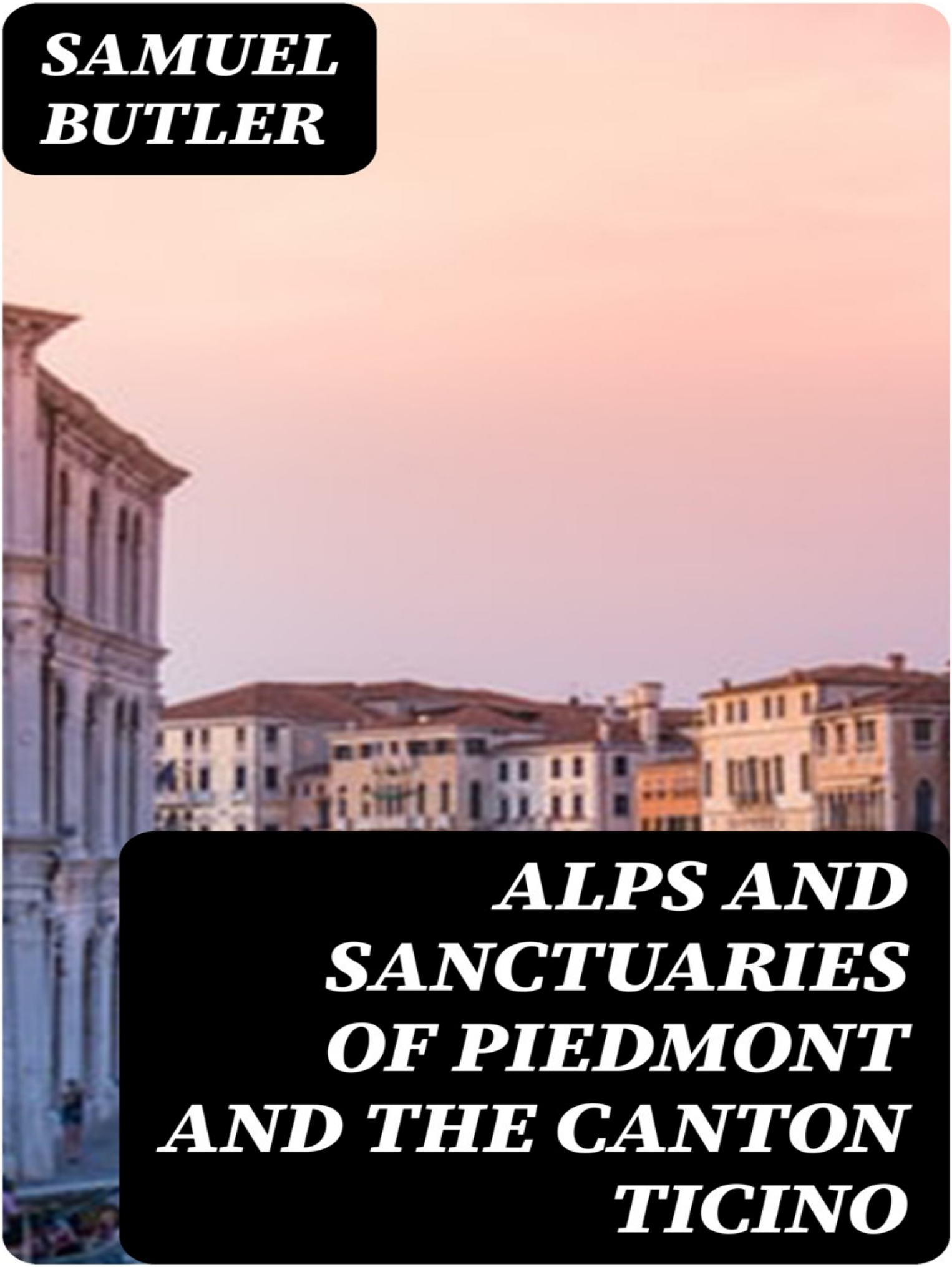
SAMUEL BUTLER



ALPS AND SANCTUARIES OF PIEDMONT AND THE CANTON TICINO

Samuel Butler

Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino

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Introduction

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THE publication of a new and revised edition of “Alps and Sanctuaries” at a much reduced price and in a handier and more portable form than the original will, I hope, draw general attention to a book which has been undeservedly neglected. “Alps and Sanctuaries” has hitherto been the Cinderella of the Butler family. While her sisters, both elder and younger, have been steadily winning their way to high places at the feast, she has sat unrecognised and unhonoured in the ashes. For this, of course, the high price of the book, which was originally issued at a guinea, was largely responsible, as well as its unmanageable size and cumbrousness. But Time has revenges in his wallet for books as well as for men, and I cannot but believe that a new life is in store for one of the wisest, wittiest and tenderest of Butler’s books.

“Alps and Sanctuaries” originally appeared at a time (1881) when the circle of Butler’s readers had shrunk to very narrow dimensions. “Erewhon” (1872) had astonished and delighted the literary world, but “The Fair Haven” (1873) had alienated the sympathies of the orthodox, and “Life and Habit” (1877) and its successors “Evolution, Old and New” (1879) and “Unconscious Memory” (1880) had made him powerful and relentless enemies in the field of science. In 1881 Butler was, as he often termed himself, a literary pariah, and “Alps and Sanctuaries” was received for the most part with contemptuous silence or undisguised hostility. Now that Butler is a recognised classic, his

twentieth-century readers may care to be reminded of the reception that was accorded to this—one of the most genial and least polemical of his works. Very few papers reviewed it at all, and in only four or five cases was it honoured with a notice more than a few lines long.

