

# **Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol**

## **Untrodden peaks and unfrequented valleys**

**Edwards, Amelia Ann Blanford**

**Leipzig, 1873**

Chapter XIV. Caprile to Botzen

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CAPRILE TO BOTZEN.

Choice of Routes—Goodbye to Caprile—Pieve d'Andraz—The Upper Valley of Livinallungo—Last Sight of the Pelmo—The Sella Massive—The Campolungo Pass—Corfara—A coming Painter—A Population of Artists—Ticini and his Works at Corfara—A Phenomenon—The Colfosco Pass—The Grödner Thal—The Capital of Toyland—The Trade of St. Ulrich—The Ladin Tongue—Relics of Etruria—The Puffer Gorge—The Seisser Alp—The Lang Kofel, the Platt Kogel, and the Schlern—The Baths of Ratzes—Descent into the Valley of the Eisack—Botzen—The Rosengarten once more—Farewell.

THE time at length came for leaving Caprile—for leaving Caprile, and the Dolomites, and the pleasant untrodden ways of South Eastern Tyrol, and for drifting back again into the overcrowded highways of Italy and Switzerland.

We were to re-enter the world at Botzen. All roads, perhaps, led to Rome, when the Golden Milestone stood in the centre of the known universe. So, too, all these central Dolomite valleys and passes may be said to lead, somehow or another, to Botzen. We had plenty of routes to choose from. There was the comparatively new char-road between Monte Latemar and the Rosengarten, known as the Caressa pass. There was the way by Livinallungo and the Gader Thal to Bruneck, and the rail, from Bruneck to Botzen. Again, we might follow the long line of the Avisio through the Fassa, Fiemme and Cembra valleys, to Lavis, where the torrent meets the Eisack and the road meets the railway, not far from Trent. Or we might make for the Grödner Thal and the Seisser Alp,

and strike the Brenner line at Atzwang, a little above Botzen.

We decided upon the last. It had many advantages over the other routes. It would take us first along the whole valley of Livinallungo; show us the Sella Massive from three sides of its vast circumference; carry us to St. Ulrich, which is to South Tyrol in respect of the wood-carving trade what Interlaken and Brienz are to Switzerland; carry us over the Seisser Alp close under the shadow of the Lang-Kofel, the Platt-Kogel, and the Schlern; give us an opportunity of visiting the Baths of Ratzes; and finally land us at Botzen in about a week, or even less, from the time of starting.

We parted from friends when we parted from the hospitable Pezzés, and went away promising ourselves and them to return again soon to Caprile. The morning at five A.M. was cool and bright; but we had already been waiting some days for more favourable weather, and the sky was still unsettled. The church-bells were ringing as we rode out of the village, and the usual procession of remonstrance was winding up towards the church. This time, they were going to pray for dry weather.

"Che! che!" said Clementi, contemptuously, "that is the way they do, Signora! The Paroco watches his barometer; and when the rain is near falling, he calls the people together to pray for it. Perhaps it comes down in the middle of the mass. Then he cries 'Ecco il miracolo!'—and, poor devils! they believe it."

As far as Finazzer's little inn at Andraz, our road lay over ground already traversed. Then we crossed

the torrent, left the valley of Buchenstein opening away to the right, and, skirting now the rising slopes of the Col di Lana, continued our course up the main valley of Livinallungo. At the large village known indifferently as Livinallungo and Pieve d'Andraz, we paused for an hour to feed the mules, and were served with excellent coffee in the cleanest of wooden rooms by the fattest of cheerful landladies. These people also are Finazzers, and their opposite neighbours, who likewise keep an inn, are Finazzers; which is the more perplexing as the one albergo is really comfortable, and the other of doubtful report. The good one, however, lies to the Eastward; that is to say, to the right of a traveller coming up from Caprile. The village, which is the Capoluogo and post-town of the district, hangs on the verge of a steep precipice, and stands nearly 1,500 feet higher than Caprile. The view from the church-terrace is quite magnificent, and not only commands the deep-cut course of the Cordevole from its source at the head of the valley down as far as Caprile, but brings in the Civita, the Marmolata, the Monte Padon (or Mesola), the Sella Massive, and a host of inferior peaks.

From Pieve d'Andraz as far as Araba—a dismal-looking wooden hamlet at the foot of the slopes below the south-eastern precipices of the Sella—the valley rises slowly and steadily. As it rises, it becomes barren and uninteresting. The jagged peaks of Monte Padon, emerging gradually from their hood of sullen clouds, show purply-black against the sky. By and by, the winding way having brought us, somehow, in a line with the Val Fiorentina and higher than the intervening slopes of Monte Frisolet, we are greeted with

an unexpected view of the Pelmo. Shadowy, stately, very distant, it closes the end of an immensely long and glittering vista. We see it for a few moments only, and for the last time. As the path trends inward, it vanishes—as the Civita and the Marmolata have by this time also vanished. We shall see them no more in the course of the present journey; and who can tell when, if ever, we shall see them again?

