

# **Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol**

## **Untrodden peaks and unfrequented valleys**

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Chapter V. Cortina to Pieve di Cadore

## CHAPTER V.

## CORTINA TO PIEVE DI CADORE.

The Sagro of Cortina—A Tyrolean Sermon—The Peasant Maiden of Livinal-lungo—The Courier replaced—An Ampezzo Wedding—The Tofana—Peutelstein—The Höllenstein Thal—The Croda Rossa—Landro and the Dürren See—The Drei Zinnen—The Start for Auronzo—The Church of the Crucifix—Pieve di Cadore—The House in which Titian was born—The Casa Zampieri—An Invasion—Titian's First Fresco—The odious little Girl—The Duomo—Don Antonio da Via—The Cadore Titians—The four Temperas—A curious antique Predella.

THE morning of the Sagro dawned to a prodigious ringing of church-bells and firing of musketry. There were masses going on in both churches from five A.M. till mid-day. The long street and the piazza by the post-office presented one uninterrupted line of booths. There were hundreds of strangers all over the town; hundreds in the churches. Every house seemed suddenly to have become an albergo. Every window, every balcony, every doorway was crowded. The acrobats paraded Cortina again this brilliant Sunday morning about nine o'clock, and the discord of their drums and trumpets went on all day long, to the accompaniment of the church-bells and the intermittent firing of the sharp-shooters down at the "Tir" by the river-side.

What a motley crowd! What a busy, cheerful scene! What a confusion of voices, languages, music, bells and gunpowder! Here are Austrian Tyrolese from Toblach, Innichen, and the Sexten Thal, who speak only German; Italian Tyrolese from the Longarone side, who speak only Italian; others from the border-villages who speak both, or a patois compounded of both, which is quite unintelligible. The costumes

of these mountain-folk are still more various than their tongues. The women of San Vito wear breastplates of crimson or green satin banded with broad gold braid, and ornamented with spangles. The women of the Pusther Thal walk about in huge turbanlike head-dresses, as becoming, and quite as heavy, as the bearskins of the Grenadiers. The men of Flitsch are lost in their enormous black boots, modelled, apparently, on those of the French postillion of the last century. Here, too, are old women in home-made otter-skin hats, high in the crown and ornamented like a footman's with a broad gold band; and bold Jägers with wide leather belts, green braces, steeple-crowned hats, and guns slung across their shoulders, looking exactly like Caspar in "Der Freischütz." The wonderful damsels of Livinallungo whom we met yesterday on the pass, are also present in great force; but the prevailing costume is of course that of the Ampezzo. It consists of a black felt hat with a bunch of feathers at the side; a black cloth skirt and bodice trimmed with black velvet or black satin; loose white sleeves; a large blue apron that almost meets behind; and a little coloured handkerchief round the neck. Simple, sober, and becoming, this dress suits young and old alike; and the round hat sets off a pretty face very agreeably.

Learning that the musical mass was to begin at eleven A.M., we took care, as we thought, to be at the church doors in good time; but at a quarter before the hour found the steps crowded outside, and barely standing room within. The whole body of the church was one mass of life, colour, bare heads and upturned faces. Men and women alike held their hats in their hands. Three priests at three different altars per-

formed mass simultaneously. The organist played his best, assisted, however, by the Cortina brass band with an effect that was almost maddening. One trombone player, in particular, an apoplectic red-faced man in grey flannel shirtsleeves, blew as if bent on blowing his brains out. Now and then, however, when the organist had an unaccompanied interlude, or the choirmaster a few phrases of solo, there came a lucid interval when one breathed again. But these respites were few and brief; and except during the sermon, the brass band that morning had quite the best of it.

The old curé preached, attired in magnificent vestments of white and gold brocade. His sermon turned upon Faith, and he illustrated his text oddly enough by references to all kinds of matters in which Faith is not generally supposed to bear a leading part. The soldier, the artist, the lawyer, the man of science, what could they do, he asked, without Faith? Take the soldier, for instance:—what is it that inspires him with courage to face the cannon's mouth? Faith. Take the painter—judge what must have inspired the frescoes and paintings in this very church:—Faith. Think of the patience and labour required in the cutting of the Suez canal! What supported those workmen through their trying task? Faith. Look again at the Mont Cenis tunnel! Think of how those engineers began at opposite sides of that great mountain, and at length, after years of labour, met in the midst of it. To what power must we attribute such perseverance crowned with such success? To the supreme and vivifying power of Faith.

Of such quality was the good man's discourse. He preached in Italian, and paused after every peroration

to mop his bald head with a blue cotton pocket-handkerchief. It was a hot day, and his eloquence quite exhausted him.

Coming out of the church, we take a turn round the fair. Here are booths for the sale of everything under the sun—of hats; umbrellas; pipes; spectacles; pots, pans, and kettles; tanned leather; untanned leather; baskets; wooden ladles; boots and shoes; blankets; home-spun frieze and linen; harness; scythes; tin wares; wooden wares; nails, screws and carpenters' tools; knives, forks and spoons; crockery; toys; crucifixes and prayer-books; braces, garters, pocket-books, steel chains, sleeve-buttons and stationery; live poultry; fruit; vegetables; cheap jewellery; ribbons; stuffs; seeds; bird-cages; and cotton umbrellas of many colours. Here, too, is a stall for the exclusive sale of watches, from the massive silver turnip to the flat little Geneva time-keeper of the size, and probably also of the value, of an English florin. Near the church-door stands a somewhat superior booth stocked with mediæval brass work, altar-candlesticks, patinas, chalices and the like; while, next in rotation, a grave-looking old peasant presides over a big barrel full of straw and water, round the top of which, in symmetrical array, repose whetstones of all sizes.