Strange as it may seem, Butler's best friends were the Roman Catholics. *The Weekly Register* praised "Alps and Sanctuaries" almost unreservedly, and *The Tablet* became positively lyrical over it. The fact is that about this time Butler was dallying with visions of a *rapprochement* between the Church of Rome and the "advanced wing of the Broad Church party," to which he always declared that he belonged. In the second edition of "Evolution, Old and New," which was published in 1882, there is a remarkable chapter, entitled "Rome and Pantheism," in which Butler holds out an olive branch to the Vatican, and suggests that if Rome would make certain concessions with regard to the miraculous element of Christianity she might win the adherence of liberal-minded men, who are equally disgusted by the pretensions of scientists and the dissensions of Protestants.

"Alps and Sanctuaries" contains nothing like a definite eirenicon, but it is pervaded by a genuine if somewhat vague sympathy for Roman institutions, which, emphasised as it is by some outspoken criticism of Protestantism, will serve to explain the welcome that it received in Roman Catholic circles. Nevertheless, one may venture to doubt whether Butler felt altogether at ease in the society of his new friends, and it was probably with rather mixed feelings that he read *The Tablet's* description of "Alps and Sanctuaries" as "a book that Wordsworth would have

gloated over with delight." On the other hand, the compliment paid to his little discourse on the "wondrous efficacy of crosses and crossing," which the pious *Tablet* read in a devotional rather than a biological sense and characterised as "so very suggestive and moral that it might form part of a sermon," must have pleased him almost as much as *The Rock's* naïf acceptance of "The Fair Haven" as a defence of Protestant orthodoxy.

"Alps and Sanctuaries" is essentially a holiday book, and no one ever enjoyed a holiday more keenly than Butler. "When a man is in his office," he used to say, "he should be exact and precise, but his holiday is his garden, and too much precision here is a mistake." He acted up to his words, and in "Alps and Sanctuaries" we see him in his most unbuttoned mood, giving the rein to his high spirits and letting his fantastic humour carry him whither it would. Butler always spent his holidays in Italy, a country which he had known and loved from his earliest childhood, and for which the passing years only increased his affection. Few Englishmen have ever studied her people, her landscape and her art with deeper sympathy and understanding, and she never received a sincerer tribute than the book which Butler dedicated to his "second country" as "a thank-offering for the happiness she has afforded me."

Butler used to declare that he wrote his books so that he might have something to read in his old age, knowing what he liked much better than any one else could do. But though he cared little for contemporary popularity, no man valued intelligent appreciation more highly. He recorded in his "Note-books" with evident delight the remark made by a

lady after reading “Alps and Sanctuaries”: “You seem to hear him speaking,” adding, “I don’t think I ever heard a criticism of my books which pleased me better.” The story of another unsolicited testimonial I must give in his own words:

“One day in the autumn of 1886 I walked up to Piora from Airolo, returning the same day. At Piora I met a very nice quiet man whose name I presently discovered, and who, I have since learned, is a well-known and most liberal employer of labour somewhere in the north of England. He told me that he had been induced to visit Piora by a book which had made a great impression upon him. He could not recollect its title, but it had made a great impression upon him; nor yet could he recollect the author’s name, but the book had made a great impression upon him; he could not remember even what else there was in the book; the only thing he knew was that it had made a great impression upon him.

“This is a good example of what is called a residuary impression. Whether or no I told him that the book which had made such a great impression upon him was called ‘Alps and Sanctuaries,’ and that it had been written by the person he was addressing, I cannot tell. It would have been very like me to have blurted it all out and given him to understand how fortunate he had been in meeting me. This would be so fatally like me that the chances are ten to one that I did it; but I have, thank Heaven, no recollection of sin in this respect, and have rather a strong impression that, for once in my life, I smiled to myself and said nothing.”

Butler always remembered with satisfaction that “Alps and Sanctuaries” gained him the friendship of Dr. Mandell

Creighton. In her biography of her husband, Mrs. Creighton mentions that the Bishop had been reading “Alps and Sanctuaries,” which charmed him so much that he determined to visit some of the places described therein. On his return to England, Dr. Creighton wrote to Butler, telling him how much “Alps and Sanctuaries” had added to the pleasure of his trip, and begged him to come to Peterborough and pay him a visit. The story is told in Butler’s “Note-books,” but I cannot resist the temptation to repeat it:

“The first time that Dr. Creighton asked me to come down to Peterborough, I was a little doubtful whether to go or not. As usual, I consulted my good clerk Alfred, who said:

“‘Let me have a look at his letter, sir.’

“I gave him the letter, and he said:

“‘I see, sir, there is a crumb of tobacco in it; I think you may go.’

“I went, and enjoyed myself very much. I should like to add that there are few men who have ever impressed me so profoundly and so favourably as Dr. Creighton. I have often seen him since, both at Peterborough and at Fulham, and like and admire him most cordially.”