And now the huge Sella takes all the horizon—a pile of thickset, tawny towers, like half a dozen stumpy Pelmos clustered together. The mass seems naturally to divide itself into the five blocks respectively entitled the Boé, or Pordoi Spitz closing the head of the Fassa Thal; the Sella Spitz, looking up the Grödner Thal; the Pissadu Spitz overhanging the Colfosco pass, the Masor Spitz facing Corfara and the Gader Thal; and the Campolungo Spitz, dominating the Campolungo pass, which we are now approaching. As we strike northwards up the bare Col to the right, leaving Araba and the Vale of Livinallungo far below, we have these huge, impending bastions always upon the left.

The trees up here are few and stunted. The Alp-roses are all off, and only the bare bushes remain. The golden lilies, the gentians, the rich wild flowers that made most of the other passes beautiful, are all missing; and only a few scant blooms of Edelweiss hide themselves here and there among the moss-grown boulders. The mowers are at work, however, on all the slopes, getting in the meagre hay-harvest and singing at their work. First one voice, then another, takes up the Jödel. It is echoed and flung back from side to side of the valley, now dying away, now breaking out again,

sweet, and liquid, and wild as the notes of a bird—of which, no doubt, all these Swiss and Tyrolean melodies were originally imitations.

Now, as we near the top of the Col, new mountains come rising on the northern horizon;—the Santa Croce, or Heiligen Kreuz, a long mountain terminated towards the west with a couple of twin peaks, like a Cathedral with two short spires; the dome-shaped Verella Berg; and the Sass Ungar, or Sassander Kofel, which is, in reality, an outpost of the Guerdenazza Massive.

Just as we have reached the top of the pass and begun to descend, a long, rumbling peal of distant thunder rolls up from the Livinallungo side, and, looking back, we see the clouds gathering fast at our heels. Down below, in a green, lonely hollow, lies Corfara; consisting of about a dozen houses and a tiny church. The way is steep, and soft, and slippery—the mules can hardly keep their feet—the storm is coming up. So we hurry, and slide, and stumble on as quickly as we can, and arrive presently in the midst of thunder and lightning at the door of Rottenara's albergo.

The little hostelry consists of two houses, an old and a new. The new house is reserved for travellers of the better class, and contains neither public room nor kitchen. The family occupy the old house, cook in it, and there entertain the guides and peasant-travellers. The new house is made of sweet, fresh, bright pine-wood. The upstairs rooms are all wood—floors, walls, and ceilings alike. The ground floor rooms are plastered and whitewashed.

Who would have dreamed of finding Art in such a place? Who would have dreamed that the grave

old peasant covered with flour-dust who just now led the mules to the stable, was the father of a young painter of unusual promise? Yet it is so. Franz Rottenara, the son of our host, is an art-student at Vienna. The house is full of his sketches. The first thing one sees on going upstairs is a full-length figure of Hofer on the landing, done on the wall in colours, life-size, admirably drawn, with a banner in his right hand, and his rifle slung to his shoulder. In the largest bedroom, one end of which serves for a dining-room, hang some capital oil studies of still-life, and several clever heads in crayons. And down below, in a sort of lumber room where the wet cloaks are hung to dry, every inch of whitewashed wall is covered with graffiti—heads, arms, hands, caricatures, full-lengths, half-lengths, Frederic the Great, Goethe, Schiller, Mignon, Mephistophiles, Hamlet, the Torso of the Belvedere, the Fighting Gladiator, the Wild Huntsman, and many more than I can remember or enumerate. The pretty little Mädchen who serves our dinner is never tired of answering questions about “mein Bruder nach Wien.” He painted those two still-life pictures when he was here last summer, and the Hofer fresco four years ago. He was always drawing, from earliest boyhood, and studied at Munich before he went to Vienna. He is at home now—came home last night to serve his annual month with the Corfara rifle-corps—and has just gone over the hill to see friends at some neighbouring village.

Later in the day, when he returns from “over the hill,” the young artist, at my request, pays us a visit. He is not yet five-and-twenty, and is as shy as a girl. We talk a little about art; but as Herr Franz is not

very strong in Italian, and as the writer's German is limited, our *Æsthetic* conversation is necessarily somewhat dislocated. I gather enough, however, to see that he has all the steady industry, the patient ambition, and the deep inward enthusiasm of a German art-student; and I believe that he is destined to make his mark by and by.

Corfara is, of course, over the Austrian border, and its people are as thoroughly Austrian as if Campidello and Caprile were not each within a few hours' journey. Herr Franz is the only member of his family who speaks Italian. Neither old Rottenara, nor his daughter, nor any soul about the village, except the priest, understands a syllable of any language but their own.

The great surprise of Corfara, however, is its church. It is not wonderful, after all, to find a solitary genius springing up here and there, in even the wildest soil. Not many miles from Titian's birthplace we found the Ghedinas. In the valley where Brusetolon was born, we came upon the young wood-sculptor of Bragarezza. It is not therefore so surprising that Corfara should produce its painter. But it is certainly somewhat startling, when—having strolled out by and by after the storm has tailed off into a dull drizzle—we peep in at yonder tiny humble-looking church, and find ourselves in the midst of the most lavish decorations. Here, where one would have expected to find only whitewash, are walls covered with intricate mediæval diapering; shrines, altars and triptychs loaded with carved and painted saints, and gorgeous with profuse gilding; stalls, organ-loft, and seats elaborately sculptured; all in the most ornate style of early German

Gothic; all apparently new; all blazing with burnished gold and glowing with colour.