It is remarkable that there are here no dancing or refreshment booths. The sober Tyrolese do not often dance, unless at weddings; and for meals, those who have not brought food with them, crowd at midday into the inns and private houses, and there eat with small appearance of festivity. Even the acrobats do not seem greatly to attract them. A large crowd gathers outside the show and almost fills the piazza in

the afternoon; but not many seem to be going in. They are content, for the most part, to listen to the comic dialogue sustained on the outer platform by the clown and Merry Andrew, and prefer to keep their soldi warm in their pockets.

Now the writer, knowing from previous experience the unpopularity of the sketcher, steals into corners and behind booths, in order to secure a few notes of costume and character; but, being speedily found out and surrounded, is fain either to use her pencil openly or not at all. The good people of Ampezzo, however, prove to be less sensitive in this matter than the peasants of Italy or Switzerland. They are delighted to be sketched, and come round by dozens, begging to have their portraits taken, and anxious that no detail of costume should be omitted. One very handsome woman of Livinallungo, tempted by the promise of a florin, came home with me in order that I might make a careful coloured study of her costume. She was tall, and so finely formed that not even that hideous sacque and shapeless bodice could disguise the perfection of her figure. As I placed her, so she stood, silent, motionless, absorbed, for more than half an hour. A more majestic face I never saw, nor one so full of a sweet, impenetrable melancholy. Being questioned, she said she was twenty-three years of age, and a farm-servant at Livinallungo.

"And you are not married?" I asked.

"No, Signora."

"Nor betrothed?"

"No, Signora."

"But that must be your own fault," I said.

She shook her head.

"Ah, no," she replied, with a slightly heightened colour. "Our young men do not marry without money. Who would think of me? I am too poor."

I should have liked to know more of her history; but her natural dignity and reserve were such that I felt I must not question her farther.

The sketch finished, she just glanced at it, put back the proffered payment, and turned at once to go. The Signora was very welcome, she said; she did not wish to be paid. Being pressed, however, to take the money, she yielded, more, as it seemed, through good-breeding than from inclination; and so went away, taking the downward path from the back of the house, and going home over the mountain, alone.

That afternoon, Santo Siorpaes came again, bringing with him a tall, brown, fair-haired young man of about twenty-eight or thirty, whom he introduced as "Signore Giuseppe Ghedina." This Giuseppe, he said, was a farmer, lately married, well-to-do, and a nephew of our landlord of the Aquila Nera. Not being a professional guide, he would nevertheless be happy to travel with the Signoras, and to be useful to the utmost of his power. He did not profess to know all the country laid down in our scheme, but he would take Santo's written instructions as to routes, inns, mules, guides and so forth; and he, Santo, did not doubt that we should find Giuseppe in all respects as well fitted for the work as himself.

Now Giuseppe's manner and appearance were particularly prepossessing. We liked his simple gravity, the intelligence with which he asked and answered questions, and the interest with which he examined our maps and guide-books. Preliminaries, therefore,

were soon settled. He was to inform himself thoroughly upon all matters connected with the route, and to hold himself in readiness to join us in a day or two. Meanwhile it was agreed that we should pay him at the same rate that we should have paid Santo Siorpaes: namely two and a half florins a day for his wages, and one florin and a half for his food—in all, about eight francs, or six and eightpence English, per diem. If at any time we were to travel by any public conveyance, we were of course to pay his fare; but all lodging and other expenses *en route* were to be defrayed by himself.

It may here be observed, once and for always, that a more fortunate choice could not have been made. Faithful, honest, courteous, untiring, intelligent, Giuseppe Ghedina, unused as he was to his new office, entered upon his duties as one to the manner born, and left nothing to be desired. Always at hand, but never obtrusive, as economical of our money as of his own, he was always thinking for us and never for himself. And so anxious was he that the Signoras should see all that was to be seen, that, when travelling through a district new to himself, he used to take pains each evening to enter in his pocket-book all such details as he could pick up in advance respecting every object of interest which might chance to lie in our way in the course of the next day's journey. He remained with us, as will be seen, throughout this Dolomite tour; and we parted with mutual regret, when it ended.

Numbers of those who had thronged the fair and the churches all this day, went home the same afternoon or evening. As long as daylight remained, they



could be seen dotting every mountain path; and for hours after all Cortina was in bed, their long wild Alpine cry rang from hillside to hillside, and broke the silence of the night. Next morning, however, there seemed to be as many as ever in the fair, which was kept up throughout the second day with undiminished spirit.

This second morning began with a wedding. The order of the bridal procession was as follows. First came the indefatigable brass band, numbering some twenty performers; then the bride and the best man; then the bride's father and mother; then the bridegroom walking alone; and lastly some fourteen or fifteen friends and relations of both sexes. In this order, they twice paraded the whole length of the town. The bride wore a black alpaca dress; the usual black cloth bodice and white sleeves; and a gorgeous apron of red and green silk fastened behind with a pair of quaint brass clasps. Neither she nor any of the other women on this occasion wore hats; but only an abundance of silver pins in their neatly plaited hair. Having entered the church, they all took seats in the aisle about halfway down, and the band went into the organ-loft.

