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STUDIES OF TRAVEL: ITALY

Edward Freeman

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# Edward A. Freeman

## Studies of Travel: Italy

### Arezzo

The city of Mæcnas, and of a whole crowd of famous men of later times, shows no outward signs of being much frequented by travellers. There is some difficulty there in getting so much as an Italian newspaper, and, though excellent photographs have been taken of some of the chief buildings, they must be sought for at Florence; they are not to be bought at Arezzo. Yet the old Etruscan city has many attractions, among them surely the singular cleanness of its streets, and, above all, that clear and pure air which is thought to have had something to do with nourishing the genius of so many of its citizens in so many different ways. Perhaps, on the whole, Arezzo does not suffer from not having yet put on the cosmopolitan character of some of its neighbours. And if the city does not, either as Arretium or as Arezzo, stand forth in the first rank of Italian cities, still it has a long history under both forms of its name. If, again, its buildings do not rank with those of Pisa or Lucca, still there is quite enough both in the general aspect of the city, and in some particular objects within its walls, to claim a day or two's sojourn from any one who is not eager to rush from Florence to Rome as fast as the so-called express train can carry him.

Arezzo, as to its physical site, holds a middle position between cities which sit perched on a high hill-top like Fiesole, and cities which, like Florence, lie flat or nearly so on the banks of a great river. It has its river, if we may give that name to the mere brook which presently loses itself in the Chiana, as the Chiana soon loses itself in the Arno. The river too has a bridge, but both river and bridge have to be sought for; they form no important points in the general aspect of the city. The bridge at Arezzo is not one of those to which we instinctively go the first thing to take a general view of the city as a whole. The hill is a more real thing, as any one will say who climbs some of its steeper streets. Still it is one of those hills which seem to borrow height and steepness from the fact of being built upon. If it were covered with green grass, it would simply pass as one of several small hills which break the flat of the rich plain, girded in on all sides by higher mountains, which rise, in February at least, into vast snowy heights in the further distance. Still Arezzo has distinctly the character of a hill city, not of a river city; the hill counts for a good deal, while the river counts for nothing. The best points for a general view from below will be found on the town wall, a little way to the left of the railway station; while to look down on Arezzo we must climb to the castle in the eastern corner of the city, whose Medicean fortifications look strong enough without, but which, within, has gardens and fig trees level with the walls, and rabbits running about at large among them. The castle therefore forms no special object in the general view; it simply passes as a more marked part of the line of the city walls. These last remain in their whole circuit, except where they have been broken down to make the approach to the railway; surely a new gate would have been a better way of compassing this object. A town wall standing free, as those of Arezzo stand in nearly their whole range, is always a striking object, and one whose circuit it is pleasant and instructive to make. And it has a special interest in some cities, of which Arezzo is one, which have, so to speak, a show side. One side lies open to the world; the ancient roads, the modern railway, approach it; the city dies away into the country by gradually descending suburbs. On the other side, the wall suddenly parts the inhabited town, sometimes from actual desolation, at all events from open fields; the hill rises sheer above whatever lies beyond it. So it is with the north-eastern side of Arezzo, if we go behind the cathedral and the castle; we have not fully taken in the lie of the city without taking this walk to its rear. Still we must not look to the walls of Arezzo for the special interest of some other walls. They will not give us either Roman or Etruscan blocks, nor yet the picturesque outline of mediæval towers

and gateways. The walls put on their present aspect in Medicean times, and over one of the gates we see an inscription which illustrates one stage of a tyrant's progress. The first avowed sovereign Cosmo appears as "Duke of Florence and Siena." He had inherited one enslaved commonwealth; he had himself enslaved another; meanwhile he was waiting for the fitting reward of such exploits in the higher rank and more sounding title of a Grand Duke of Tuscany.

In the general view of Arezzo there can be hardly said to be any one dominant object. If the castle made any show, it and the cathedral church, standing nearly on the same level on the highest ground in the town, would stand well side by side. As it is, the body of the *duomo* is the prominent feature in the view. But it is hardly a dominant feature. It is the only building whose body shows itself, but it rises among a crowd of towers, ecclesiastical and municipal, and one of them, the great campanile of St. Mary *della Pieve*, though the body of its church does not show itself far below, is a distinct rival to the cathedral, and utterly dwarfs its small and modern, though not ungraceful, octagon tower. These two churches form the two greatest architectural objects in Arezzo. The municipal element does not show itself so largely as might be looked for. The town-house is there, and the town-tower, and that hard by the *duomo*; but they do not hold, even comparatively, anything like the same position as their fellows in the great Florentine piazza. Perhaps this is not wonderful in a city which was so largely Ghibelin, and whose most noted historical character was a fighting bishop. Guy Tarlati, bishop and lord of Arezzo, keeps – though not on its old site – his splendid tomb in the *duomo*, on which are graven the names and likenesses of the castles which he won, and how King Lewis of Bavaria took the Lombard crown at his hands. But Arezzo has little or nothing to show in the way of houses or palaces or of street arcades. Its most striking building besides the churches is the front of that called the *Fraternità dei Laici*, in the open sloping space which seems to mark the forum of Arretium. This is a work in the mixed style of the fourteenth century, but so rich and graceful in its detail as to disarm criticism. Within, it contains the public library and museum. This last has much to show in many ways; most striking of all, because thoroughly local, are the huge tusks and other remains of the fossil elephants and other vast beasts of bygone days. The valley of the Chiana is full of them. Naturally enough, in the early days of science, when elephants' bones were no longer thought to be those of giants, they were set down as relics of the Gætulian beasts of Hannibal.