The sight of this splendour is so amazing that for the first few minutes one can only wonder in silence; and that wonder is increased when, happening presently to meet the priest, we learn from him that all these adornments are the work of the peasant population of the place—of those very haymakers whom we heard singing this morning in the hay—designed by them, carved by them, painted by them, gilded by them; and the pious free-will offering of their hands. It is a small place, and the inhabitants do not number more than 260 or 270 souls, children included; “but,” says the priest, smiling, “they are all artists.”

He is a gentlemanly priest, and expresses himself in “very choice Italian.” He speaks of Corfara in a smiling, well-bred, deprecating way, as “a lost, out-of-the-world spot”; and of the church, though one would think he must feel proud of it, as “pretty for so poor a place.” When I praise the decorations, he shrugs his shoulders, as implying that better might have been done with larger means.

“One good thing we have, though,” he says, “which the Signoras have not seen; but which I shall be pleased to show, if they do not mind the trouble of returning.”

So we turn back—this interview having taken place just outside the churchyard gate—and, re-entering the church, follow him to the back of the altar, where are a pair of painted doors now folded back out of sight, but brought round to the front, he says, in Lent, and closed over the face of the altar. These paintings represent the decollation of Saint Catherine, to whom

the church is dedicated; and, according to the Paroco, were executed in the XIV. or XV. Century by an Italian artist named Ticini, who, as the story goes (and it is always the same story with these village treasures) being detained at Corfara by stress of weather, painted these pictures and presented them to the church, in return for the hospitality of the priest. Beyond this, our Paroco has nothing to tell. He knows no more than I, who this Ticini was; when or where he lived; or whence he came. No mention of him occurs in the comprehensive volumes of Crowe and Cavalcaselle on "Painting in North Italy;" and his works at Corfara obtain not a line of notice in the pages of Ball's Guide, or of Messrs. Gilbert and Churchill's "Dolomite Mountains." I, who never even heard of him before, can only judge from the style of his work that he was a North Italian of the Bellinesque school. The paintings, which are of course on panel, are executed in a brilliant, crystalline, early style, and recall the work of Memling even more than the work of the Friulian painters. The Saint Catherine, slender, round-faced, and fair, is quite of the German type; while the exquisite finish of the costumes, the delicate use of the gilding, and the elaborate treatment of patterns and textures, remind one of Carlo Crivelli.

Four other paintings, also on panel, representing Saint Catherine and other saints, adorn the front of the altar. These works, deeper in tone, but evidently belonging to the same period, are supposed by the priest to be by some other hand. At all events they are all interesting; while the larger paintings at the back are unquestionably of rare beauty and value.

As we leave the church, two little girls come run-

ning after the priest, to kiss his hand; an act of homage which he excuses to us in his apologetic, smiling way, saying that it is the custom here, and that the children are "simple, and mean well."

Being now come to where the paths diverge, he wishes us a pleasant journey, lifts his little skull-cap with a courtly air, and turns away to his own home—a cheerful-looking white house with smart blinds and pots of flowers in the windows, and a fat poodle sitting at the gate.

Returning presently to the inn, just as the drizzle thickens and the light begins to fail, we encounter a Phenomenon. It stands in the little yard between the Albergo and the Dépendance, discoursing and gesticulating in the midst of a group composed of the Rottenaras, our guides, and a few miscellaneous men and stable-boys. It wears highlows, a battered straw hat, and a brown garment which may be described either as a long kilt or the briefest of petticoats. Its hair is sandy; its complexion crimson; its age anything between forty-five and sixty. It carries a knapsack on its back, and an alpenstock in its hand. The voice is the voice of a man; the face, tanned and travel-stained as it is, is the face of a woman. She is gabbling German—apparently describing her day's tramp across the mountains—and seems highly gratified by the peals of laughter which occasionally interrupt her narrative.

"A guide?" she exclaims, replying to an observation of some by-stander. "Not I! What do I want with a guide? I have carried my own knapsack and found my own way through France, through England, through Italy, through Palestine. I have never taken

a guide, and I have never wanted one. You are all lazy fellows, and I will have nothing to do with you. Fatigue is nothing to me—distance is nothing to me—danger is nothing to me. I have been taken by brigands before now. What of that? If I had had a guide with me, would he have fought them? Not a bit of it! He would have run away. Well, I neither fought nor ran away. I made friends of my brigands—I painted all their portraits—I spent a month with them; and we parted, the best comrades in the world. Ugh! guides, indeed! All very well for incapables, but not for me. I am afraid of nothing—neither of the Pope nor the Devil!”

Somewhat startled by this tremendous peroration, we go in, and leave her discoursing; and I don't know that I have ever experienced a more lively sense of gratification and relief than when I presently learn that this lady is a German. She is no stranger, it seems, at Corfara, but appears every now and then in this mad fashion, sometimes putting up at the Rottenaras for several weeks together. She paints, she botanises, and I think they said she writes. Giuseppe, who describes her as a Signora “molto brutta e molto allegra,” tells next day how she supped that night at the guides' table, and entertained them hugely.