“Alps and Sanctuaries” was published a few months before the opening of the St. Gothard tunnel in 1882. That event naturally made many and great changes in the Val Leventina, and we who know the valley only as a thoroughfare for shrieking smoking expresses, can scarcely realise its ancient peace in the days of which Butler wrote. But apart from the incursion of the railway, Butler’s beloved valleys have changed but little since “Alps and Sanctuaries”

was written. A few more roads have been made, and a few more hotels have been built. Butler's prediction to the effect that the next great change in locomotion in the Ticinese valleys "would have something to do with electricity"—a prediction which in 1881 was by no means so obvious as a twentieth-century reader might suppose—has been strikingly fulfilled. Electric railways now run up the Val Blenio from Biasca to Acquarossa, half-way to Olivone; up the Val Mesocco from Bellinzona to Mesocco, and from Locarno up the Val Maggia to Bignasco. Ere long they will doubtless penetrate the higher recesses of the valleys. Many of the "nice people" mentioned in "Alps and Sanctuaries" have passed away. Signer Dazio no longer reigns in Fusio; his hotel is in other hands, "and from the sign is gone Sibylla's name." Signor Guglielmoni has long since fallen a victim to the rigours of the Alpine winter, which Butler so feelingly describes. At S. Michele, however, there are still some monks who remember Butler and a copy of "Alps and Sanctuaries," given by him to the Sanctuary, is one of their most cherished possessions. The lapse of thirty years has left S. Michele unaltered, so far as I could see a few years ago, save for the arm-chairs made out of clipped box-trees. These have fallen grievously from their high estate as depicted on p. 103, and are now deplorably thin and ragged.

I think that Butler must at one time have intended to bring out a new edition of "Alps and Sanctuaries"—the so-called second edition published in 1882 by Mr. David Bogue being merely a re-issue of the original sheets with a new title-page—since he took the trouble to compile an

elaborate and highly characteristic index, the manuscript of which is bound up in a copy of the so-called second edition now in my possession. This idea he seems to have abandoned, and he did not revise the text of the book, beyond correcting two or three misprints. He continued, however, to accumulate material for a possible sequel, and at his death he left a large mass of rough notes recording impressions of many holiday expeditions to various parts of Italy, in particular to his favourite Lombard and Ticinese valleys. Mr. Festing Jones and I have examined these notes with great care, and from them Mr. Jones, who was, I need hardly say, Butler's constant companion both at home and abroad, and his collaborator in the original "Alps and Sanctuaries," has constructed one entirely new chapter, "Fusio Revisited," and made considerable additions to Chapter X. I have, in addition, borrowed two passages, relating respectively to Bellinzona (p. 198) and Varese (p. 257) from Butler's recently published "Note-books," and Mr. Jones has kindly allowed me to take the note on Medea Colleone and her *passero solitario* (p. 23) from his "Diary of a Journey through North Italy and Sicily." I have revised the original text of the book, into which some trifling errors had crept, and have completed the index by adding references to the new matter. I have also ventured to consign to an appendix the original Chapter IX, "Reforms instituted at S. Michele in the year 1478," which contains a summary of certain documents relating to the Sanctuary. These are valuable to scholars and students, but are not likely to interest the ordinary reader, and I am following the suggestion of a friend in transplanting the chapter bodily to

the end of the book. The illustrations, all save six which the reader will easily distinguish, are printed from the original Dawson-Process blocks, which are interesting examples of early photo-engraving work.

Mr. Fifield's determination to make the present edition handy and portable has unfortunately compelled him to abandon Mr. Charles Gogin's design for the original cover, which requires a larger volume than would in the present case be convenient. Readers who propose to carry the book from S. Ambrogio up to the Sanctuary of S. Michele will, I am sure, acquiesce in the sacrifice.

My last words must be an expression of cordial thanks to Mr. Festing Jones, whose help and counsel have been invaluable to me in preparing the book for republication.

R. A. Streatfeild.

May, 1913.

Author's Preface to First Edition

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I SHOULD perhaps apologise for publishing a work which professes to deal with the sanctuaries of Piedmont, and saying so little about the most important of them all—the Sacro Monte of Varallo. My excuse must be, that I found it impossible to deal with Varallo without making my book too long. Varallo requires a work to itself; I must, therefore, hope to return to it on another occasion.

For the convenience of avoiding explanations, I have treated the events of several summers as though they belonged to only one. This can be of no importance to the

reader, but as the work is chronologically inexact, I had better perhaps say so.

The illustrations by Mr. H. F. Jones are on pages 95, 211, 225, 238, 254, 260. The frontispiece and the illustrations on the title-page and on pages 261, 262 are by Mr. Charles Gogin. There are two drawings on pages 136, 137 by an Italian gentleman whose name I have unfortunately lost, and whose permission to insert them I have, therefore, been unable to obtain, and one on page 138 by Signor Gaetano Meo. The rest are mine, except that all the figures in my drawings are in every case by Mr. Charles Gogin, unless when they are merely copied from frescoes or other sources. The two larger views of Oropa are chiefly taken from photographs. The rest are all of them from studies taken upon the spot.

I must acknowledge the great obligations I am under to Mr. H. F. Jones as regards the letterpress no less than the illustrations; I might almost say that the book is nearly as much his as mine, while it is only through the care which he and another friend have exercised in the revision of my pages that I am able to let them appear with some approach to confidence.

November, 1881.