Something may be picked up here and there in the other churches of Arezzo; but it is *Santa Maria della Pieve* which is the real object of study. The *duomo* is absolutely without outline; it is a single body with nothing to break it, and nothing to finish it at either end. But its proportions within come somewhat nearer to Northern ideas than is common in the Italian Gothic, and its apse specially reveals the German hand to which tradition attributes the building. The church of *La Pieve* is of a higher order. It has real shape within and without. Its four arms should support a cupola, only the cupola has never been finished; the apse is in the very best form of the Italian Romanesque; the west front is called a copy of Pisa; but neither its merits nor its defects seem borrowed from that model. Part of it is sham, which nothing at Pisa is, while the small arcades stand out free, as at Lucca, but not at Pisa. The front is a wonderful display of column capitals of all kinds, from the Corinthian column used up again in its lowest range to the fantastic devices of the small ranges above them. The arch and the entablature are both used; so they are in the apse: so they are within. For the choir has a real triforium, and that triforium shows this strange falling back on the construction of the Greek. The arches below are round; those which should support the cupola, as well as those of the nave, are pointed, the latter rising from columns of prodigious height. The internal effect is like nothing else; it is quite un-Italian; it is as little like anything English or French; the arches, but not the columns, suggest the memory of Aquitaine. The south side has been rebuilt. Perhaps the work was physically needful: but it has involved the destruction of the substructure of the ancient building on the site of which the church stands. The columns in the west front seem to be the only remains of Arretium as distinguished from Arezzo. The "Tyrrhena regum progenies" have here left but small traces behind them.

## Cortona

From Arezzo the next stage will naturally be to the hill on whose height

... Cortona lifts to heaven  
Her diadem of towers.

If the journey be made on a market or fair day, the space between the walls and the station at Arezzo may be seen crowded with white oxen, suggesting the thought of triumphs and triumphal sacrifices. Their race, it was said, prayed to the gods that Marcus and Julian might not win victories which would lead to their destruction. And the prayer seems to have been answered, as the breed specially connected with Clitumnus has clearly not died out, even by the banks of Clanis. The journey is not a long one; yet, if we had time to see everything, we might well wish to break it, as we pass by the hill of Castiglione Fiorentino, with its walls and towers. That strong and stern hill-fortress comes in well between Arezzo and Cortona. Arezzo covers a hill, but it can hardly be said to stand on a hill-top; Castiglione distinctly does stand on a hill-top; Cortona sits enthroned on a height which it would hardly be straining language to speak of as a mountain. We have now come to a site of the oldest class, the stronghold on the height, like Akrokorinthos and the Larissa of Argos. But at Argos and Corinth the mountain-fortress became, at a later stage, the citadel of the younger city which grew up at the mountain's foot. But at Cortona, as at greater Perugia, the city still abides on the height; it has never come down into the plain. So it has remained at Laon; so it has become at Girgenti, where the vast lower space of the later Akragas is forsaken, and the modern town has shrunk up within the lines of the ancient acropolis. From the ground below Cortona we look up to a city like those of old, great and fenced up to heaven; the "diadem of towers" is there still, though it is now made up of a group of towers, ecclesiastical, municipal, and military, none of them of any account in itself, but each of which joins with its fellows to make up an effective whole. At Cortona indeed, as at Argos and Corinth, there is an upper and a lower city, and the upper city is pretty well forsaken. But while at Argos and Corinth the lower city stands in the plain, and the acropolis soars far above it, at Cortona the lower city itself stands so high up the hill that it is only when we reach it that we fully understand that there is a higher city still. The site itself belongs so thoroughly to the oldest days of our European world that there is a certain kind of satisfaction in finding that the main interest of the place belongs to those oldest days. We are well pleased that everything of later times is of quite a secondary character, and that the distinctive character of Cortona is to be the city of the Etruscan walls.

In truth, a certain degree of wonder is awakened by the fact that Cortona exists at all. It would have been by no means amazing if we had found only its ruins, as on so many other old-world sites for which later times have found no use. Great in its earliest days, foremost among the Etruscan cities of the mountains, Cortona has never been great in any later age. As a Roman city and colony it was of so little account that, even in Italy, where bishops are so thick upon the ground, it did not become a bishopric till the fourteenth century. Just at that time came its short period of anything like importance among the cities of mediæval Italy. Sold to Florence early in the fifteenth century, it has ever since followed the fortunes of the ruling city. Yet through all these changes Cortona has managed to live on, though we can hardly say to flourish. It still keeps the character of a city, though a small and mean one, inhabited by a race of whom the younger sort seem to have nothing to do but to run after the occasional visitor. One ragged urchin offers to accompany him to the cathedral; another persists in following him round nearly the whole circuit of the ancient walls. This last is too bad; a walk round the walls of Cortona is emphatically one of those things which are best enjoyed in one's own company.

As an Italian city which has lived, though in rather a feeble way, through the regular stages of Roman colony and mediæval commonwealth, Cortona has of course its monuments which record those periods of its being. There are some small fragments of Roman work, but nothing that can be called a Roman building. There is a crowd of churches and monasteries, but none of any great architectural value, though some contain works of importance in the history of painting. It perhaps marks the position of Cortona as a comparatively modern bishopric that its cathedral church is in no sort the crowning building of the city. The *duomo* stands about half-way up the height within the town, on a corner of the walls. Its elegant *Renaissance* interior has been already spoken of; it seems to have supplanted a Romanesque building the columns of which may have been used again. The point in the upper city where we should have looked for the *duomo* is occupied by the Church of St. Margaret, that is, Margaret of Cortona, described over her portal as "pœnitens Margarita," marked off thereby alike from the virgin of Antioch and from the matron of Scotland. The municipal buildings are not remarkable, though one wall of the Palazzo Pretorio must be a treasure-house for students of Italian heraldry, thickly coated as it is with the arms of successive *podestas*. Of private palaces the steep and narrow streets contain one or two; but it is not on its street architecture that Cortona can rest its claim to fame. From the lower city, with its labyrinth of streets, we may climb to the acropolis. Here, around the Church of St. Margaret, all seems desolate. The Franciscan convent on the slope below it lies in ruins – not an usual state for an Italian building. The castle above, fenced in by its ditch, seems as desolate as everything around, save the new or renewed fabric of St. Margaret's. This height is the point of view to which the visitor to Cortona will be first taken, if he listens to local importunity. A noble outlook it is; but the traveller can find points of view equally noble in the course of the work which should be done first of all – that of compassing the mighty wall which is the thing that makes Cortona what it is.

