winter there. But to a person liking society in moderation with a few good dances sprinkled in during the winter and a fair amount of tennis, San Remo is an ideal place. Knickerbockers and cricketing flannels are frequently seen, and there is none of that striving after effect so much found at Cannes, where top hats and frock coats are *de rigueur* most of the time.

San Remo is near the French frontier and so, of course, is a queer mixture of French and Italian village life (for it has only seventeen thousand inhabitants). It is thirty-six hours from London and easily reached either by the P. L. and M. Railway, by way of Lyons and Marseilles, or by Milan and Geneva, via the Mont-Cenis tunnel.

The old town, or *Citta Vecchia*, is built on a hill away from the sea, and the steep streets are crowded together pell-mell on the nearly perpendicular hillside. Bradshaw’s Guide refers to them as “steep, mediæval streets”; but, although I admit the steepness, I have never discovered the mediævalism – unless the abundant dirt and endless supply of unsavoury smells may be taken to represent it. Of course, the dark, narrow lanes are garlic-haunted, and that reminds me of a story I heard here. At the old Cathedral, an English priest was talking to an Italian peasant woman about the next world. She was giving her ideas on the subject and ended up a glowing rhapsody in this way: “And, oh, our Holy Father, the Pope, will be there on a great golden throne, smiling at the faithful; with big bunches of our angelic garlic under his chair to give to each of his flock as St. Peter brings them to him.” If that idea of Paradise were presented to many good Christians, I fear their faith might be shaken, for of all the sickening, clinging odours, a whiff of garlic-scented air is the worst.

This old town is nearly devoid of interest. There are even no curio shops, and after one walk the average English tourist comes back to his hotel to “take a tub,” and leaves its mysteries undisturbed in future. To any one, however, brave enough to pick his way through the overhanging alleys and dark streets, up to the very top of the hill, an old church presents itself, the “Madonna della Costa,” where there is a wonderful picture of the Virgin which is supposed to be a certain cure for leprosy. (The method of applying the cure is an unsolved mystery.)

Most people here go to Mentone to get gloves and stockings, and smuggle them back over the frontier to avoid paying the absurd prices asked in San Remo. The new town is built at the foot of the hill and consists of two streets, with a few good shops, where the tradesmen speak bad French and charge enormous prices for the necessaries of life. On each side of this new town stretch the English and German colonies, the English settling at the west end and the Teutons preferring the east. Ever since the Emperor Frederick lived in a villa here the east end has been a resort for patriotic Germans

who want the warm breezes of the Riviera, but do not care to enjoy them on French territory. It is not the most pleasant part of the town, and English and Americans are very chary of settling there, as the more aristocratic west end turns the cold shoulder to the unfortunate villa holders and dwellers in hotels and *pensions* at the east end, and has a tendency to consider them doubtful or *déclassé*.

The west end has all the best hotels and *pensions* as well as villas scattered along the pretty Promenade overlooking the sea and bordered with wide-branching date palms. The Promenade ends in lovely gardens, and both Promenade and gardens are called after the late Empress of Russia, who spent a winter here early in the seventies. The Promenade is used as a scene for “church parade” after service on Sunday mornings by the English colony, and every afternoon, from four onward, one may meet the world and his wife there. The municipal band plays twice a week in the public gardens, but the performance – a rather poor one – is attended mainly by Italians. The language of San Remo is a curious *patois* made up of Ligurian Italian – very different to the pure *Lingua Toscana* of Florence, and the bastard French heard in Nice and Cannes.

Five days in every week are bright and sunny, one of the remaining two is usually cloudy and the other rainy. The average temperature is fifty-two degrees in winter. The winds are hardly ever troublesome, as the high chain of hills behind the town act as a natural barrier. Among the many bad shops there is one really good one: Squire’s, the English chemist’s, who dubs himself (but by real Letters Patent) “Court Chemist to the late German Emperor and to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales.”