Presently the bridegroom went up by himself to the altar, and kneeled down. When he had knelt there a few minutes, the mother of the bride led her daughter up, placed her at his left hand, and there left her. After they had both knelt there some five minutes longer, the priest came in, followed by the old bellringer, who acted as clerk. The bellringer then lighted a pair of long wax tapers and handed them to the priest, who blessed them, and gave one to the

bride and the other to the bridegroom. This was the beginning of the ceremony.

Then the priest read the marriage service in a low voice and very quickly, only pausing presently to ask for the rings, which were handed to him on a little glass dish by the bellringer. The priest, having blessed the rings, first gave one to the bridegroom to place upon the finger of the bride, and then gave the other to the bride, to place upon the finger of the bridegroom. During all this time they never parted from their tapers, but shifted them from one hand to the other, as occasion required. At this stage of the ceremony, the bridegroom produced some money, and gave it to the bride. They were then profusely sprinkled with holy water, and this concluded the marriage service.

High mass was next performed, as yesterday, with the full band and organ; the newly married couple remaining the whole time upon their knees before the altar, with their lighted tapers in their hands.

At length, when all was over, and the congregation was about to disperse, the bridegroom got up quite coolly and walked out of the church, leaving his bride still kneeling. Then her mother came up again, and led her away. The bridegroom, without so much as looking back to see what had become of her, went and played at bowls in the piazza; the bride went home with her parents, took off her finery, and shortly reappeared in her shabby, everyday clothes. It is, perhaps, Tyrolean etiquette for newly married persons to avoid each other as much as possible. At all events, the bridegroom loafed about with the men, and the

bride walked with her own people, and they were not once seen together all the rest of the day.

One of the pleasantest excursions that we made at this time was to Landro in the Höllenstein Thal, about twelve miles from Cortina by the Austrian post-road. On this occasion, our landlord provided a comfortable little chaise on good springs, with a seat in front for the driver; and the chesnut appeared in smart harness, with red tassels on his head, and a necklace of little jingling bells.

With Giovanni again to drive, we started early one lovely July morning, following the course of the Upper Ampezzo valley, skirting all the length of the Tofana, and seeing its three summits in succession. Being so long in the ridge, the great height and size of this mountain can only be appreciated by those who see it from at least two sides of its vast triangle—as from the Tre Sassi pass on the S.W., and from the high road on the East. Good walkers with time to spare may complete the tour of the mountain by ascending the Val Travernanza, which divides the Tofana ridge from that of Monte Lagazuoi. The pyramidal peak on the side of the Tre Sassi has been repeatedly ascended by hunters from Cortina. The central peak was achieved by Dr. Grohmann in 1863. And the north peak was reached in 1867 by Mr. Bonney, who describes the view looking over in the direction of Bruneck and the Grosse Venediger as one of the finest among the Eastern Alps. The highest peak, according to the latest measurements, reaches as nearly as possible to 10,724 feet.

From Cortina, the road runs for some distance at a level of about sixty feet above the bed of the Boita,

and passes presently under the shadow of a kind of barber's pole painted with red and white stripes, which here juts across the road at an angle of forty-five degrees. As we prepare to drive under it, the door of a little hut adjoining, which we had taken till now for a good-sized kennel, flies suddenly open, and a small, withered, excited old man flings himself into the middle of the road, and demands forty-eight kreutzers for toll. Becoming learned in the ways of the place, we soon know that a white and red pole always stands for a toll-bar, while a black and yellow one indicates the boundary line between Austria and Italy.

From here the road now begins to ascend and the mountains to close in; new peaks, snow-streaked above and wooded below, come into view; and the great crag of Peutelstein, once crowned by a famous mediæval stronghold, shuts in the end of the valley. The old castle was levelled to the ground in 1867, and there is some talk of a modern fortress to be erected on its site. At this point the road swings round abruptly to the right; winds up through pine-woods behind the platform on which the castle used to stand; leaves the noisy torrent far below; and, trending eastward at right angles to the Ampezzo valley takes, in local parlance, the name of the Thal Tedesco—which, however, is not to be found in either Mayr's or Artaria's maps. Here, also, a board by the wayside informs us that we have entered the "Distretta" of Welsperg.

And now the road leads through a succession of delicious grassy glades, among pine-woods loaded with crimson and violet cones, and festooned with the weird grey-beard moss of the Upper Alps. Wild campanulas

and purple gentians, deep golden Arnica blossoms, pink Daphne, and a whole world of other wild flowers, some quite new to us, here bloom in such abundance that the space of green sward on either side of the carriage-way looks as if bordered by a strip of Persian carpet.

Meanwhile, through openings in the wood, we catch occasional glimpses of great Dolomite peaks to right and left, and, emerging by and by upon an open space of meadow-land on the borders of which stands a tiny farm-house, we see the fine pinnacles of the Cristallino (9,238 feet) rising in giant battlements beyond the sloping ground upon our right. And now the road crosses a rough torrent-bed, stony, and steep, and blinding white in the sunshine. Here we alight and make our way across from boulder to boulder, while Giovanni leads the chesnut in and out among the shallows.

And now, as we emerge from the pine-wood, a new Dolomite—a huge, dark, mournful-looking mountain ominously splashed with deep red stains—rises suddenly into towering prominence upon our left, and seems almost to overhang the road.

What mountain is this? For once Giovanni is at fault. He thinks it must be the Croda Rossa, but he is not sure. Finding a mountain, however, here set down in Mayr's map as the Crepa Rossa, and in Arteria as the Rothwand, we are fain to conclude that it is in each case the same, with only a difference in the name.