The process of going to the back of the city, which may be done in some measure at Arezzo, may be done in all its fulness at Cortona. Happily, very nearly the whole wall can be compassed without, and in by far the greater part of its course more or less of the old Etruscan rampart remains. In many places the mighty stones still stand to no small height, patched of course and raised with work of later times, but still standing firmly fixed as they were laid when Cortona stood in the first rank among the cities of the Rasena. Not that there is reason to attribute any amazing antiquity to these walls. We must remember that the Etruscan cities kept their local freedom till the days of Sulla, and that some Etruscan works are later than some Roman works. The masonry is by no means of the rough and early kind; yet the one remaining gate, unluckily blocked, is square-headed, and might almost have stood at Mykênê. On the highest point, the hindermost point, the wildest and most desolate point, where, though just outside an inhabited city, we feel as if we were in a land forsaken of men, the Etruscan wall has largely given way to the mediæval fortress whose present aspect dates from Medicean days. But it has given way only to leave one of the grandest pieces of the whole wall standing as an outpost in the rear of the city, overhanging the steepest point of the whole hill. The Etruscan wall, the Medicean castle, one seeming to stand as forsaken and useless as the other, form a summary of the history of Cortona in stone and brick.

From the walls we may well turn to the Museum, to see the tombs and the other relics of the men who reared them. Pre-eminent among them, the glory of the Cortonese collection, as the Chimæra is the glory of the Florentine collection, is a magnificent bronze lamp, wrought with endless mythological figures. Near it stands the painting of a female head, which we might at first take for the work of *Renaissance* hands, and in which those who are skilled in such matters profess to recognize the existing type of Cortonese beauty. The painting however dates from the days when Cortona was still Etruscan. Perugia keeps her ancient inhabitants themselves, in the shape at least of their skulls and skeletons. At Cortona the remote mothers, it may be, of her present people live more vividly in the form of the Muse whose features were copied, it may be nineteen hundred years back, from the living countenance of one of them.



## Perugia

The hill-city of Perugia supplies an instructive contrast with the hill-city of Cortona. The obvious contrast in the matter of modern prosperity and importance is an essential part of the comparative history. Cortona has through all ages lived on, but not much more than lived on. Perugia has, through all ages, kept, if not a place in the first rank of Italian cities, yet at any rate a high place in the second rank. She never had the European importance of Venice, Genoa, Florence, Naples, and Milan, or of Pisa in her great days. But in the purely Italian history of all ages Perugia keeps herself before our eyes, as a city of mark, from the wars of the growing Roman commonwealth down to the struggle which in our own days freed her from a second Roman yoke. In the civil wars of the old Rome, in the wars between the Goth and the New Rome, in the long tale of the troubled greatness of mediæval Italy, Etruscan Perusia, Roman Augusta Perusia, mediæval and modern Perugia, holds no mean place. And the last act in the long drama is not the least notable. It sounds like a bit out of Plutarch's "Life of Timoleôn," when we read or when we remember how, twice within our own days, little more than twenty and thirty years back, the fortress of the tyrants was swept away, as the great symbolic act which crowned the winning back of freedom in its newest form. When a city has such a tale as this to tell, we do not expect, we do not wish, that its only or its chief interest should gather round the monuments of an early and almost præhistoric day of greatness. At Cortona we are glad that things Etruscan are undoubtedly uppermost. At Perugia we are glad that things Etruscan are there to be seen in abundance; but we also welcome the monuments of Roman days, pagan and Christian; we welcome the streets, the churches, and palaces of mediæval times, and even the works of recent times indeed. The Place of Victor Emmanuel with the modern buildings which crown it, supplanting the fortress of Pope Paul, as that supplanted the houses, churches, and palaces of earlier times, is as much a part of the history of Perugia as the Arch of Augustus or the Etruscan wall itself.

The difference between the abiding greatness of Perugia and the abiding littleness of Cortona is no doubt largely due to the physical difference of their sites. Both are hill-cities, mountain-cities, if we will; but they sit upon hills of quite different kinds. The hill of Perugia is better fitted for growth than the hill of Cortona. Cortona sits on a single hill-top. Perugia sits, not indeed on seven hills, but on a hill of complicated outline, which throws out several – possibly seven – outlying, mostly lower, spurs, with deep valleys between them. The Etruscan and Roman city took in only the central height, itself of a very irregular shape and at some points very narrow. The lower and outlying spurs were taken within the city in later times. Hence it is only in a small part of their circuit that the original walls remain the present external walls; it is only on part of its western side that we can at all go behind Perugia. But the lower city is still thoroughly a hill-city. The hill of Perugia is lower than the hill of Cortona, while the city of Perugia is vastly greater than the city of Cortona. But Perugia is as far removed as Cortona from coming down into the plain. On the little hill of Arezzo such a process could happen, and it has happened. Not so with the loftier seats of its neighbours. Cortona is not likely to grow; Perugia very likely may. But it will take a long period of downward growth before unbroken dwellings of men stretch all the way from its railway station to its municipal palace.

At Perugia, as becomes its history, no one class of monuments draws to itself exclusive, or even predominant, attention. Perhaps, on the whole, the municipal element is the most striking. The vast pile of the public palace, its grand portal, its bold ranges of windows, its worthy satellites, the Exchange, and the great fountain with its marvels of sculpture, utterly outdo, as the central points of the city, the lofty but shapeless and unfinished cathedral which stands opposite to them. And at this point, the Church and the commonwealth are the only rivals; the remains of earlier times do not come into view. For them we must seek, but at no great distance. Go down from the central height, and stand on the bridge which spans the *Via Appia* of Perugia, a strange namesake for the *Via Appia* of Rome. There the walls of the Etruscan city, rising on the one side above the houses, on the other

above one of the deep valleys, form the main feature. And, if they lose in effect from the modern houses built upon them, the very incongruity has a kind of attractiveness, as binding the two ends of the story together. From this point of view, Perugia is specially Perugian. And, if the walls are less perfect than those of Cortona, they have something that Cortona has not. The Arch of Augustus, the barrier between the older and the newer city, spans the steep and narrow street fittingly known as *Via Vecchia*. At Perugia the name of Augustus suggests the thought whether he really made the bloody sacrifice to the *manes* of his uncle with which some reports charge him. The gate at least makes no answer, save that we see that the Roman built on the foundations of the Etruscan, save that the legend of "Augusta Perusia" is itself a record of destruction and revival. The gateway, tall, narrow, gloomy, the Roman arch springing from two vast Etruscan towers, is a contrast indeed to such strictly architectural designs as the two gates of Autun. The Roman builder was evidently cramped by the presence of the older work. In fact the general character of the gateway has more in common with the endless mediæval gateways and arches which span the streets of Perugia. Of really better design, though blocked and in a less favourable position, is the other gateway, the *Porta Martis*, which now makes part of the substructure of the new piazza, as it once did of that of the papal fortress. And he who looks curiously will find out, not indeed any more Roman gateways, but the jambs from which at least two other arches, either Roman or Etruscan, once sprang.