Chapter I
Introduction

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MOST men will readily admit that the two poets who have the greatest hold over Englishmen are Handel and Shakespeare—for it is as a poet, a sympathiser with and renderer of all estates and conditions whether of men or things, rather than as a mere musician, that Handel reigns supreme. There have been many who have known as much English as Shakespeare, and so, doubtless, there have been no fewer who have known as much music as Handel: perhaps Bach, probably Haydn, certainly Mozart; as likely as not, many a known and unknown musician now living; but the poet is not known by knowledge alone—not by *gnosis* only—but also, and in greater part, by the *agape* which makes him wish to steal men's hearts, and prompts him so to apply his knowledge that he shall succeed. There has been no one to touch Handel as an observer of all that was observable, a lover of all that was loveable, a hater of all that was hateable, and, therefore, as a poet. Shakespeare loved not wisely but too well. Handel loved as well as Shakespeare, but more wisely. He is as much above Shakespeare as Shakespeare is above all others, except Handel himself; he is no less lofty, impassioned, tender, and full alike of fire and love of play; he is no less universal in the range of his sympathies, no less a master of expression and illustration than Shakespeare, and at the same time he is of robuster, stronger fibre, more easy, less introspective. Englishmen are of so mixed a race, so inventive, and so

given to migration, that for many generations to come they are bound to be at times puzzled, and therefore introspective; if they get their freedom at all they get it as Shakespeare “with a great sum,” whereas Handel was “free born.” Shakespeare sometimes errs and grievously, he is as one of his own best men “moulded out of faults,” who “for the most become much more the better, for being a little bad;” Handel, if he puts forth his strength at all, is unerring: he gains the maximum of effect with the minimum of effort. As Mozart said of him, “he beats us all in effect, when he chooses he strikes like a thunderbolt.” Shakespeare’s strength is perfected in weakness; Handel is the serenity and unself-consciousness of health itself. “There,” said Beethoven on his deathbed, pointing to the works of Handel, “there—is truth.” These, however, are details, the main point that will be admitted is that the average Englishman is more attracted by Handel and Shakespeare than by any other two men who have been long enough dead for us to have formed a fairly permanent verdict concerning them. We not only believe them to have been the best men familiarly known here in England, but we see foreign nations join us for the most part in assigning to them the highest place as renderers of emotion.

It is always a pleasure to me to reflect that the countries dearest to these two master spirits are those which are also dearest to myself, I mean England and Italy. Both of them lived mainly here in London, but both of them turned mainly to Italy when realising their dreams. Handel’s music is the embodiment of all the best Italian music of his time and before him, assimilated and reproduced with the

enlargements and additions suggested by his own genius. He studied in Italy; his subjects for many years were almost exclusively from Italian sources; the very language of his thoughts was Italian, and to the end of his life he would have composed nothing but Italian operas, if the English public would have supported him. His spirit flew to Italy, but his home was London. So also Shakespeare turned to Italy more than to any other country for his subjects. Roughly, he wrote nineteen Italian, or what to him were virtually Italian plays, to twelve English, one Scotch, one Danish, three French, and two early British.

But who does not turn to Italy who has the chance of doing so? What, indeed, do we not owe to that most lovely and loveable country? Take up a Bank of England note and the Italian language will be found still lingering upon it. It is signed “for Bank of England and Compa.” (*Compagnia*), not “Compy.” Our laws are Roman in their origin. Our music, as we have seen, and our painting comes from Italy. Our very religion till a few hundred years ago found its headquarters, not in London nor in Canterbury, but in Rome. What, in fact, is there which has not filtered through Italy, even though it arose elsewhere? On the other hand, there are infinite attractions in London. I have seen many foreign cities, but I know none so commodious, or, let me add, so beautiful. I know of nothing in any foreign city equal to the view down Fleet Street, walking along the north side from the corner of Fetter Lane. It is often said that this has been spoiled by the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway bridge over Ludgate Hill; I think, however, the effect is more imposing now than it was before the bridge was built. Time has already

softened it; it does not obtrude itself; it adds greatly to the sense of size, and makes us doubly aware of the movement of life, the colossal circulation to which London owes so much of its impressiveness. We gain more by this than we lose by the infraction of some pedant’s canon about the artistically correct intersection of right lines. Vast as is the world below the bridge, there is a vaster still on high, and when trains are passing, the steam from the engine will throw the dome of St. Paul’s into the clouds, and make it seem as though there were a commingling of earth and some far-off mysterious palace in dreamland. I am not very fond of Milton, but I admit that he does at times put me in mind of Fleet Street.

While on the subject of Fleet Street, I would put in a word in favour of the much-abused griffin. The whole monument is one of the handsomest in London. As for its being an obstruction, I have discoursed with a large number of omnibus conductors on the subject, and am satisfied that the obstruction is imaginary.

When, again, I think of Waterloo Bridge, and the huge wide-opened jaws of those two Behemoths, the Cannon Street and Charing Cross railway stations, I am not sure that the prospect here is not even finer than in Fleet Street. See how they belch forth puffing trains as the breath of their nostrils, gorging and disgorging incessantly those human atoms whose movement is the life of the city. How like it all is to some great bodily mechanism of which the people are the blood. And then, above all, see the ineffable St. Paul’s. I was once on Waterloo Bridge after a heavy thunderstorm in summer. A thick darkness was upon the river and the

buildings upon the north side, but just below I could see the water hurrying onward as in an abyss, dark, gloomy, and mysterious. On a level with the eye there was an absolute blank, but above, the sky was clear, and out of the gloom the dome and towers of St. Paul’s rose up sharply, looking higher than they actually were, and as though they rested upon space.

Then as for the neighbourhood within, we will say, a radius of thirty miles. It is one of the main businesses of my life to explore this district. I have walked several thousands of miles in doing so, and I mark where I have been in red upon the Ordnance map, so that I may see at a glance what parts I know least well, and direct my attention to them as soon as possible. For ten months in the year I continue my walks in the home counties, every week adding some new village or farmhouse to my list of things worth seeing; and no matter where else I may have been, I find a charm in the villages of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex, which in its way I know not where to rival.