Unlike all other Dolomites that we have yet seen, the Croda Rossa, instead of being grey and pallid, is

of a gloomy brownish and purplish hue, like the mountain known as "Black Stairs," near Enniscorthy, in Ireland. Going on in the direction of Schluderbach and looking back upon the Croda Rossa, it constantly assumes a more and more threatening aspect, rising cliff above cliff towards one vast domed summit, just under which is gathered a cluster of small peaks quite steeped in blood-colour. From these, great streaks and splashes of the same hue stream down the barren precipices below, as if some great slaughter had been done there, in the old days of the world.

Passing Schluderbach, a clean-looking road-side inn, we come presently in sight of the Dürren See, a lovely little emerald-green lake streaked with violet shadows and measuring about three-quarters of a mile in length. Great mountains close it in on all sides, and the rich woods of the lower hills slope down to the water's edge. The clustered peaks, the eternal snows and glaciers of Monte Cristallo; the towering summit of the Piz Popena; and the extraordinary towers of the Drei Zinnen come one after the other into view. As for the Drei Zinnen, they surpass in boldness and weirdness all the Dolomites of the Ampezzo. Seen through an opening between two wooded hills, they rise abruptly from behind the intervening plateau of Monte Piano, as if thrust up from the centre of the earth, like a pair of tusks. No mere description can convey to even the most apprehensive reader, any correct impression of their outline, their look of intense energy, of upwardness, of bristling, irresistible force. Two barren isolated obelisks of pale, sulphurous, orange-streaked limestone, all shivered into keen scimitar-blades and shark-

like teeth towards the summit, they almost defy the pencil and quite defy the pen.

At Landro, a clean and comfortable inn standing alone at the head of the lake, we stayed to feed the horse and take luncheon. Here we were served with excellent cold salmon from the Misurina lake, and hot cutlets. Everything about the place looked promising. The landlord and landlady and their son, a bright lad of about seventeen, spoke only an unintelligible kind of German; but were cheerfully disposed and most obliging. Thinking that it might be a pleasant place to put up at for a few days, we enquired about rooms; but every inch of the house was occupied for the whole summer by a large party, chiefly English, including a member of the Italian Club-Alpino. This gentleman, followed by a gigantic St. Bernard dog, came in while we were at luncheon, marvellously attired in a brilliant scarlet flannel blouse and high black riding boots; in which costume, followed always by his dog, he had that morning been up a difficult ice-slope of Monte Cristallo.

Luncheon over, we strolled and sketched awhile beside the fairy waters of the Dürren See—a lake into which three torrents flow, and from which no stream issues. Why it never overflows its banks, and where the surplus water vanishes to, are mysteries for which no one has yet accounted. There has been talk of hidden clefts and natural emissaries in the bed of the lake; but it is obviously unlikely, to say the least of it, that the supply and the drainage should be adjusted with such nicety. Why, therefore, the Dürren See is always full, and never too full, remains to be explained by men of science.

Of the three great mountains seen from Landro, it may be as well to mention that the Drei Zinnen\* (9,833 feet) has been lately ascended by members of the Austrian or German Alpine Clubs; that the Piz Popena (10,389 feet) was first achieved by Mr. E. R. Whitwell; and that the highest peak of Monte Cristallo (10,644 feet) was gained by Dr. Grohmann in September, 1865, from the Cristall pass, beginning on the side of the Tre Croce.

Starting from the Dürren See, the road again turns northward, and so runs nearly straight all the way to Toblach, a distance of about ten more English miles. Looking up the vista of this narrow glen from Landro, one sees the snow-capped mountains of the Pusther Thal closing in the view.

Returning to Cortina in the pleasant afternoon, we left the carriage at a point not far from the toll-bar, and strolled homewards by a lower path leading through fields and meadows and past the ruins of a curious old turreted château, one tower of which now serves for the spire of a little church built with the stones of the former stronghold.

Meanwhile there yet remained much to be seen and done before we could leave Cortina. We must see the Marmarole, hitherto completely hidden behind the Croda Malcora; and the Misurina Lake, famous for its otters and its salmon trout. We must go over the Tre Croce pass, and up the Val d'Auronzo; and above all we must visit Titian's birthplace at Pieve di

\* Of the three peaks bearing this name, only two are seen from Landro; but seen from behind as one goes up the Val d'Auronzo, all three are visible.



Cadore. Now it seemed, so far as one could judge from maps, to be quite possible to bring all these points into a single excursion, taking each in its order, and passing a night or two on the road. In order to do this, we must follow the Ampezzo valley to Pieve di Cadore; then take the valley of the Piave as far as its junction with the Anziei at Tre Ponti; thence branch off into the Val d'Auronzo; and from Auronzo find our way back to Cortina by the Val Buona and the pass of the Tre Croce. This route, if practicable, would take us the complete circuit of the Croda Malcora, Antelao and Marmarole, and could be done, apparently, nearly all the way by carriage road.

A consultation with old Ghedina proved that this plan was feasible as far as a place called the Casa di San Marco in the Val Buona, now accessible by means of one of the new roads in process of construction by the Italian Government. As to whether this road was or was not actually completed as far as the Casa di San Marco, he was not quite sure; but he did not doubt that the carriage could be got along "somehow." Beyond that point, however, the new way had certainly not yet been opened, and we, as certainly, could only follow it as far as it went. He would therefore send saddle-horses round by the Tre Croce pass to meet us at the Casa di San Marco; the carriage coming back by way of a cart-track leading round by Landro. With these saddle-horses we could then ride up to the Misurina Alp, and return by the Tre Croce to Cortina.