The walls and gateways of a city can hardly be called its skeleton, but they are in some sort its shell. And at Perugia the body within the shell was of no mean kind. Take away every great public building, church, or palace, and Perugia itself, its mere streets and houses, would have a great deal to show. With no grand street arcades like Bologna, few or no striking private palaces like Venice and Verona, Perugia once had streets after streets – the small and narrow streets not the least conspicuously – of a thoroughly good and simple style of street architecture. Arched doors and arched windows are all, and they are quite enough. Some are round, some are pointed; some are of brick, some of stone; and those of brick with round arches are decidedly the best. But never were buildings more mercilessly spoiled than the Perugian houses. As in England mediæval houses are spoiled to make bigger windows, so at Perugia they are spoiled to make smaller windows. Most of the doorways and windows are cut through and blocked, and an ugly square hole is bored to do the duty of the artistic feature which is destroyed. No land has more to show in the way of various forms of beauty than Italy; but when an Italian does go in for ugliness he beats all other nations in carrying out his object.

Perugia, we need hardly say, is a city of paintings, and it is as receptacles for paintings that its churches seem mainly to be looked on. But some of them deserve no small attention on other grounds. At the two ends of the city are two churches which follow naturally on the Etruscan and Roman walls and gates. At one end, the Church of St. Angelo, circular within, sixteen-sided without, forms one of the long series of round and polygonal churches which stretch from Jerusalem to Ludlow. And this, clearly a building of Christian Roman times, with its beautiful marble and granite Corinthian columns, though not one of the greatest in size, holds no mean place among them. At the other end, the Abbey of Saint Peter, amid many changes, still keeps two noble ranges of Ionic columns, the spoils doubtless of some Pagan building at its first erection in the eleventh century. Nor must the *duomo* itself be judged of by its outside. The work of a German architect, it shows a German character in the three bodies of the same height, and its pillars consequently of amazing height. But at Perugia it is not churches or palaces or earlier remains which we study, each apart from other things. Here they all unite to form a whole greater than any one class alone – Augusta Perusia itself.

## The Volumnian Tomb

The ancient Etruscans have some points of analogy with the modern Freemasons. This last familiar and yet mysterious body seems to let the outer world know everything about itself, except what it is. We have read various books by Freemasons about Freemasonry, about its history, its constitution, its ritual. On all these points they seem to give us the fullest particulars: we have only to complain that the historical part is a little vague, and its evidence a little uncertain. We should not like rashly to decide whether Freemasonry was already ancient in the days of Solomon or whether it cannot be traced with certainty any further back than the eighteenth century. But we know the exact duties of a Tyler, and we know that at the end of a Masonic prayer we should answer, not "Amen," but "So mote it be." Still, what Freemasonry is, how a man becomes a Freemason, or what really distinguishes a Freemason from other people, are points about which the Masonic books leave us wholly in the dark. So it is with the Etruscans. We seem to know everything about them, except who they were. As far as we can know a people from their arts and monuments, there is no people whom we seem to know better. We have full and clear monumental evidence as to the people themselves, as to many points in their ways, thoughts, and belief. We know how they built, carved, and painted, and their buildings, sculptures, and paintings, tell us in many points how they lived, and what was their faith and worship. We have indeed no Etruscan books; but their language still lives, at least it abides, in endless inscriptions. But who the Etruscans were, and what their language was, remain unsolved puzzles. The ordinary scholar is half-amused, half-provoked, at long lines of alphabetic writing, of which, as far as the mere letters go, he can read a great deal, but of which, save here and there a proper name, he cannot understand a word. He knows that one ingenious man has read it all into good German and another into good Turkish. He curses every Lucumo whose image he sees for sticking like a Frenchman to his own tongue. Why could they not write up everything in three or four languages? How happy he would be if he could light on a Latin or Greek crib which would give life to the dead letter. For surely nothing in the world so truly answers the description of a dead letter, as words after words, most of which it is not hard to spell, but at the meaning of which we cannot even guess.

It is natural that in the museums of the Etruscan cities the monuments of a kind whose interest is specially local should form a chief part of the show. At Florence, at Arezzo, at Cortona, at Perugia, the collections which each city has brought together make us familiar, if we are not so already, with much of Etruscan art and Etruscan life. Or shall we say that what they really make us familiar with is more truly Etruscan death? Our knowledge of most nations of remote times comes largely from their tombs and from the contents of their tombs, and this must specially be the case with a people who, like the Etruscans, have left no literature behind them. The last distinction makes it hardly fair to attempt any comparison between the Etruscans and nations like the Greeks or the Romans, with whose writings we are familiar. But suppose we had no Greek or Roman literature, suppose we had, as we have in the case of the Etruscans, no means of learning anything of Greek or Roman life, except from Greek and Roman monuments. The sepulchral element would be very important; but it would hardly be so distinctly dominant as it is in the Etruscan case. At all events, it would not be so distinctly forced upon the thoughts as it is in the Etruscan case. Take a Roman sarcophagus: we know it to be sepulchral, but it does not of itself proclaim its use; there often is no distinct reference to the deceased person; at all events, his whole figure is not graven on the top of the chest which contains his bones or his ashes. But in the Etruscan museums it is the sepulchral figures which draw the eye and the thoughts towards them far more than anything else, more than even the chimæra, the bronze lamp, and the painted muse. Of various sizes, of various degrees of art, they all keep one general likeness. The departed Lucumo leans on his elbow, his hand holding what the uninitiated are tempted to take for a dish symbolizing his admittance to divine banquets in the other world, but which the learned

tell us is designed to catch the tears of those who mourn for him. Sometimes the *Lucumonissa*— if we may coin so mediæval a form — lies apart, sometimes along with her husband. On the whole, these Etruscan sculptures seem to bring us personally nearer to the men of a distant age and a mysterious race than is done by anything in either Greek or Roman art.