I have ventured to say the above, because during the remainder of my book I shall be occupied almost exclusively with Italy, and wish to make it clear that my Italian rambles are taken not because I prefer Italy to England, but as by way of *parergon*, or by-work, as every man should have both his profession and his hobby. I have chosen Italy as my second country, and would dedicate this book to her as a thank-offering for the happiness she has afforded me.

Chapter II
Faido

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For some years past I have paid a visit of greater or less length to Faido in the Canton Ticino, which though politically Swiss is as much Italian in character as any part of Italy. I was attracted to this place, in the first instance, chiefly because it is one of the easiest places on the Italian side of the Alps to reach from England. This merit it will soon possess in a still greater degree, for when the St. Gothard tunnel is open, it will be possible to leave London, we will say, on a Monday morning and be at Faido by six or seven o'clock the next evening, just as one can now do with S. Ambrogio on the line between Susa and Turin, of which more hereafter.

True, by making use of the tunnel one will miss the St. Gothard scenery, but I would not, if I were the reader, lay this too much to heart. Mountain scenery, when one is staying right in the middle of it, or when one is on foot, is one thing, and mountain scenery as seen from the top of a diligence very likely smothered in dust is another. Besides I do not think he will like the St. Gothard scenery very much.

It is a pity there is no mental microscope to show us our likes and dislikes while they are yet too vague to be made out easily. We are so apt to let imaginary likings run away with us, as a person at the far end of Cannon Street railway platform, if he expects a friend to join him, will see that friend in half the impossible people who are coming through the wicket. I once began an essay on "The Art of Knowing

what gives one Pleasure," but soon found myself out of the diatonic with it, in all manner of strange keys, amid a maze of metaphysical accidentals and double and treble flats, so I left it alone as a question not worth the trouble it seemed likely to take in answering. It is like everything else, if we much want to know our own mind on any particular point, we may be trusted to develop the faculty which will reveal it to us, and if we do not greatly care about knowing, it does not much matter if we remain in ignorance. But in few cases can we get at our permanent liking without at least as much experience as a fishmonger must have had before he can choose at once the best bloater out of twenty which, to inexperienced eyes, seem one as good as the other. Lord Beaconsfield was a thorough Erasmus Darwinian when he said so well in "Endymion": "There is nothing like will; everybody can do exactly what they like in this world, provided they really like it. Sometimes they think they do, but in general it's a mistake." [23] If this is as true as I believe it to be, "the longing after immortality," though not indeed much of an argument in favour of our being immortal at the present moment, is perfectly sound as a reason for concluding that we shall one day develop immortality, if our desire is deep enough and lasting enough. As for knowing whether or not one likes a picture, which under the present æsthetic reign of terror is *de rigueur*, I once heard a man say the only test was to ask one's self whether one would care to look at it if one was quite sure that one was alone; I have never been able to get beyond this test with the St. Gothard scenery, and applying it to the Devil's Bridge, I should say a stay of about thirty

seconds would be enough for me. I daresay Mendelssohn would have stayed at least two hours at the Devil's Bridge, but then he did stay such a long while before things.

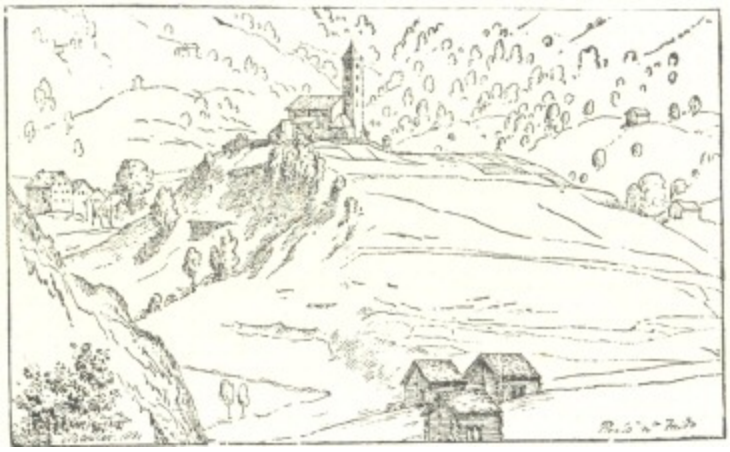
The coming out from the short tunnel on to the plain of Andermatt does certainly give the pleasure of a surprise. I shall never forget coming out of this tunnel one day late in November, and finding the whole Andermatt valley in brilliant sunshine, though from Flüelen up to the Devil's Bridge the clouds had hung heavy and low. It was one of the most striking transformation scenes imaginable. The top of the pass is good, and the Hotel Prosa a comfortable inn to stay at. I do not know whether this house will be discontinued when the railway is opened, but understand that the proprietor has taken the large hotel at Piora, which I will speak of later on. The descent on the Italian side is impressive, and so is the point where sight is first caught of the valley below Airolo, but on the whole I cannot see that the St. Gothard is better than the S. Bernardino on the Italian side, or the Lukmanier, near the top, on the German; this last is one of the most beautiful things imaginable, but it should be seen by one who is travelling towards German Switzerland, and in a fine summer's evening light. I was never more impressed by the St. Gothard than on the occasion already referred to when I crossed it in winter. We went in sledges from Hospenthal to Airolo, and I remember thinking what splendid fellows the postillions and guards and men who helped to shift the luggage on to the sledges, looked; they were so ruddy and strong and full of health, as indeed they might well be—living an active outdoor life in such an air; besides, they were picked men, for the passage

in winter is never without possible dangers. It was delightful travelling in the sledge. The sky was of a deep blue; there was not a single cloud either in sky or on mountain, but the snow was already deep, and had covered everything beneath its smooth and heaving bosom. There was no breath of air, but the cold was intense; presently the sun set upon all except the higher peaks, and the broad shadows stole upwards. Then there was a rich crimson flush upon the mountain tops, and after this a pallor cold and ghastly as death. If he is fortunate in his day, I do not think any one will be sorry to have crossed the St. Gothard in mid-winter; but one pass will do as well as another.