The way from Corfara to St. Ulrich lies along the Gader Thal, through the village of Colfosco, and up a high and lonely valley between the Guerdenazza and Sella Massives.\* There was not a living soul in

\* The entire area of the Guerdenazza Massive is estimated at about twenty-two square miles, and its level at something over 9000 feet above the level of the sea. The Sella Massive cannot cover an area of less than fourteen square miles. The principal summit of this latter, *i. e.* the Boë, or Pordoi Spitz, ascended by Dr. Grohmann, is by him given at 10,341 feet. I am not

Colfosco as we rode through—nothing but a ghastly, attenuated Christ on a house-side, nearly as large as life, and splashed horribly, as if with blood, from head to foot. The whole village was out on the hills,—

“The oldest and youngest  
At work with the strongest,”

getting in the hay.

From above Corfara, and as far as the top of the pass, our path lay close under the tremendous precipices of that part of the Sella known as the Pissadu Spitz. The mountain on this side assumes magnificent proportions, preserving always its characteristic likeness to a Titanic fortress, and showing now and then, through clefts in those giant ramparts, glimpses of a great snowy plateau within, with here and there a blue fold of downward-creeping glacier, or a fall of misty cascade. As we mount higher, the last patches of corn and flax give place to a broad, desolate space of boggy turf intersected by a network of irregular cattle-tracks and scattered over with scores of wooden crosses. These mark where travellers have been found dead. They say at Corfara that this Colfosco Col is the most dangerous of all the Dolomite passes, and that the wind in winter rages up here with such fury that it drives the snow and sleet in great clouds which bury and suffocate men and cattle in their progress. There is also no defined path, and the bog is everywhere treacherous.

And now, the summit reached and passed, the Lang-Kofel rises on the left above woods and hill

aware that any of the other four summits have been scaled. In superficial extent, the Guerdenazza and Sella Massives exceed all other Dolomite blocks,

tops—a vast, solitary tower with many pinnacles. A sheltered gorge thinly wooded with fir-trees opens before us; the long-impending rain begins again, hard and fast; and the path becoming soon too steep for riding, we have to dismount and walk in a pelting storm down a steep mountain-side to Santa Maria Gardena, which is the first hamlet at the head of the Grödner Thal. Here we put up at a tiny osteria till the sky clears again, and then push on for St. Ulrich.

Our way now lies along the Grödner Thal, green and wooded and sparkling with villages. The Sella is gradually left behind. The Lang-Kofel becomes more lofty and imposing. The Platt-Kogel, like a half-dome, rises into view. The wooded slopes of the Seisser Alp close in the valley on the left; and the Schlern, seen for the first time through a vista of ravine, shows like a steep, black wall of rock, flecked here and there with snow.

Every last trace of Italy has now vanished. The landscape, the houses, the people, the names and signs above the doors, are all German. The peasants we meet on the road are square-set, fair, blue-eyed, and boorish. The men carry wooden Krazen on their backs, as in Switzerland. Unmistakeable signs and tokens now begin to tell of the approach to St. Ulrich. The wayside crucifixions are larger, better carved, better painted, and some are picked out with gold. By and by we pass a cottage outside the door of which stands a crate piled high with little wooden horses. In the doorway of another house, a workman is polishing an elaborately carved chair. And presently we pass a cart full of nothing but—dolls' legs;

every leg painted with a smart white stocking and an emerald-green slipper!

And now the capital of Toyland comes in sight—an extensive, substantial-looking hamlet scattered far and wide along the slopes on the right bank of the torrent. The houses are real German Tyrolean homesteads, spacious, many-windowed, with broad eaves, and bright green shutters, and front gardens full of flowers. There are two churches—a little old lower church, and a large, smart upper church, with a bulbous belfry tower painted red. And there are at least half a dozen inns, all of which look clean and promising. The whole place, in short, has a bright, prosperous, commercial air about it, like a Swiss manufacturing town. Here, at the Gasthaus of the White Horse, we are cordially received by a group of smiling girls, all sisters, who show us into excellent rooms; give us roast-beef and prunes for supper, and entertain us with part-songs and zitter-playing in the evening.

That night there came another thunderstorm followed by three days of bad weather, during which we had more time than enough for enquiring into the curious trade of the place, and seeing the people at their work.

For here, as I have said, is the capital of Toyland. We had never even heard of St. Ulrich till a few weeks ago, and then but vaguely, as a village where wooden toys and wayside Christs were made; and now we find that we have, so to say, been on intimate terms with the place from earliest infancy. That remarkable animal on a little wheeled platform which we fondly took to represent a horse—black,

with an eruption of scarlet discs upon his body, and a mane and tail derived from snippings of ancient fur-tippet—he is of the purest Grödner Thal breed. Those wooden-jointed dolls of all sizes, from babies half an inch in length to mothers of families two feet high, whose complexions always came off when we washed their faces—they are the Aborigines of the soil. Those delightful little organs with red pipes and spiky barrels, turned by the hardest-working doll we ever knew; those boxes of landscape scenery whose frizzly cone-shaped trees and red-roofed houses stood for faithful representations of “Tempe and the vales of Arcady”; that Noah’s ark (a Tyrolean homestead in a boat) in which the animals were truer to nature than their live originals in the Zoological Gardens; that monkey, so evidently in the transition stage between man and ape, that spends his life toppling over the end of a stick; those rocking-horses with an arm-chair fore and aft; that dray with immovable barrels; those wooden soldiers with supernaturally small waists and triangular noses—all these—all the cheap, familiar, absurd treasures of your earliest childhood and of mine—they all came, Reader, from St. Ulrich! And they are coming from St. Ulrich to this day—they will keep coming, when you and I are forgotten. For we are mere mortals; but those wooden warriors and those jointed dolls bear charmed lives, and renew for ever their indestructible youth.