But if these works can teach us thus much when set in rows in a place where they were never meant to be set up, how much more plainly do they speak to us when we see them at home, untouched, in the place and in the state in which the first artist set them! The Volumnian tomb near Perugia is one of the sights which, when once seen, is not likely to be forgotten. The caution does not bear on Etruscan art; but it is well to walk to it from St. Peter's Abbey; going by the railway is a roundabout business, and the walk downwards commands a glorious and ever-shifting view over the plain and the mountains, with the towns of Assisi, Spello, and a third further on — can it be distant Trevi? Foligno lies down in the plain — each seated on its hill. The tomb is reached; a small collection from other places has been formed on each side of the door. This is all very well; but we doubt the wisdom of putting, as we understood had been done, some things from other places in the tomb itself. But this is not a moment at which we are inclined to find fault. We rejoice at finding that what ought to be there is so happily and wisely left in its place, and are not greatly disturbed if a few things are put inside which had better have been left outside. The stone doorway of the lintelled entrance — moved doubtless only when another member of the house was literally gathered to his fathers — stands by the side; it was too cumbrous to be kept in its old place now that the tomb stands ready to be entered by all whose tastes lead them that way. We go in; the mind goes back to ruder sepulchres at Uleybury and New Grange, of sepulchres at least as highly finished in their own way at Mykênê. But those were built, piled up of stones; here the dwelling of the dead Lucumos is hewn in the native tufa. The top is not, as we might have looked for, domical; it imitates the forms of a wooden roof. From it still hang the lamps; on its surface are carved the heads of the sun-god and of the ever-recurring Medusa. Nor is the sun-god's own presence utterly shut out from the home of the dead. It is a strange feeling when a burst of sunshine through the open door kindles the eyes of the Gorgon with a strange brilliancy, and lights up the innermost recess, almost as when the sinking rays light up the apses of Rheims and of St. Mark's. In that innermost recess, fronting us as we enter, lies on his *kistwaen*— may we transfer the barbarian name to so delicate a work of art? — the father of the household gathered around him. He is doubtless very far from being the first *Felimna*, but the first *Felimna* whose ashes rest here. The name of the family can be spelled out easily by those who, without boasting any special Etruscan lore, are used to the oldest Greek writing from right to left. Children and grandchildren are grouped around the patriarch; and here comes what, from a strictly historical view, is the most speaking thing in the whole tomb. The name of Avle Felimna can be easily read on a chest on the right hand. On the left hand opposite to it is another chest which has forsaken the Etruscan type. Here is no figure, no legend in mysterious characters. We have instead one of those sepulchral chests which imitate the figure of a house with doors. The legend, in every-day Latin, announces that the ashes within it are those of P. Volumnius A. F. That is, the Etruscan Avle Felimna was the father of the Roman Publius Volumnius. We are in the first century before our æra, when the old Etruscan life ended after the Social War, and when the Lucumos of Arretium and Perugia became Roman Clinii and Volumnii. To an English scholar the change comes home with a special force. He has an analogy in the change of nomenclature in his own land under Norman influences in the twelfth century. Publius Volumnius, son of Avle Felimna, is the exact parallel to Robert the son of Godwin, and a crowd of others in his days, Norman-named sons of English fathers.

We are not describing at length what may be found described at length elsewhere. But there is another point in these Etruscan sculptures which gives them a strange and special interest. This is their strangely Christian look. The genii are wonderfully like angels; but so are many Roman figures also, say those in the spandrels of the arch of Severus. But Roman art has nothing to set alongside of the Lucumo reclining on his tomb, not exactly like a strictly mediæval recumbent figure, but very like a

tomb of the type not uncommon a little later, say in the time of Elizabeth and James the First. And in the sculptures on the chests, wherever, instead of familiar Greek legends, they give us living pictures of Etruscan life, we often see the sons of the Rasena clearly receiving a kind of baptism. There is no kind of ancient works which need a greater effort to believe in their antiquity. And nowhere do the sculptures look fresher – almost modern – than when seen in contrast with the walls and roof above and beside them, the sepulchre hewn in the rock, with the great stone rolled to its door.

## Præ-Franciscan Assisi

There is a certain satisfaction, a satisfaction which has a spice of mischief in it, in dwelling on some feature in a place which is quite different from that which makes the place famous with the world in general. So to do is sometimes needful as a protest against serious error. When so many members of Parliament showed a few years back, and when the *Times* showed only a very little time back, that they believed that the University of Oxford was founded by somebody – Alfred will do as well as anybody else – and that the city of Oxford somehow grew up around the University, it became, and it remains, a duty to historic truth to point out the importance of Oxford, geographical and therefore political and military, for some ages before the University was heard of. When the *Times* thought that Oxford was left to the scholars, because "thanes and barons" did not think it worth struggling for, the *Times* clearly did not know that schools grew up at Oxford then, just as schools have grown up at Manchester since, because Oxford was already, according to the standard of the time, a great, flourishing, and central town, and therefore fittingly chosen as a seat of councils and parliaments. Here there is real error to fight against; in other cases there is simply a kind of pleasure in pointing out that, while the received object of attraction in a place is often perfectly worthy of its fame, the place contains other, and often older, objects which are worthy of some measure of fame also. It is quite possible that some people may think that the town of Assisi grew up round the church and monastery of Saint Francis. If anyone does think so, the error is of exactly the same kind as the error of thinking that the city of Oxford grew up around the University. It is Saint Francis and his church which have made Assisi a place of world-wide fame and world-wide pilgrimage, and Saint Francis and his church are fully worthy of their fame. Yet Assisi had been a city of men for ages on ages before Saint Francis was born, and Assisi would still be a place well worthy of a visit, though Saint Francis had never been born, and though his church had therefore never been built. It is perhaps a light matter that Assisi had eminent citizens besides Saint Francis and very unlike Saint Francis, that it was the birthplace of Propertius before him and of Metastasio after him. But before Assisi, as the birthplace of the seraphic doctor, had earned a right to be itself called "seraphica civitas," before one of its later churches came to rank with the patriarchal basilicas of Rome, Assisi had, as a Roman and an early mediæval city, covered its soil with monuments of which not a few still exist and which are well worthy of study. And in one way they have a kind of connexion with Saint Francis which his own church has not. The saint never saw his own monument; it would have vexed his soul could he have known that such a monument was to be. But in his youth he saw, and doubtless mused, as on the bleak mountain of Subasio and the yellow stream of Chiaschio, so also on the campanile and apse of the cathedral church of St. Rufino and on the columns of the converted temple of the Great Twin Brethren.