When the late Emperor Frederick was ill here in ’88 at his villa and all his affairs and correspondence were in confusion, his much-loved wife, the popular Empress Victoria (who looks so much like her mother, the Queen of England) used to have all her English letters sent to the villa enclosed in this chemist’s prescription envelopes, to keep them safe from Bismarck’s spies; for the relations, never very cordial, between the grim Chancellor and the Illustrious Lady were then at a dangerous tension and the friends of the Empress claimed that he did not scruple to confiscate her private letters from the English Court when he could get hold of them. The young Princesses were very fond of taking long walks in the endless olive groves about San Remo, and sketching the town from either of the two high rocks that shut in the bay on each side.

A pretty peasant girl in a small fruit shop near the Emperor’s villa made a small fortune by selling mouldy pears and sour oranges to enthusiastic British tourists who thronged the shop, because the Empress Victoria had made a lovely study of her in oils, which has appeared in a London exhibition.

Another permanent memorial of the visit of the Royal Family to San Remo is the constant appearance of the highly-gilt arms of the Hohenzollerns over most of the shops in the new town, which, one and all, describe themselves as “Court Grocer to the Emperor Frederick”; “Court Bootmaker to the Imperial Family,” when possibly the *chef* may have bought some candles from the one and the Emperor’s valet may have been measured for a pair of boots at the other. I have even seen the advertising card of one “Guisseppa Candia, Court Laundress to the German Empress.”

The English set in San Remo is charming and very hospitable when one comes with letters of introduction. The leading English physician, Dr. Freeman, and his wife are always ready to extend the courtesies of the place to fresh arrivals; and any visitor at the English Club will easily recall the jovial person of Mr. Benecke. But when one comes without letters or other credentials, the English colony can be very freezing; as a third-rate American author found some years since, when, with his wife, he tried to take the town by storm.

The country round about San Remo is full of pleasant walks. Ospedaletti is only two miles away, and one may take a charming walk there and back in the afternoon. It is an interesting place, albeit a dreary one, for it is the monument of a great failure. Some years ago a great International Company bought up all the land along the lovely bay, built splendid hotels and shops, made good roads and put up the magnificent Casino still to be seen there. The shares were at a high premium and every one was sure the company would make a huge fortune, and so it would if it had not neglected the trifling

formality of obtaining the consent of King Humbert to the establishment of a large gambling hell in his dominions. The result was that he stepped in at the last minute and intimated that while he had no objections to a Casino, he was not prepared to allow games of chance. Of course, this ruined not only the company, but the place, for Ospedaletti's only *raison d'être* was in the Casino, and the Casino's in the roulette table. The hotels and shops are all closed now and the beautiful building is gradually falling to pieces from decay. The roads are all overgrown, and a few poor Italian families are the only representatives of the gay world that was to make Ospedaletti a successful rival of Monte Carlo.

Then, beyond, is the town of Bordighera, an Anglo-Italian resort nearer the frontier and especially loved by consumptives. George McDonald, the Scotch author, has a beautiful house there and his daughters are famous in the tennis courts along the Riviera. Bordighera is a garden of palms and supplies all the churches of Rome on Palm Sunday.

A more interesting walk from San Remo is to take the Corniche road as far as the Pietra Lunga on the east side of San Remo, and then to strike inland through the olive groves until one finds the dreary village of Bussana, a place totally destroyed by the earthquake of 1886. The ruins of the quaint old church are still shown (with the inevitable monogram of the Virgin on everything), where a service was being held when the first shock came on that eventful Sunday. The peasants say there are still bodies hidden under the massive masonry and swear that the place is haunted. This was the earthquake that startled Cannes early on the same morning, when walls were falling and people flying from the hotels and houses in various stages of undress. The Prince of Wales was there then on his yearly visit to the Riviera, and one of his valets rushed in to call him at five o'clock for the hotel walls had fallen at the back, and there was danger that the others might go. But the Prince only scolded the valet sleepily for waking him and refused to get up in spite of the man's entreaties, finally turning over and going to sleep again amid the noise of falling chimneys and crashing walls. It is needless to say that H. R. H. was not injured and that the other walls did not fall.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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