The two largest wholesale warehouses in the village are those of Herr Purger, and of Messrs. Insam and Prinoth. They show their establishments with readiness and civility; and I do not know when I have seen any sight so odd and so entertaining. At Insam

and Prinoth's alone, we were taken through more than thirty large store-rooms, and twelve of these were full of dolls—millions of them, large and small, painted and unpainted, in bins, in cases, on shelves, in parcels ready packed for exportation. In one room especially devoted to Lilliputians an inch and a half in length, they were piled up in a disorderly heap literally from floor to ceiling, and looked as if they had been shot out upon the floor by cartloads. Another room contained only horses; two others were devoted to carts; one long corridor was stocked with nothing but wooden platforms to be fitted with horses by and by. Another room contained dolls' heads. The great, dusk attic at the top of the house was entirely fitted up with enormous bins, like a wine-cellar, each bin heaped high with a separate kind of toy, all in plain wood, waiting for the painter. The cellars were stocked with the same goods, painted and ready for sale.

Now, the whole population of the place, men and women alike, being with few exceptions brought up to some branch of the trade, and beginning from the age of six or seven years, the work is always going on, and the dealers are always buying. It is calculated that out of a population which, at the time of the last Census, numbered only 3493 souls, there are two thousand carvers—to say nothing of painters and gilders. Some of these carvers and painters are artists, in the genuine sense of the word; others are mere human machines who make toys, as other human machines make match-boxes and matches. A "smart" doll-maker will turn out twenty dozen small jointed dolls one inch and a half in length, per diem; and

of this sized doll alone Messrs. Insam and Prinoth buy 30,000 a week, the whole year round. The regular system is for the wholesale dealers to buy the goods direct from the carvers; to store them till they are wanted; and only to give them out for painting as the orders come in from London or elsewhere. Thus the carver's work is regular and unfailing; but the painter's, being dependent on demands from without, is more precarious.

The warehouses of Herr Purger, though amply supplied with dolls and other toys, contain for the most part goods of a more artistic and valuable kind than those dealt in by Messrs. Insam and Prinoth. All the studios in Europe are furnished with lay-figures large and small from Herr Purger's stores, and even with model horses of elaborate construction. Here also, ranged solemnly all the length of dimly lighted passages, stand rows of beautiful Saints, large as life, exquisitely coloured, in robes richly patterned and relieved with gold:—Saint Cecílias with little model organs; knightly Saint Theodores in glittering armour; grave, lovely St. Christophers with infant Christs upon their shoulders; Saint Florians with their buckets; Madonnas crowned with stars; nun-like Mater Dolorosas; the Evangelists with their emblems; Saint Peter with his keys; and a host of other Saints, Angels, and Martyrs. In other corridors we find the same goodly company reproduced in all degrees of smallness. In other rooms we have Christs of all sizes and for all purposes, coloured and uncoloured; in ivory; in ebony; in wood; for the bénitier; for the oratory; for the church-altar; for the wayside shrine. Some of these are perfect as works of art, faultlessly modelled,

and in many instances only too well painted. One life-size recumbent Figure for a Pietà was rendered with an elaborate truth, not to life, but to death, that was positively startling. I should be afraid to say how many rooms full of smaller Christs we passed through, in going over the upper storeys of Herr Purger's enormous house. They were there, at all events, by hundreds of thousands, of all sizes, of all prices, of all degrees of finish. In the attics we saw bins after bins of crowns of thorns only.

One day was devoted to going from house to house, and seeing the people at their work. As hundreds do precisely the same things, and have been doing them all their lives, with no ideas beyond their own immediate branch, there was an inevitable sameness about this part of the pilgrimage which it would be tedious to reproduce. I will, however, give one or two instances.

In one house we found an old, old woman at work, Magdalena Paldauf by name. She carved cats, dogs, wolves, sheep, goats, and elephants. She has made these six animals her whole life long, and has no idea of how to cut anything else. She makes them in two sizes; and she turns out, as nearly as possible, a thousand of them every year. She has no model or drawing of any kind to work by; but goes on steadily, unerringly, using gouges of different sizes, and shaping out her cats, dogs, wolves, sheep, goats and elephants with an ease and an amount of truth to nature that would be clever if it were not so utterly mechanical. Magdalena Paldauf learned from her mother how to carve these six animals, and her mother had learned, in like manner, from the grandmother. Magdalena

has now taught the art to her own grand-daughter; and so it will go on being transmitted for generations.