Assisi is one of the hill-cities; but the hill-cities supply endless varieties among themselves. Assisi does not, like the others which we have spoken of, occupy a hill which is wholly its own; the hill on which it stands, though very distinct, is still only a spur of a huge mountain. As at Mykênê, while the akropolis is high enough, there is something far higher rising immediately above it. And the akropolis of Assisi is a mere fortress; even if it was the primitive place of shelter, it cannot have been inhabited for many ages. The *duomo* stands, very far certainly from the top of the hill, but at the top of the really inhabited city with its continuous streets, and that is no small height from the lowest line of them. Above the church are the remains of the theatre, of the amphitheatre; the distant tower beyond it, and soaring over all, the fortress of Rocco Grande with no dwelling of man near it, or for some way below it. To go behind Assisi is almost more needful than in the case of any of the other hill-cities, not only for the mediæval walls, for the slight traces which seem to mark an outer and earlier wall; but yet more for the view over the narrow valley, the bleak hills scattered with houses, the winding river at their feet, soon to become yet more winding in the plain, and the glimpse far away of

Perugia on its hill. But Assisi has a spot only less wild within the city walls, the ground namely over which we climb from the inhabited streets to the fortress. So it is at Cortona; but there the presence of the church and monastery of St. Margaret makes all the difference. The general view of Assisi, as seen from below, gives us the church of Saint Francis with the great arched substructure to the left, the mountain to the right; between them is a hill with a city running along it at about half its height, sending up a forest of bell-towers, some really good in themselves, all joining in the general effect. Above all this is the hill-top, partly grassy, partly rocky, crowned by the towers of the fortress which looks down on all, except the steep of the mountain itself.

Of particular objects older than the church of Saint Francis, a restriction which of course also cuts out the church of his friend, Saint Clara, there can be no doubt that the monument of greatest interest is the temple in the forum – now *Piazza grande* – with its Corinthian columns strangely hemmed in by a house on one side and on the other by the bell-tower which was added when the temple was turned into a church. But it is surely not, as it is locally called, a temple of Minerva, but rather of Castor and Pollux. Not the least interesting part of its belongings lies below ground; for the level of the forum at Assisi has risen as though it had been at Rome or at Trier. The temple must have risen on a bold flight of steps, of which some of the upper ones still remain. In front of it, below the steps, was a great altar, with the drains for the blood of the victims, just as we see them on the Athenian akropolis. Such drains always bring to our mind those comments of Dean Stanley on this repulsive feature of pagan and ancient Jewish worship, which has passed away alike from the church, from the synagogue, and from the mosque, save only at Mecca. In front again is the dedicatory inscription with the name of the founder of the temple, and the record of the dedication-feast which he made to the magistrates and people. His name can doubtless be turned to in Mommsen's great collection; we are not sure that in the underground gloom we took it down quite correctly, and it is better not to be wrong. Anyhow the dedication is not to Minerva but to the twin heroes. A great number of inscriptions are built up in the wall of the church. As usual, there are more freedmen than sons; and among the freedmen the one best worth notice is Publius Decimius Eros Merula, physician, surgeon, and oculist, who bought his freedom for so much, his magistracy as one of the *Sexviri* for so much, who spent so much on mending the roads, and left so much behind him. Here the state of things is vividly brought home to us in which a man could buy, not only his cook and his coachman, but also his architect and his medical adviser. And we are set thinking on the one hand how great must be the physical infusion of foreign blood, Greek and barbarian, in the actual people of Italy, and on the other hand how thoroughly and speedily all such foreign elements were practically Romanized. The son of the slave-born magistrate of Assisi would look on himself, and be looked on by others, as no less good a Roman than any Fabius or Cornelius who might still linger on.

The temple above ground and its appurtenances underground are the most memorable things in Præ-Franciscan Assisi; but there are other things besides, both Roman and mediæval. The lower church of *Sta. Maria Maggiore*, close by the bishop's palace, and which is said to have been the original cathedral, is a Romanesque building of rather a German look, with masses of wall instead of columns. The thought comes into the mind that it is the *cella* of a temple with arches cut through its walls. But it hardly can be; the arrangement seems to be a local fashion; it is found also in the later and larger church of St. Peter hard by. Besides, at *Sta. Maria Maggiore* there are the clear remains of a Roman building, seemingly a house, with columns and mosaic floors, underneath the present church of St. Rufino. The later cathedral has been sadly disfigured within; but it keeps its apse of the twelfth century, its west front of the thirteenth, using up older sculptures, and it has the best bell-tower in Assisi. And below it remains the crypt of the older church of 1028, with ancient Ionic columns used up, and Corinthian capitals imitated as they might be in 1028. Just above are scanty remains of the theatre; above again are still scantier remains of the amphitheatre; but its shape is impressed on the surrounding buildings, just as the four arms of the Roman *chester* abide unchanged in many an English town where every actual house is modern. A piece of Roman wall, and a wide arch in the

*Via San Paolo* leading out of the forum, complete the remains of ancient Assisi above ground. It is doubtless altogether against rule, but among so many memorials of earlier gods and earlier saints, it is quite possible, in climbing the steep and narrow streets of Assisi, to forget for a while both Saint Francis and Saint Clara.