As regarded time, we could make our *giro* in either three days or two; sleeping in the one case both at Pieve di Cadore and Auronzo, or, in the other,

starting early enough to spend the day at Pieve and reach Auronzo in the evening. Having heard unfavourable reports of the inn at Pieve, we decided on the latter course.\*

The day we started upon this, our first long expedition, was also the day that began Giuseppe's engagement as our travelling attendant. We rose early, having ordered the carriage for seven A.M.—a roomy well-appointed landau, drawn by a pair of capital horses, and driven by a solemn shock-headed coachman of imperturbable gravity and civility. The whole turn-out, indeed, was surprisingly good and comfortable, and would have done credit to any of the first-class hotels we had lately left behind.

The Ghedinas assembled in a body to see us off. L.'s maid, mournful enough at being left behind in a strange land, watched us from the balcony. The post-master, the chemist, the grocer and the curé, stood together in a little knot at the corner of the piazza to see us go by. At last, bags, rugs, and umbrellas being all in, Giuseppe jumped up to his seat on the box, the driver cracked his whip, and away we went in the midst of a chorus of "*buon viaggios*" from the lookers on.

The first twelve or fourteen miles of road, as far as Tai Cadore, lay over the same ground that we had already traversed the day of our arrival at Cortina. At Tai, however, we turned aside, leaving the Monte

\* It would, of course, be easy to put up at Tai Cadore, where there is a perfectly unobjectionable little hostelry, about one mile from Pieve di Cadore. Persons intending to make a prolonged stay in the neighbourhood would have to do this; we, however, not liking the idea of turning back upon our road, preferred pushing on to Auronzo.

Zucco zigzag far below, and so went up the long white road leading to the hamlet on the hill.

About halfway between the two valleys, we drew up at a little wayside church, to see a certain miracle-working crucifix said to have been found in the year 1540 in a field close by, where it was turned up accidentally by the plough. Without being (as some local antiquaries would have it believed) so ancient as either the time of the invasion of the Visigoths in A.D. 410, or that of the Huns in A.D. 432, the crucifix is undoubtedly curious, and may well have been buried for security at the time of the German invasion under Maximilian in A.D. 1508. Since that time it is supposed to have wrought a great number of miracles; to have sweated blood, and so stayed the pestilence of 1630; and in various ways to have extended an extraordinary degree of favour and protection towards the people of Cadore. The little church, originally dedicated to Saint Antonio, is now called the church of the Santissimo Crocefisso, and enjoys a high reputation throughout this part of Tyrol. The crucifix is carved in old brown wood, and the sacred image is somewhat ludicrously disfigured by a wig of real hair.

We reached Pieve di Cadore about half-past eleven A.M.; delays included, and found the albergo quite as indifferent as its reputation. It was very small, very dirty, and crowded with peasants eating, drinking, and smoking. Going upstairs in search of some corner where we might leave our wraps and by and by take luncheon apart, we found the bedrooms so objectionable that we decided to occupy the landing. It was a comfortless place, crowded with lumber, and only a shade more airy than the rest of the house. A space

was cleared, however; a couple of seats were borrowed from a neighbouring room; and the top of a great carved *cassone*, or linen-chest, was made to serve for a table. Having ordered some food to be ready by one o'clock (it being now nearly eleven) we then hastened out to see the sights of the place. The landlady's youngest daughter, an officious little girl of about twelve, volunteered as guide, and, being rejected, followed us pertinaciously from a distance.

The quaint old piazza with its gloomy arcades, its antique houses with Venetian windows, its cafés, its fountain, and its loungers, is just like the piazzas of Serravalle, Longarone, and other provincial towns of the same epoch. With its picturesque Prefettura and belfry-tower one is already familiar in the pages of Gilbert's "Cadore." There, too, is the fine old double flight of steps leading up to the principal entrance on the first floor, as in the town-hall at Heilbronn—a feature by no means Italian; and there, about midway up the shaft of the campanile, is the great, gaudy, well-remembered fresco, better meant than painted, wherein Titian, some twelve feet in height, robed and bearded, stands out against an ultramarine background, looking very like the portrait of a caravan giant at a fair.

This picture—a gift to the Commune of Cadore from the artist who painted it—is now the only mural fresco in the town. Some years ago, one of the old houses in the piazza, now ruthlessly whitewashed, is said to have borne distinct traces of external decorations by Cesare Vecellio, the cousin and pupil of Titian.

Turning aside from the glowing piazza and follow-

ing the downward slope of a hill to the left of the Prefettura, we come, at the distance of only a few yards, upon another open space, grassy and solitary, surrounded on three sides by rambling, dilapidated-looking houses, and opening on the fourth to a vista of woods and mountains.

In the midst of this little piazza stands a massive stone fountain, time-worn and water-worn, surmounted by a statue of Saint Tiziano in the robes and square cap of an ecclesiastic. The water, trickling through two metal pipes in the pedestal beneath Saint Tiziano's feet, makes a pleasant murmuring in the old stone basin; while, half hidden behind this fountain, and leaning up as if for shelter against a larger house adjoining, stands a small whitewashed cottage upon the side-wall of which an incised tablet bears the following record:—\*

NEL MCCCCLXXVII  
FRA QUESTE VMILI MURA  
TIZIANO VECCELLIO  
VENE A CELEBRE VITA  
DONDE VSCOVA GIA PRESSO A CENTO ANNI  
IN VENEZIA  
ADDI XXVII AGOSTO  
MDLXXVI.