Airolo, at the foot of the pass on the Italian side, was, till lately, a quiet and beautiful village, rising from among great green slopes, which in early summer are covered with innumerable flowers. The place, however, is now quite changed. The railway has turned the whole Val Leventina topsy-turvy, and altered it almost beyond recognition. When the line is finished and the workmen have gone elsewhere, things will get right again; but just now there is an explosiveness about the valley which puzzles one who has been familiar with its former quietness. Airolo has been especially revolutionised, being the headquarters for the works upon the Italian side of the great St. Gothard tunnel, as Göschenen is for those on the German side; besides this, it was burnt down two or three years ago, hardly one of the houses being left standing, so that it is now a new town, and has lost its former picturesqueness, but it will be not a bad place to stay at as soon as the bustle of the works has subsided, and there is a good hotel—the Hotel Airolo. It lies

nearly 4000 feet above the sea, so that even in summer the air is cool. There are plenty of delightful walks—to Piora, for example, up the Val Canaria, and to Bedretto.

After leaving Airolo the road descends rapidly for a few hundred feet and then more slowly for four or five kilometres to Piotta. Here the first signs of the Italian spirit appear in the wood carving of some of the houses. It is with these houses that I always consider myself as in Italy again. Then come Ronco on the mountain side to the left, and Quinto; all the way the pastures are thickly covered with cowslips, even finer than those that grow on Salisbury Plain. A few kilometres farther on and sight is caught of a beautiful green hill with a few natural terraces upon it and a flat top—rising from amid pastures, and backed by higher hills as green as itself. On the top of this hill there stands a white church with an elegant Lombard *campanile*—the *campanile* left unwhitewashed. The whole forms a lovely little bit of landscape such as some old Venetian painter might have chosen as a background for a Madonna.



This place is called Prato. After it is passed the road enters at once upon the Monte Piottino gorge, which is better than the Devil’s Bridge, but not so much to my taste

as the auriculas and rhododendrons which grow upon the rocks that flank it. The peep, however, at the hamlet of Vigera, caught through the opening of the gorge, is very nice. Soon after crossing the second of the Monte Piottino bridges the first chestnuts are reached, or rather were so till a year ago, when they were all cut down to make room for some construction in connection with the railway. A couple of kilometres farther on and mulberries and occasional fig-trees begin to appear. On this we find ourselves at Faido, the first place upon the Italian side which can be called a town, but which after all is hardly more than a village.

Faido is a picturesque old place. It has several houses dated the middle of the sixteenth century; and there is one, formerly a convent, close to the Hotel dell' Angelo, which must be still older. There is a brewery where excellent beer is made, as good as that of Chiavenna—and a monastery where a few monks still continue to reside. The town is 2365 feet above the sea, and is never too hot even in the height of summer. The Angelo is the principal hotel of the town, and will be found thoroughly comfortable and in all respects a desirable place to stay at. I have stayed there so often, and consider the whole family of its proprietor so much among the number of my friends, that I have no hesitation in cordially recommending the house.

Other attractions I do not know that the actual town possesses, but the neighbourhood is rich. Years ago, in travelling by the St. Gothard road, I had noticed the many little villages perched high up on the sides of the mountain, from one to two thousand feet above the river, and had wondered what sort of places they would be. I resolved,

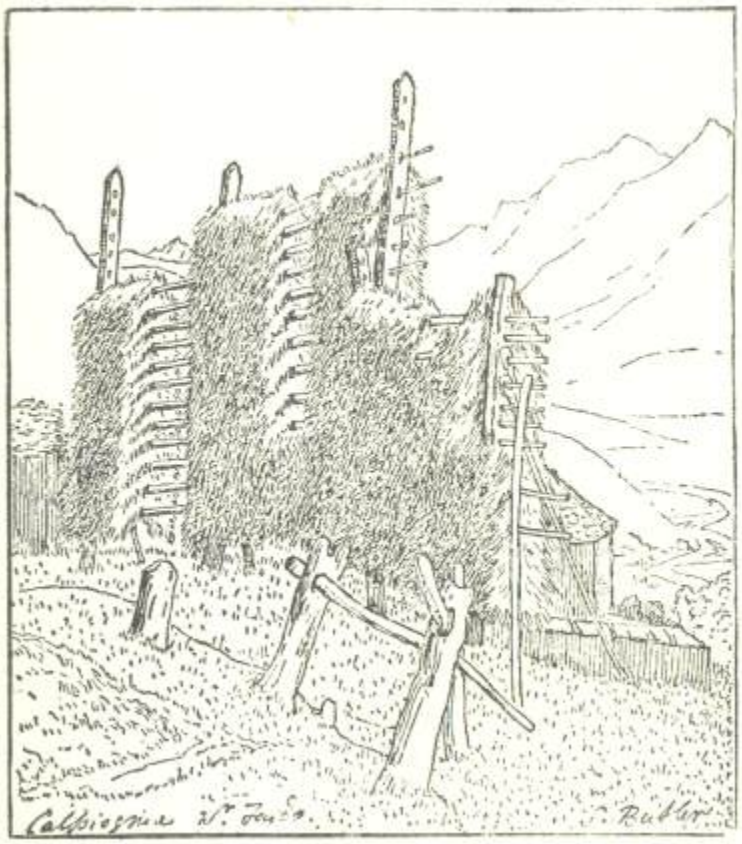
therefore, after a time to make a stay at Faido and go up to all of them. I carried out my intention, and there is not a village nor fraction of a village in the Val Leventina from Airolo to Biasca which I have not inspected. I never tire of them, and the only regret I feel concerning them is, that the greater number are inaccessible except on foot, so that I do not see how I shall be able to reach them if I live to be old. These are the places of which I do find myself continually thinking when I am away from them. I may add that the Val Leventina is much the same as every other subalpine valley on the Italian side of the Alps that I have yet seen.