In the adjoining house, Alois Senoner, a fine, stalwart, brown man in a blue blouse, carves large Christs for churches. We found him at work upon one of three-quarters life-size. The whole figure, except the arms, was in one solid block, fixed upon a kind of spit between two upright posts, so that he could turn it at his pleasure. It was yet all in the rough, half tree-trunk, half Deity, with a strange, pathetic beauty already dawning out of the undeveloped features. It is a sight to see Herr Senoner at work. He also has no model. His block is not even pointed, as it would be if he cut in marble. He has nothing to guide him, save his consummate knowledge; but he dashes at his work in a wonderful way, scooping out the wood in long flakes at every rapid stroke, and sending the fragments flying in every direction. But then Alois Senoner is an artist. It takes him ten days to cut a figure of three-quarters life-size, and fifteen to execute one as large as life. For this last, the wood costs fifteen florins, and his price for the complete figure is forty-five florins; about four pounds ten shillings English.

In another house we found a whole family carving skulls and cross-bones, for fixing at the bases of crucifixes—not a cheerful branch of the profession; in other houses, families that carved rocking-horses, dolls, and all the toys previously named; in others, families of painters. The ordinary toys are chiefly painted by women. In one house, we found about a dozen girls painting grey horses with black points. In another house, they painted only red horses with white points.

It is a separate branch of the trade to paint the saddles and head-gear. A good hand will paint twelve dozen horses a day, each horse being about one foot in length; and for these she is paid fifty-five soldi, or about two shillings and threepence English.

I have dwelt at some length on the details of this curious trade, for the reason that, although it is practised in so remote a place and in so traditional a way, it yet supplies a large slice of the world with the products of its industry. The art is said to have been introduced into the valley at the beginning of the last century; no doubt, on account of the inexhaustible supply of arollas, or *Pinus Cembra*, yielded by the forests of the Grödner Thal, the wood of which is peculiarly adapted for cheap carving, being very white, fine-grained, and firm, yet soft and easy to work.

The people of St. Ulrich have lately restored and decorated their principal church, which is now the handsomest in South Tyrol. The stone carvings and external decorations have been restored by Herr Plase Oventura of Brixen, and the painted windows are by Naicaisser of Innsbruck. The polychrome decorations are by Herr Part of St. Ulrich; the large wooden statues are by Herr Mochneght, also of St. Ulrich; and the smaller figures on the altars and pulpit, as well as the wood-sculpture generally, are all by local artists. Colour and gilding have of course been lavishly bestowed on every part of the interior; but the general effect is rich and harmonious, and not in the least overcharged. Above the high altar hangs an excellent copy of the famous Florentine Madonna of Cimabue.

The dialect of the Grödner Thal, called the Ladin

tongue, is supposed to be directly derived from the original Latin at some date contemporary with the period of Roman rule. It differs widely from all existing dialects of the modern Italian, and though in some points closely resembling the *Rhæto Romansch* of the Grisons, and the *Lower Romanese* of the Engadine, it is yet, we are told, so distinctly separated from both by "well-marked differences both grammatical and lexicographical," as to indicate "kinship rather than identity of stock." Those, however, who admit with Steub the unity of the *Rhætian* and *Etruscan* languages, and who agree with Niebuhr in believing the *Rhætians* of these Alps to have been the original *Etruscan* stock, will assign a still remoter origin to this singular fragment of an ancient tongue. It certainly seems more reasonable to suppose that the tide of emigration flowed down originally from the mountains to the plains, rather than that the aboriginal dwellers in the fertile flats of Lombardy should have colonised these comparatively barren Alpine fastnesses. This view, the writer ventures to think, receives strong confirmation from the fact that a large number of sepulchral bronzes, distinctly *Etruscan* in character, have been discovered at various times within the last twenty-five years in the immediate neighbourhood of *St. Ulrich*. These objects, collected and intelligently arranged by *Herr Purger*, may be seen in his show-room. They fill two cabinets, and comprise the usual articles discovered in graves of a very early date, such as bracelets, rings, fibulæ, torques, ear-rings, weapons, &c., &c. Philologists may be interested in knowing that there exists a curious book on the *Grödner Thal* and its language, with a grammar and vocabulary of

the same, by Don Josef Wian, a native of the Fassa Thal, and present Paroco of St. Ulrich.

From St. Ulrich to the Seisser Alp, the way leads up through a wooded ravine known as the Puffer gorge. Weary of waiting longer for the weather, we start at last on a somewhat doubtful morning, and find the paths wet and slippery, and the mountain streams all turbid from the rain of the last three days. Neat homesteads decorated with frescoed Saints and Madonnas, and surrounded like English cottages with gardens full of bee-hives and flowers, are thickly scattered over the lower slopes towards St. Ulrich. These gradually diminish in number as we ascend the gorge, and after the little lonely church and hamlet of San Pietro, cease altogether.