A poor, mean-looking, low-roofed dwelling, disfigured by external chimney-shafts and a built-out oven; lit with tiny, blinking, mediæval windows; altogether unlovely; altogether unnoticeable; but—the birthplace of Titian!

\* In the (year) MCCCCLXXVII, within these humble walls Titian Vecellio entered (upon) a celebrated life, whence he departed, at the end of nearly a hundred years, in Venice, on the 27th day of August, MDLXXVI.

It looked different, no doubt, when he was a boy and played outside here on the grass. It had probably a high, steep roof, like the homesteads in his own landscape drawings; but the present old brown tiles have been over it long enough to get mottled with yellow lichens. One would like to know if the fountain and the statue were there in his time; and if the water trickled ever to the same low tune; and if the women came there to wash their linen and fill their brazen water jars, as they do now. This lovely green hill, at all events, sheltered the home from the east winds; and Monte Duranno lifted its strange crest yonder against the southern horizon; and the woods dipped down to the valley, then as now, where the bridle-path slopes away to join the road to Venice.

We went up to the house, and knocked. The door was opened by a sickly hunchbacked lad who begged us to walk in, and who seemed to be quite alone there. The house was very dark, and looked much older inside than from without. A long, low, gloomy upstairs chamber with a huge penthouse fire-place jutting into the room, was evidently as old as the days of Titian's grandfather, to whom the house originally belonged; while a very small and very dark adjoining closet, with a porthole of window sunk in a slope of massive wall, was pointed out as the room in which the great painter was born.

"But how do you know that he was born here?" I asked.

The hunchback lifted his wasted hand with a deprecating gesture.

"They have always said so, Signora," he replied. "They have said so for more than four hundred years."

"They?" I repeated, doubtfully.

"The Vecelli, Signora."

"I had understood that the Vecellio family was extinct."

"Scusate, Signora," said the hunchback. "The last direct descendant of 'Il Tiziano' died not long ago—a few years before I was born; and the collateral Vecelli are citizens of Cadore to this day. If the Signora will be pleased to look for it, she will see the name of Vecellio over a shop on the right-hand side, as she returns to the Piazza."

I did look for it; and there, sure enough, over a small shop-window I found it. It gave one an odd sort of shock, as if time were for the moment annihilated; and I remembered how, with something of the same feeling, I once saw the name of Rubens over a shop-front in the market-place at Cologne.

I left the house less incredulous than I entered it. Of the identity of the building there has never been any kind of doubt; and I am inclined to accept with the house the identity of the room. Titian, it should be remembered, lived long enough to become, long before he died, the glory of his family. He became rich; he became noble; his fame filled Italy. Hence the room in which he was born may well have acquired, half a century before his death,—perhaps even during the lifetime of his mother—that sort of sacredness that is generally of post-mortem growth. The legend, handed down from Vecellio to Vecellio in uninterrupted succession, lays claim, therefore, to a more reliable pedigree than most traditions of a similar character.

The large old house adjoining, known in Cadore as the Casa Zampieri, was the next place to be visited.

It originally formed part of the Vecellio property, and contains an early fresco, once external, but now brought inside by the enlargement of the house, and supposed to have been painted by Titian in his youth.

The hunchback offered to conduct us to this house, and, having ushered us out into the little piazza, carefully locked his own door behind him. Here, lying in wait for us, we found the officious small girl with some three or four companions of her own age, who immediately formed themselves into an uninvited body-guard and would not be shaken off.

The hunchback rang the Zampieri bell; but no one answered. He knocked; but the echo of his knocking died away and nothing came of it. At length he tried the door. It was only latched, and it opened instantly.

"Let us go upstairs," he said, and walked straight in.

We followed, somewhat reluctantly. The body-guard trooped in after us.

"This way," said the hunchback, already halfway up the staircase.

"But the mistress of the house," we urged, hesitatingly; "where is she?"

"Ah, *chi lo sa?* Perhaps she is out—perhaps we shall find her upstairs."

Again we followed. It was a large house, and had once upon a time been handsomely decorated. The landing was surrounded by doors and furnished with old high-backed chairs, sculptured presses, and antique oak chests big enough for two or three Ginevras to have hidden in. Our guide opened one of the doors, led us into a bare-looking kind of drawing-room, and



did the honours of the place as if it all belonged to him.

"Ecco il Tiziano?" said he, pointing to a rough fresco which, though executed on the wall of the room, was set round with a common black and gold framing.

The subject, which is very simple, consists of only three figures:—a long-haired boy kneeling on one knee, and a seated Madonna, with the Child-Christ standing in her lap. These are relieved against a somewhat indefinite background of pillars and drapery. The drawing of this group is not particularly good; the colouring is thin and poor; but there is much dignity and sweetness both in the attitude and expression of the Madonna. The drapery and background have, however, suffered injury at some time or other; and, worse still, restoration. A small picture which the lad originally appeared to be presenting as a votive offering, has been altogether painted out; but its former position is clearly indicated by the attitude of the hands of the two principal figures.

According to the same respectable chain of local tradition, Titian painted this fresco at the age of eleven years. Mr. Gilbert, who knows more, and has written more, about Cadore than any of Titian's biographers, suggests that the kneeling boy is a portrait of the young painter by himself; and that he "commended himself in this manner to the Divine care" before leaving home in 1486, to become a pupil of Zuccati at Venice.

Meanwhile the hunchback entertained us with the history of the fresco; the body-guard stood gaping by; and the odious small girl amused herself by peeping into the photographic albums on the table. In the

midst of it all, a door was opened at the farther end of the room, and a lady came in.