I had no particular aversion to German Switzerland before I knew the Italian side of the Alps. On the contrary, I was under the impression that I liked German Switzerland almost as much as I liked Italy itself, but now I can look at German Switzerland no longer. As soon as I see the water going down Rhinewards I hurry back to London. I was unwillingly compelled to take pleasure in the first hour and a half of the descent from the top of the Lukmanier towards Disentis, but this is only a ripping over of the brimfulness of Italy on to the Swiss side.

The first place I tried from Faido was Mairengo—where there is the oldest church in the valley—a church older even than the church of St. Nicolao of Giornico. There is little of the original structure, but the rare peculiarity remains that there are two high altars side by side.

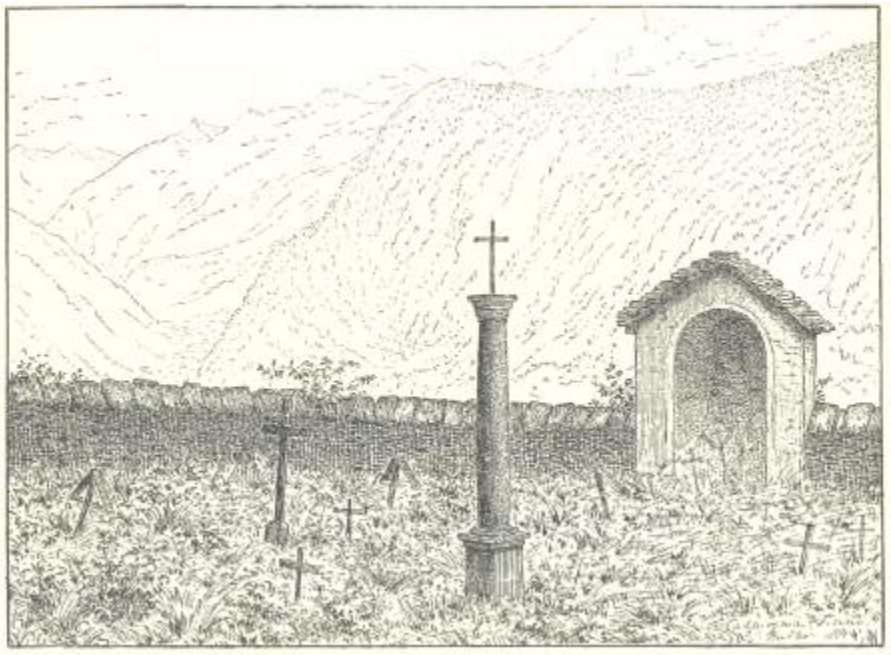
There is a fine half-covered timber porch to the church. These porches are rare, the only others like it I know of being at Prato, Rossura, and to some extent Cornone. In each of these cases the arrangement is different, the only

agreement being in the having an outer sheltered place, from which the church is entered instead of opening directly on to the churchyard. Mairengo is full of good bits, and nestles among magnificent chestnut-trees. From hence I went to Osco, about 3800 feet above the sea, and 1430 above Faido. It was here I first came to understand the purpose of certain high poles with cross bars to them which I had already seen elsewhere. They are for drying the barley on; as soon as it is cut it is hung up on the cross bars and secured in this way from the rain, but it is obvious this can only be done when cultivation is on a small scale. These *rascane*, as they are called, are a feature of the Val Leventina, and look very well when they are full of barley.