Hence a long and steep pull of about a couple of hours brings us out at last upon the level of that vast and fertile plateau known as the Seisser Alp—the largest, and certainly the most beautiful, of all these upper Tyrolean pasture-mountains. Scattered about with clumps of dark fir-trees, with little brown châteaux, with herds of peaceful cattle, with groups of hay-makers, and watched over by a semicircle of solemn, gigantic mountains, it undulates away, slope beyond slope, all greenest grass, all richest wild-flowers, for miles and miles around. Yonder, to the South-West, the great plateau rolls on and on to the very foot of the Schlern, which on this side looms up grandly through flitting clouds of mists. A low ridge of black and shattered rocks, called the Ross-zahn, or Horse-jaw, from its resemblance to a row of broken teeth in a jaw-bone of rock, connects the Schlern with the North end of the Rosengarten range, as well as with

the Southern extremity of the Seisser Alp, and with the ridge out of which rise the Platt Kogel and Lang Kofel. But the Rosengarten is quite hidden in the mists that keep flying up with the wind from the side of Botzen.

The Lang Kofel, however, stern and solitary, with a sculptured festoon of glacier suspended above a deep cleft in the midst of its bristling pinnacles; and the Platt Kogel,\* crouching like an enormous toad, with its back towards the Schlern, show constantly, sometimes singly, sometimes both together, sometimes in sunshine, sometimes in shadow, as the vapours roll and part.

A vast panorama which should comprehend the Marmolata and Tofana, and many a famous peak beside, ought to be visible from here; but all that side is wrapt in clouds to-day, and only the Sella and Guerdenazza Massives stand free from vapour. Now and then the curtain is lifted for a moment towards the West, revealing brief glimpses of wooded hills and gleaming valleys bounded by far mountain-ranges, blue, tender, and dream-like, as if outlined upon the sunny air.

But (apart from the view it commands of its three nearest neighbours, the Lang Kofel, Platt Kogel, and Schlern) the great sight of the Seisser Alp is—the Seisser Alp. Imagine an American prairie lifted up bodily upon a plateau from 5,500 to 6,000 feet in

\* Ball gives the Lang Kofel a height of 10,392 feet, and the Platt Kogel, 9,702 feet. The latter he reports as “easily accessible from Seiss, or more conveniently from Santa Christina in the Grödner Thal.” The Lang Kofel was ascended for the first time by Dr. Grohmann in 1869; partly ascended by Mr. Whitwell in 1870; and again ascended to the highest summit on the 11th of July, 1872, by Mr. U. Kelso, accompanied by Santo Siorpaes of Cortina.

height—imagine a waving sea of deep grass taking the broad flood of the summer sunshine and the floating shadows of the clouds—realise how this upper world of pasture feeds from thirteen to fifteen hundred head of horned cattle; contains three hundred herdsmen's huts and four hundred hay-châlets; supports a large summer-population of hay-makers and cow-herds; and measures no less than thirty-six English miles in circumference—and then, after all, I doubt if you will have conceived any kind of mental picture that does justice to the original. The air up here is indescribably pure, invigorating, and delicious. Given a good road leading up from Seiss or Castelruth and a fairly good Hotel on the top, the Seisser Alp, as a mountain resort, would beat Monte Generoso, Albisbrunn, Seelisburg, and every "Sommerfrisch" on this side of Italy out of the field.

The peasants of these parts preserve vague traditions of a pre-historic lake said once upon a time to have occupied the centre of this Alpine plateau; a legend which gains some colour from the fact that were it not for the gap of the Pufler gorge, down which the drainage flows to the Grödner Thal, there would at this present time be a lake in the depression on the summit.

Having wandered and lingered up here for nearly a couple of hours, we at length begin descending by the course of the Tschippitbach, a torrent flowing down the deep cleft that separates the Seisser Alp from the North West face of the Schlern.\* Coming

\* The height of the Schlern is only 8,405 feet; but it stands up in such a grand solitary way, and its precipices are so bare and vertical, that it looks higher than many a more lofty Dolomite. The easiest ascent is from Völs,

presently to a cheese-maker's hut a few hundred feet below the edge of the plateau, we call our midday halt. A bench and table are accordingly brought out and set in the shade; the good woman supplies us with wooden bowls of rich golden-coloured cream; the mules graze; the guides go indoors and drink a jug of red wine with the herdsman and his sons; the mists roll away, and the huge aiguilles of the Schlern start out grandly from above the woods behind the châlet.

From this point down to the Bath-House at Ratzes, the way winds ever through fir-forests that exclude alike the near mountains and the distant view. About halfway down, we pass within sight of the ruined shell of Schloss Hauenstein, once the home of Oswald of Wolkenstein, a renowned knight, traveller, and Minnesinger, who was born in the year 1367; fought against the Turks at Nicopolis in 1396; was present at the storming of Ceuta in 1415; encountered innumerable perils by land and sea in the Crimea, in Armenia, Persia, Asia Minor, Italy, Spain, England, Portugal, and the Holy Land; and died here in the castle of Hauenstein in the year 1445. He was buried in the church of the famous Abbey of Neustift near Brixen, where his tomb may be seen to this day. His love-songs, hymns, and historical ballads are published at Innspruck, collated from the only three ancient MS. copies extant, one of which belongs to the

and the view from the top, though said not to be so complete as that from the Ritterhorn nearer Botzen, is extremely fine, and comprises the Adamello, Ortler, Oetzthal, and Antholzer Alps. The South Eastern horizon, however, and consequently all the Primiero Dolomites, are concealed by the near mass of the Rosengarten. "No mountain in the Alps has acquired so great a reputation among botanists for the richness of its flora, and the number of rare plants it produces, as the Schlern."—Ball's *Eastern Alps*, p. 484.

present Count Wolkenstein, one to the Imperial Library at Vienna, and one to the Ferdinandeum at Innsbruck.