To our immense relief, she seemed to take the invasion as a matter of course, and received us as amiably as if we had presented ourselves under the properest circumstances. It may be that she is in the constant habit of finding stray foreign tourists in forcible possession of her drawing-room; but she certainly betrayed no surprise at sight of either ourselves or our suite. She showed us some old maps and engravings of Cadore, a lithographed head of Titian, and some other worthless treasures; and when we rose to take leave, asked for our cards.

"I value them," she said, "as souvenirs of the strangers who honour me by a visit."

The hunchback now went back to his own home and we bent our steps towards the Duomo, always persecuted by the irrepressible little girl who, now that the hunchback had withdrawn, constituted herself our guide whether we would or no, and had it all her own way. She chattered; she gesticulated; she laid forcible hands upon the sketching case; she made plunges at our parasols; she skirmished round us, and before us, and behind us; and kept up a breathless rush of insufferable babble.

"The Signoras were going to the Duomo? Ecco! They had but to follow her. *She* knew the way. *She* had known it all her life. *She* was born here! See, that was the Prefettura. Would the Signoras like to go over the Prefettura? Many strangers did go over the Prefettura. Yonder was the schoolhouse. *She* went to school there. She was fond of going to school. Last week she had a tooth out. It hurt dreadfully—oh! dreadfully. It was

pulled out by the medico. He lived in the piazza yonder, nearly opposite the post office. This little house here was the house of the Paroco. She had an uncle who was a Paroco;—not here, however. At Domegge, up the valley. And she had an aunt at Cortina; and brothers and sisters—lots of brothers and sisters, all older than herself. Her eldest sister had a baby last week—oh! such a little baby; no longer than that! Would the Signoras like to see the baby? Ah, well—here was the church. The Signoras must come in by the side door. The great door is always locked, except on Saints' days and Sundays. The side door is always open. This way—this way; and please to mind the step!"

It is a large church, quite as large as the Duomo of Serravalle, unfinished externally; bare-looking, but well-proportioned within. The chancel and transept are full of pictures, some two or three of which are reputed genuine Titians. None of these, however, though all in the style and of the school of the great master, are so strikingly fine as to declare their parentage at first sight, like the great Titian of Serravalle.

It happened, fortunately for us, that the Paroco was in the vestry. Hearing strange voices speaking a strange tongue, he came out—a handsome, gentlemanly little man of about forty-seven or fifty, with keen well-cut features, very bright eyes, a fresh colour, and silver-grey hair. He at once entered into conversation, and was evidently well pleased to show the treasures of his church. His name and style are Don Antonio Da Via (Don being probably a corruption of Domine, a parish priest); and he has for fifteen years been paroco of this his native town. In point of taste

and education he is superior to the general run of Tyrolean pastors. He takes an eager interest in all that relates to Titian and the Vecelli; and believes Cadore to be the axis on which the world goes round.

The Titians in the church are two in number:—one a large, life-size painting containing four full-length figures; the other an oblong, also a figure-subject, half life size, and half length.

The first represents the Madonna and Child seated, with S. Rocco standing on one side of the group and S. Sebastiano on the other. S. Rocco points as usual to the wound in his thigh. S. Sebastiano stands in the traditional Peruginesque attitude, with upturned face, hands bound behind his back, and his body pierced with arrows.

The colouring has sadly faded; the saints are not very well-drawn; the whole design is poor, the treatment conventional, the quality of the work early; and yet no student of Titian could look at it for five minutes and doubt its authenticity. It is the figure of the seated Madonna that stamps the work with Titian's sign-manual. Here is the somewhat broad, calm face, the fresh complexion, the reddish golden hair that he delighted to paint his whole life long. It was his favourite type of female loveliness—that type which he developed to its ultimate perfection in the gorgeous "Sacred and Profane Love" of the Borghese gallery. Even the draperies of the Cadore Madonna, although the crimson has lost its fire and the blue has gone cold and dim, yet recall those other glowing voluminous folds, so impossible, so magnificent, which mark the highest ideal flight ever yet attained in mere *pieghi*.

The present picture was doubtless executed while Titian was yet a mere lad; but at the same time it bears internal evidence of having been painted after he had seen Venice and studied the works of the Venetian colourists.

Between this painting and the smaller one, there reaches a great gulf of time—a gap of perhaps fifty years. The first was the work of his boyhood; the second was the work of his age. He painted it, most likely, and presented it to the church, during one of his summer visits to his native hills. It hangs in the Vecelli chapel—a chapel dedicated to his own patron saint, S. Tiziano; and in that chapel, under that altar, it was his desire to have been finally laid to rest. He died, however, as we all know, in time of plague at Venice; and where he died was, of necessity, buried.

This little picture, by which the Cadorini set unbounded store, represents Saint Tiziano and Saint Andrew adoring the infant Christ, who lies in the lap of the Virgin. S. Tiziano, supposed to be a portrait of Titian's nephew, Marco Vecellio, kneels to the left of the spectator, in rich episcopal robes of white and gold brocade. Saint Andrew (a portrait of Titian's brother Francesco) crouches reverently on the right. Titian himself, bearing S. Tiziano's crozier, appears in attendance upon the saint, in the corner to the left; while the Virgin mother, according to popular belief, represents the wife of the painter.