## Spello

The Umbrian town which takes care to blazon over one of its many gates its full description as "Ispello Colonia Giulia, Citta Flavia Costante," is hardly of any great fame, either as ancient Hispellum or as modern Spello. It must have some visitors, drawn thither most likely by two or three pictures by famous masters which remain in one of its churches. Somebody must come to see them, or their keepers would not have learned the common, but shabby, trick of keeping them covered, in hopes of earning a *lira* by uncovering them. May we make the confession that we became aware – or, to speak more delicately, that we were reminded – of the existence of the colony at once Julian and Flavian by the description in the generally excellent German guide-book of Gsell-fels? And may we further add that, though we feel thoroughly thankful to its author for sending us to Spello at all, yet his description is not quite so orderly as is usual with him, and that, though he is perfectly accurate in his enumeration of the Roman monuments, yet his account led us to expect to find them in a more perfect state than they actually are? On the whole, except for the wonderful prospect which Spello shares with Perugia and Assisi, we should hardly send anybody to Spello except a very zealous antiquary; but a very zealous antiquary we certainly should send thither. There is no one object of first-rate importance of any date in the place; but there are the remains of a crowd of objects which have been of some importance. There is also the site; there is the general look of the place, which is akin to that of the other hill-towns, but which, as Spello is the smallest and least frequented of the group, is there less untouched and modernized in any way than even at Cortona or Assisi. We except of course the fashion of mercilessly spoiling the mediæval houses which has gone on as merrily at Spello as at Perugia and Assisi. But that is no fashion of yesterday. The general old-world air, strong in some parts of Perugia, stronger at Assisi, is strongest of all at Spello, while at Spello there seems less eagerness than at Cortona to seize the stranger and make a prey of him. The look-out is perhaps the finest of all; it takes in as prominent objects sharp-peaked mountains and ranges deep with snow, which barely come into the other views, and the long series of hill-towns is pleasantly broken by the towers and cupolas of Foligno in the plain. The mediæval walls and towers, at all events on the south-eastern side, form a line which is not easily surpassed; the walk outside Spello, though it lacks both the antiquity and the wildness of the walk outside Cortona, outdoes it in mere picturesque effect. The particular objects at Spello are perhaps a little disappointing: Spello itself, as a whole, is certainly not disappointing.

At Spello we have reached an Italian town which is not a bishop's see; even in Italy it was not likely to be so, with Assisi so close on one hand and Foligno on the other. There is therefore no *duomo*, nor is there any other church of much architectural importance. The best are two small forsaken Romanesque churches outside the walls, one on each side of the town. One of them, that of St. Claudius, forms one building of a group by which we pass on the road from Assisi to Spello, a group lying in the plain, with Spello on its height rising above them. There is a large modern villa which seems to be built on Roman foundations; by its side lies the little Romanesque church; nearly opposite is the amphitheatre of Hispellum, keeping some fragments of its walls and with its marked shape deeply impressed on the ground. Here the amphitheatre is down in the plain; at Assisi it stands in the higher part of the present city; in both it lies, according to rule, outside the original Roman enclosure. It shows the passionate love for these sports wherever the influence of Rome spread, that two amphitheatres could be needed with so small a distance between them as that which parts Assisi from Spello. More nearly opposite to the villa are other Roman fragments which are said to have been part of a theatre; but the form of the building is certainly not so clearly stamped on the ground as that of its bloodier neighbour. Indeed we are in a region of Roman remains; other fragments lie by the roadside between Assisi and Spello, and when we reach the latter town, we find that, next to its general effect, it is its Roman remains which form its chief attraction.

As we draw near from Assisi, the Julian colony of Hispellum, the Flavia Constans of a later day, is becomingly entered by a Roman gateway which bears the name of *Porta Consolare*. But on the road from Foligno the consular gate is reached only through a mediæval one, which bears, as we have said, all the names of the town prominently set forth for the stranger's benefit. The consular gate stands at the bottom of the hill: for Spello thoroughly occupies the whole of its hill; there is plenty of climbing to be done in its streets; but it has all to be done in continuous streets within the town walls. The consular gate has been patched in later times; but the Roman arch is perfect. It is a single simple arch, plain enough, and of no great height, a marked contrast to the lofty arch of Perugia. Another gateway on the side towards Assisi, known as *Porta Veneris*, must have been a far more elaborate design. But the whole is imperfect and broken down; one arch of the double entrance is blocked, and the other is supplanted by a later arch. Yet there is a good effect about the whole, owing to the bold polygonal towers of later date which flank the Roman gateway. Another gateway, higher up on the same side, is cut down to the mere stones of an arch hanging in the air. This is locally known as the *arco di trionfo*. Of the *arco di Augusto* within the town, said to be a triumphal arch of Macrinus, there is nothing left but a single jamb. In short the Roman remains of Hispellum, though considerable in number, are slight and fragmentary in actual extent. Yet there is a pleasure in tracing them out. Conceive them perfect, and Hispellum would come near to rival Verona, not as it was, but as it is. But, after all, there is a certain perverse turn of thought which is better pleased with tracing out what has been than with simply admiring what still is. Spello will make the end of a mid-Italian series seen after the great snow-tide to match the mid-French series seen before it. Everything cannot be seen in one journey. All roads lead to Rome; but thirty-seven days are enough to spend on any one of them. From the colony of Hispellum then we must hurry on to *aurea Roma* herself, even though we have to rush by many a town and fortress on its hill-top, by Trevi and Spoleto, and, proudest of all, by

... that grey crag where, girt with towers,  
The fortress of Nequinum lowers  
O'er the pale waves of Nar.

Marry, Narni is somewhat; but Rome is more. Rome, too, at each visit, presents fresh objects, old and new. The oldest and the newest seem to have come together, when one set of placards on the wall invites the Roman people to meet on the Capitol, and when the Quæstor Bacchus – it is taking a liberty with a living man and magistrate, but we cannot help Latinizing the *Questore Baccho* – puts out another set of placards to forbid the meeting. We are inclined to turn to others among our memories, to others among our lays. We might almost look for a secession; we might almost expect to see once more

... the tents which in old time whitened the Sacred Hill.