A more rough and primitive place than the little Bath-House of Ratzes it would be difficult to conceive. It lies at the foot of those tremendous aiguilles which we saw just now from the herdsman's chalet, but we have come down some 1800 feet since then, and now find ourselves at the doors of a building that can only be described as two large wooden chalets united by a covered gallery. The bath-rooms occupy the ground-floor, and the bedrooms the two upper storeys. A tiny chapel; a small bowling-ground; one large general Speise-Saal, where eating, smoking and card-playing are going on all day long; and a tumble-down Dépendance about three hundred yards off for the reception of the humbler class of patients, complete the catalogue of the attractions and resources of Ratzes. What the accommodation in that Dépendance may be like it is impossible to conjecture; for here in the "Establishment," a small bedroom measuring ten feet by eight, containing a straw-stuffed bed, a wooden tub, a chair, a table, a looking-glass the size of a small octavo volume, and no scrap of carpet or curtain of any kind, is the best lodging they have to offer.

The mistress of Ratzes—a lively, clear-headed, business-like widow, with nine children—makes up seventy beds in the Bath-House, and could find occupants for seventy more if she had more space. Her customers are for the most part small tradesmen and their families from Botzen, and peasant-farmers from the neighbouring villages. Two springs, one im-

pregnated with iron and the other with sulphur, supply these visitors with baths and medicine. There is a priest in daily attendance, but no doctor; and the patients appear to choose their springs at hap-hazard. The baths are of the simplest kind—mere pine-wood boxes coffin-shaped, with wooden lids just reaching to the chin of the occupant, and a wooden shelf inside to support the back of his head. These boxes, ranged side by side in rows of eight or ten, fill a succession of gloomy, low-roofed basement chambers, and look exactly like rows of coffins in a series of dismal vaults. This impression is heightened very horribly when the unwary stranger, peeping timidly in, as I did, through a wide-open door, sees a head solemnly peering up from a coffin-lid in a dark corner, and hears a guttural voice saying in sepulchral accents:—"Guten Abend."

One night at Ratzes is enough, and more than enough, to satisfy the most curious traveller. Of its clatter, its tobacco-smoke, its over-crowded discomfort, its rough accommodation, one has in truth no right to complain. The place, such as it is, suits those by whom it is frequented. We who go there neither for sulphur, nor iron, nor to escape from the overpowering heat of Botzen, are, after all, intruders, and must take things as we find them.

We leave Ratzes the next morning at half-past nine, having to be down at Atzwang by two P.M. to catch the train for Botzen. The morning is magnificent; but we are all sad to-day, for it is our last journey with the two Nesselts. The path winds at first among fir-forests, rounding the base of the great Aiguilles, and passing a ghastly cleft of ravine down

which a huge limb of the Schlern crashed down headlong, only twelve years back, strewing the gorge, the pastures, and all the mountain slope with masses of gigantic débris.

Now, still and always descending, we pass farms, hamlets and churches; pear and cherry orchards; belts of reddening wheat and bearded barley; and come at last to an opening whence there is a famous view. From here we look over three great vistas of valley—Northward up the Kunters Weg as far as Brixen and the Brenner; Southward towards Trient and the Val di Non; North-Westward along the wide path of the upper Etsch in the direction of Meran. At the bottom of a deep trench between tremendous walls of cliff, close down beneath our feet as it seems, flows wide and fast the grey tide of the Eisack. The high-road that leads straight to Verona shows like a broad white line on this side of the river; the railway, a narrow black line burrowing here and there through tiny rabbit-holes of tunnel, runs along the other. A whole upper-world of green hills, pasture alps, villages, churches, corn-lands and pine-forests, lies spread out like a map along the plateaus out of which those three valleys are hewn; and beyond this upper world rises yet a higher—all mountain-summits, faint and far-distant.

From this point the path becomes a steep and sudden zigzag. It is all down—down—down. Presently we come upon the first vineyard, and hear the shrill cry of the first cicala. And now the rushing sound of the Eisack comes up through the trees; and now we are down in the valley—crossing the covered bridge—dismounting at the station. Here is Atzwang; here

is the railway; here is the hot, dusty, busy, dead-level World of Commonplace again!

At Atzwang we part from Clementi and the mules. Giuseppe going on with us to Botzen. Clementi is very loath to say goodbye; and L. "albeit unused to the melting mood," exchanges quite affecting adieux with fair Nessel. As for dark Nessel, callous to the last, he shakes his ears and trots off quite gaily, evidently aware that he has finally got rid of me, and rejoicing in the knowledge.

And now, arriving at Botzen, we arrive also at the end of our midsummer ramble. For a week we linger on in this quaint old mediæval town—for a week the pinnacles of the Schlern and the grand façade of the Rosengarten yet look down upon us from the heights beyond the Eisack. As long as we can stroll out every evening to the old bridge down behind the Cathedral and see the sunset crimsoning those mighty precipices, we feel that we have not yet parted from them wholly. They are our last Dolomites; and from that bridge we bid them farewell.

THE END.