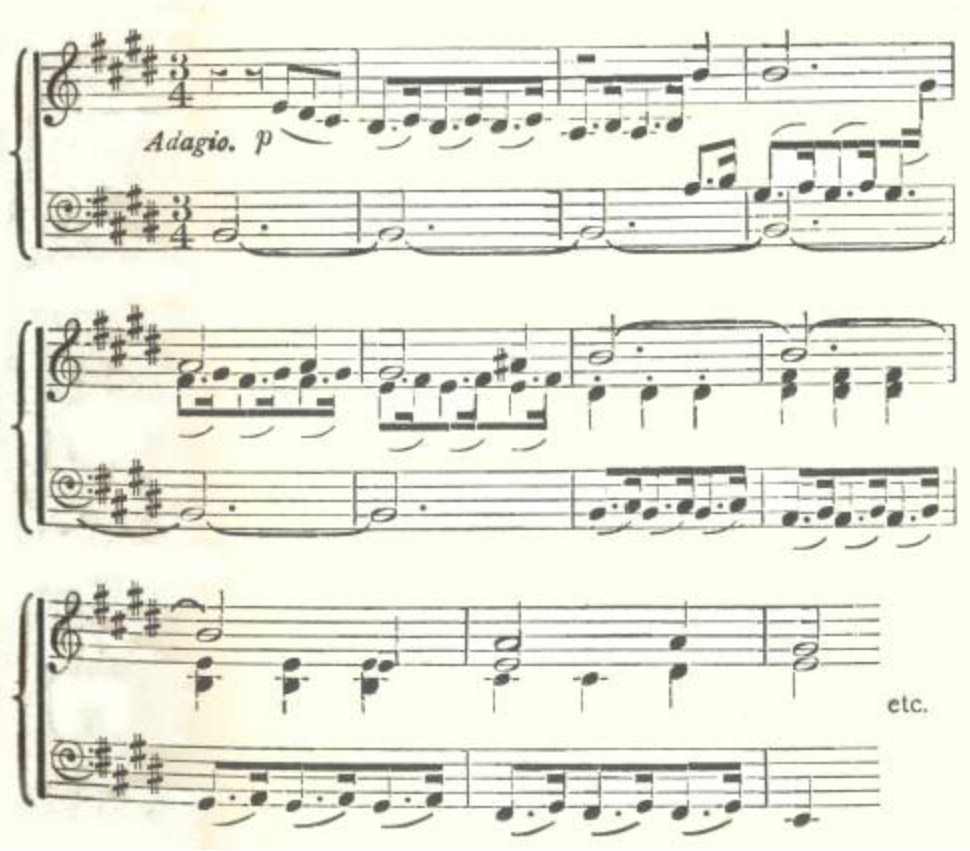


From Osco I tried to coast along to Calpiognia, but was warned that the path was dangerous, and found it to be so. I

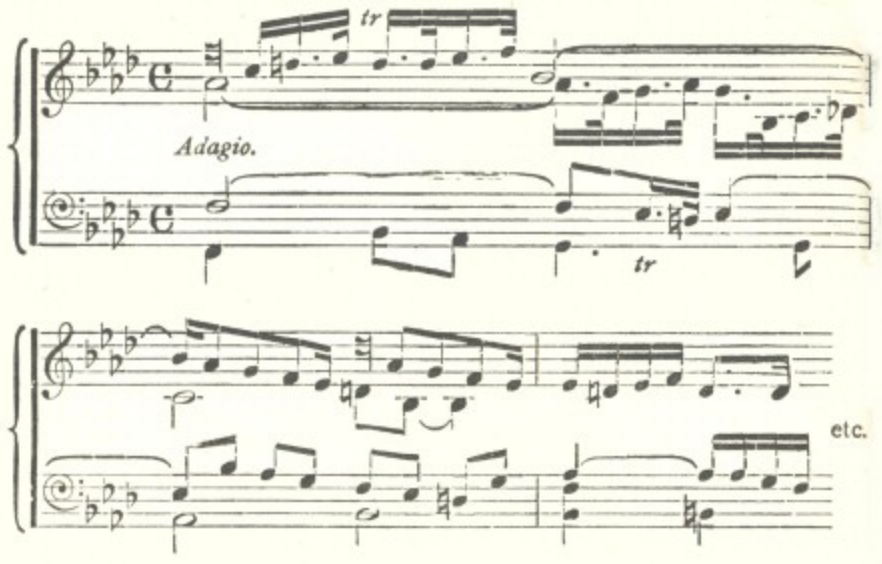
therefore again descended to Mairengo, and re-ascended by a path which went straight up behind the village. After a time I got up to the level of Calpiognia, or nearly so, and found a path through pine woods which led me across a torrent in a ravine to Calpiognia itself. This path is very beautiful. While on it I caught sight of a lovely village nestling on a plateau that now showed itself high up on the other side the valley of the Ticino, perhaps a couple of miles off as the crow flies. This I found upon inquiry to be Dalpe; above Dalpe rose pine woods and pastures; then the loftier *alpi*, then rugged precipices, and above all the Dalpe glacier roseate with sunset. I was enchanted, and it was only because night was coming on, and I had a long way to descend before getting back to Faido, that I could get myself away. I passed through Calpiognia, and though the dusk was deepening, I could not forbear from pausing at the Campo Santo just outside the village. I give a sketch taken by daylight, but neither sketch nor words can give any idea of the pathos of the place.



When I saw it first it was in the month of June, and the rank dandelions were in seed. Wild roses in full bloom, great daisies, and the never-failing salvia ran riot among the graves. Looking over the churchyard itself there were the purple mountains of Biasca and the valley of the Ticino some couple of thousand feet below. There was no sound save the subdued but ceaseless roar of the Ticino, and the Piumogna. Involuntarily I found the following passage from the “Messiah” sounding in my ears, and felt as though Handel, who in his travels as a young man doubtless saw such places, might have had one of them in his mind when he wrote the divine music which he has wedded to the words “of them that sleep.” [31]



Or again: [32]



From Calpiognia I came down to Primadengo, and thence to Faido.

Chapter III
Primadengo, Calpiognia, Dalpe, Cornone, and Prato

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NEXT morning I thought I would go up to Calpiognia again. It was Sunday. When I got up to Primadengo I saw no one, and heard nothing, save always the sound of distant waterfalls; all was spacious and full of what Mr. Ruskin has called a “great peacefulness of light.” The village was so quiet that it seemed as though it were deserted; after a minute or so, however, I heard a cherry fall, and looking up, saw the trees were full of people. There they were, crawling and lolling about on the boughs like caterpillars, and gorging themselves with cherries. They spoke not a word either to me or to one another. They were too happy and goodly to make a noise; but they lay about on the large branches, and ate and sighed for content and ate till they could eat no longer. Lotus eating was a rough nerve-jarring business in comparison. They were like saints and evangelists by Filippo Lippi. Again the rendering of Handel came into my mind, and I thought of how the goodly fellowship of prophets praised God. [33]