But those who were forbidden to meet on the Capitol did not secede even to the Aventine; the secession was done within doors, in the *Sala Dante*.

## Veii

The student of what M. Ampère calls "L'Histoire Romaine à Rome" must take care not to confine his studies to Rome only. The local history of Rome – and the local history of Rome is no small part of the œcumenical history – is not fully understood unless we fully take in the history and position of the elder sites among which Rome arose. With Rome we must compare and contrast the cities of her enemies and her allies, the cities which she swept away, the cities which she made part of herself, the cities which simply withered away before her. And first on the list may well come the city which was before all others the rival of Rome, and where she did indeed sweep with the besom of destruction. A short journey from the Flaminian Gate, a journey through a country which might almost pass for a border shire of England, with the heights of Wales in the distance, brings us to a city which has utterly perished, where no permanent human dwelling-place is left within the ancient circuit. In a basin, as it were, unseen until we are close beneath or above it, hedged in by surrounding hills as by a rampart, stands all that is left of the first great rival of Rome, an inland Carthage on the soil of Etruria. There once was Veii, the first great conquest of Rome, the Italian Troy, round whose ten years' siege wonders have gathered almost as round the Achaian warfare by the Hellespont. There are no monuments of the departed life of Veii such as are left of not a few cities which have passed out of the list of living things no less utterly. Of the greatest city of southern Etruria nothing remains beyond a site which can never be wiped out but by some convulsion of nature, a few scraps to show that man once dwelled there, and tombs not a few to show that those who dwelled there belonged to a race with whom death counted for more than life.

A sight of the spot which once was Veii makes us better understand some points in early Italian history. We see why Veii was the rival of Rome, and why she was the unsuccessful rival of Rome. Above all, we understand better than anywhere else how deep must have been the hatred with which the old-established cities of Italy must have looked on the upstart settlement by the Tiber, which grew up to so strange a greatness and threatened to devour them one by one. Veii, the great border city of Etruria, was the only one among Rome's immediate neighbours which could contend with her on equal terms. Elsewhere, in her early history, Rome, as a single city, is of equal weight in peace or war with whole confederations.

The happy position of certain hills by the Tiber had enabled one lucky group of Latin settlements to coalesce into a single city as great as all the others put together. But at Veii we see the marks of what clearly was a great city, a city fully equal in extent to Rome. And when the ancient writers tell us that, in riches and splendour, in the character of its public and private buildings, Veii far surpassed Rome, it is only what we should expect from a great and ancient Etruscan city which had entered on the stage of decline when Rome was entering on the stage of youthful greatness. There was little fear of Veii overthrowing Rome; but both sides must have felt that a day would come when Rome would be very likely to overthrow Veii. Two cities so great and so near together could not go on together. Two cities, very great according to the standard of those times, considerable according even to a modern standard, cities of nations differing in blood, language, and everything else which can keep nations asunder, stood so near that the modern inquirer can drive from one to the other, spend several hours on its site, and drive back again, between an ordinary breakfast and dinner. Rivalry and bitter hatred were unavoidable. Veii must have felt all the deadly grief of being outstripped by a younger rival, while Rome must have felt that Veii was the great hindrance to any advance of her dominion on the right bank of her own river. No form of alliance, confederation, or dependence was possible; a death struggle must come sooner or later between the old Etruscan and the newer Latin city.

The site of Veii is that of a great city, a strong city, but not a city made, like Rome, for rule. We go far and wide, and we find nothing like the "great group of village communities by the Tiber." Veii

is not a group, and she has no Tiber. The city stood high on the rocks, yet it can hardly be called a hill-city. A peninsular site rises above the steep and craggy banks of two small streams which make up the fateful Cremera; but the peninsula itself is nearly a table-land, a table-land surrounded by hills. The stream supplied the walls with an admirable natural fosse, and that was all. The vast space enclosed by the walls makes us naturally ask whether the city could have been laid out on so great a scale from the beginning. We may believe that, as in so many cases, the *arx*, a peninsula within a peninsula, was the original city, and that the rest was taken in afterwards. But, if so, it would seem as if it must have been taken in at a blow, as if Veii took a single leap from littleness to greatness, unlike the gradual growth of Rome or Syracuse. At all events, there is the undoubted extent of a great city, a city clearly of an earlier type than Rome, a city which may well have reached its present extent while Rome had not spread beyond the Palatine. Such a site marks a great advance on the occupation of inaccessible hill-tops; but Veii itself must have seemed an old-world city in the eyes of those who had the highway of the Tiber below their walls.

It is strange to step out the traces of a city whose position and extent are so unmistakably marked, but of which nothing is left which can be called a building, or even a ruin. The most memorable work in the circuit of Veii is a work not of building but of boring – the Ponte Sodo, hewn in the rock for the better passage of the guardian stream. Besides these, some small fragments of the Etruscan wall, the signs of a double gate, some masonry of the small Roman tower which in after times arose within the forsaken walls, are pretty well all that remains of the life of Veii. The remains of its death are more plentiful. There is the Roman *columbarium*, within the Etruscan site; there are the Etruscan tombs bored deep in all the surrounding hills. There is, above all, the famous painted tomb, shielding no such sculptures and inscriptions as those on which we gaze in the great Volumnian sepulchre, but within which one lucky eye was privileged for a moment to see the Lucumo himself, as he crumbled away at the entrance of the unaccustomed air. A scrap or two of his harness is there still; the arms are there; the strange-shaped beasts are there, in their primitive form and colouring; the guardian lions keep the door; but we have no written ænigma even to guess at. We can only feel our way to a date by marking the imperfect attempt at an arch, an earlier and ruder stage by far than the roof of Rome's *Tullianum* or its fellow at Tusculum. In the Volumnian tomb the main interest comes from the fact that it belongs to the very latest Etruscan times, to the transition from Etruscan to Roman life. In the Veientine tomb the main interest comes from the fact that it cannot be later than an early stage in Roman history, and that it may be as much earlier as we choose to think it. It is the same with all the little that is left of Veii. We know that, except the palpable remains of the Roman *municipium*

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