The Madonna here is indifferently executed; but the Child is brought out into fine relief, and the flesh is well-modelled, warm, and solid. The great feature of the picture, however, is Saint Tiziano, whose handsome, brown, uplifted face, Italian features, rich

Southern complexion, and wrapt devotional expression, are in the master's purest style. The white and gold brocade of the Saint's Episcopal vestments and the subdued gold of his mitre, remind one, for their richness and solidity of texture, of the handling of Paulo Veronese. The head of Titian by himself in the left corner may be said to date the picture, and represents a man of perhaps sixty years of age. The execution of the whole is very unequal—so unequal as to suggest the idea of its having been partly executed by a scholar. In this case, however, the figures of S. Tiziano and the Infant Christ must be unhesitatingly ascribed to the hand of the master.

Besides these two pictures, the treasures of Cadore, the church contains several paintings by the brothers and nephews of Titian; amongst others, a Last Supper by Cesare Vecellio; a Martyrdom of St. Catherine by Orazio Vecellio; and, foremost in merit as well as in size, four large works in tempera originally painted upon the doors of the organ, by Marco Vecellio, the nephew who sat for the S. Tiziano in the altar piece already described.

These four paintings, said the priest, had been lying for years, neglected and forgotten, in a loft to which they had been removed when taken down from the front of the organ. It had long been his desire to get them framed and hung in the church; and now, after years of waiting, he had only just been able to carry out his design.

"A Tyrolean pastor has not many lire to spend on the fine arts," he said, smiling; "but it is done at last; and the Signoras are the first strangers who have

seen them. They have not been up longer than three or four days."

These four pictures measured some sixteen feet in height by about eight in breadth, and were mounted in plain wooden frames painted black and varnished. The outside cost of these frames, one would fancy, could scarcely have exceeded twenty lire each, or a little over three pounds English for the four. But Don Antonio had cherished his project "for years" before he was rich enough to realise it.

The temperas may be described\* as four great panels, each panel decorated with a single colossal figure. Of these, Saint Matthew and Saint Mark make one pair; the Angel of the Annunciation and the Virgin, the other. With the exception of the Virgin, which is immeasurably inferior to the others, these figures are, far and away, the finest things in Cadore. For largeness of treatment and freedom of drawing, the writer knows nothing with which to compare them, unless it be the Cartoons at South Kensington. The Angel of the Annunciation—bold, beautiful, buoyant as if just dropt down from heaven—advances on half-bended knee, with an exquisite air of mingled authority and reverence. His head and flying curls are wholly Raffaellesque. So is the grand head and upturned face of Saint Mark on one of the other panels, though sadly injured and obliterated. The Angel and Virgin face each other on either side of the transept, looking West; while Saint Matthew and Saint Mark occupy the same relative positions just opposite. "The Angel,"

\* No description of these grand designs is to be found in either Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *Histories of Painting in Italy*, or in Mr. Gilbert's "*Cadore*;" although this latter gentleman seems to have had a glimpse of them while stowed away in the gloom of the loft,

said Don Antonio, "was too far separated from the Virgin; but that could not be helped, there being no other place in the church where they could be seen to so much advantage."

Having done the honours of the Sagrestia (which contained several very indifferent old pictures, including a doubtful Palma Vecchio) Don Antonio led the way up a narrow stone staircase to the Vestiario, and there, as an especial favour, permitted us to see some antique embroidered vestments and procession-banners that had been in use on great occasions from immemorial time. Much more interesting than these, however, and much more curious, was a very ancient carved and gilded Predella, or shrine, in the florid Gothic style, surmounted by a dry, Byzantine-looking Christ, and constructed with folding doors below, like a triptych. The panels of these doors were decorated outside with four small full-length paintings of the Evangelists, in a clear, brilliant, highly finished manner, the heads and general treatment recalling the style of Sandro Botticelli; while inside, the shrine contained four richly canopied niches each occupied by a small carved and painted saint, very naïve and mediæval, like little Cimabues done in wood. This Predella belongs to a period long anterior to the Titian epoch, and adorned the high altar up to the beginning of the present century.

It was already long past the hour at which we had ordered luncheon when, having thanked Don Antonio for his courtesy, we again came out into the blinding sunshine. The insufferable little girl had now, happily, vanished; but she turned up again as soon as we re-appeared at the Albergo, buzzed about us all



the time we were despatching our uncomfortable mid-day meal, and was only driven off by help of Giuseppe when we went out again presently to sketch and stroll about the town and the castle hill for another couple of hours, before pursuing our journey to Auronzo.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AURONZO AND VAL BUONA.

Domegge and Lozzo—The Legend of Monte Cornon—Tre Ponti—The Antiquity of the Piave—The Val d'Auronzo—Native Politeness—Villa Grande and Villa Piccola—"L'Altro Albergo"—An unprepossessing Population—The Marmarole—A deserted Silver Mine—The new Road—Difficulties overcome—Val Buona—The "Cirque" of the Croda Malcora—Bastian the Solitary—The Misurina Alp—A Mountain Tarn—The Tre Croce Pass.

THE view of Cadore upon which one looks back from the bend of the road half a mile out of the town on the way to Calalzo, and again from the Ponte della Molina, about another mile farther on, is one of the finest of its kind in all this part of Tyrol. At the same time, it has in it very little of the Tyrolean element. Pictorially speaking, it is a purely Italian subject, majestic, harmonious, classical; with just sufficient sternness in the mountain forms to give sublimity, but with no outlines abrupt or fantastic enough to disturb the scenic repose of the composition. In the foreground we have the ravine of the Molina spanned by a picturesque old bridge, at the farther end of which a tiny chapel clings to an overhanging ledge of cliff. In the middle distance, seen across an intervening chasm of misty valley, the little far-away town of Cadore glistens on its strange saddle-back ridge,