FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER FROM ITALY.

A Visit to Pisa—The Journey from Florence—The Sights of Pisa—The Leaning Tower—The Campo Santo, Cathedral, &c., &c.

[Correspondence of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.]

FLORENCE, February, 1870.—A day at Pisa—or, at least, a part of a day—for we went down from Florence in the morning and returned at night. But then a small part of some days is worth the whole of other days, and the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy, might have made whole weeks that preceded it. For of all winters on record this has been the most dismal at Florence, and is pronounced by "the oldest inhabitant" (for that venerable personage is spending the winter here for the benefit of his much-impaired health) "an exceptional winter." So when after rain, rain, for many days, the rain became a snowstorm, and the snow became slush, and the slush became mud, and all the world was out of patience, and then the sun displayed a smiling face, we had "one of the days you read about," as the boys used to say when we were a boy too—one of the days that made us feel as though "we were a boy again," as we have often heard ladies wish (in song) they were. And that was the day we went to Pisa; and, therefore, though our "Day at Pisa" was only a part of a day, say we was all of it "a day," as if it had been a whole day?

And first we went to the depot in a carriage—first of three ladies and ourself. And even the carriage-ride was a harbinger of good; for the driver smiled when we got in, and we smiled, for we had had our breakfast, and were off in good time. As we drove across the Arno, which had lately been swollen in wrath, but now rippled peacefully along, as though he had gotten the better of it, and was determined to be a good river from henceforth, the pavements smoked under the genial influence of old Sol, and sent up clouds of incense for the further appeasement of the angry god; and the driver touched his hat when we gave him his regular fare, supplemented by a trifling *buona mano*, and wished us a good journey, instead of vociferously demanding more, as is the habit of this gentry all the world over. We were "on time," and the cars were on time, and all went merry as the proverbial marriage-bell, simply because the sun shone—which he was much for doing.

And here, albeit our *forte* is not rhetoricsplitting, let us pause for a moment, and reflect upon the happy state of the world if all things and all persons did that for which they were made. Then the "bird that could sing and wouldn't sing" would no longer vex his owner. The horse that was brought to the water to drink, would drink. The boy that would learn would no longer be threatened with the gallows by his irate master because he wouldn't learn; and Mother Goose's melody about the pig and the dog, and the stick and the fire, and the water and the ox, and so forth, which all refused to do what they were made for, and so got an old lady into no end of troubles, would not be required to "teach our Senators wisdom."

When we had gotten so far in our meditations, the whistle—a good American whistle—gave a screech, and we rolled out of the capacious Florentine depot into the sunshine, on our way to Pisa. Presently we passed through the gap in the city's walls through which the railroad had made its way into town, and were fairly in the country. On one side were the Appennines, with snow-covered tops; on the other, the turbid Arno; while near at hand were fields and vineyards and orchards, whose forlorn look as though they had just emerged from a very thorough bath—as indeed, they had—and were half inclined to except against a repetition of the dose. On the river's few small boats were being towed by men towards the city, or were laboriously propelled by poles against the rapid current. On the river's banks were trees four or five deep, planted in straight lines, to bind them and keep them from being washed away by the floods, and forming what a Frenchman would consider a forest as it *ought* to be, and not that thing called a forest, such as Nature makes, with all the trees irregularly placed. "In fact," said Nellie, to whom we made the above remark, "a Frenchman thinks that he could have arranged the world a great deal better than it has been arranged, and it was a great mistake not to consult him about it before everything was done in its present left-handed fashion."

Nellie, you will observe, is a young lady of very decided views; but a charming young lady, nevertheless; and when it was suggested to her that other people, not Frenchmen, thought that they, too, could have arranged matters much better than they were arranged, she melted into penitence at once, and usually called our attention to the manner in which the fields are divided by a deep ditch instead of a fence; and how trees are planted on both sides of the ditch, and how grapevines climb up the trees and are led from tree to tree, forming festoons, which must be beautiful to look at "when summer is green;" and how occasional large channels, much higher than the fields, lead the water, which is caught from the Arno by the river dam at Florence, all through the valley, which water, let into canals, serves to irrigate the fields during dry weather and then she wondered that the poor men who were spading in the fields were not relieved by horses and ploughs, such as we have at home; only they are not much in use there on this sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy, for the fields are all frozen up yet, and will remain so for some weeks. By such converse and observations we beguiled the time till we rolled into the walls of the depot at Pisa, just one hour and fifty minutes from Florence.

There were assaults by the carriage-drivers, and two other persons, professing to be guides to the wonders of Pisa. One of these latter was voluble in French, and the other in cards, which he thrust into our hands while on our way to the carriage and into our laps when seated. Both protested that the Cathedral, the celebrated Leaning Tower, the Baptistery and the Campo Santo were all locked up, and they alone had the keys. Although dismayed by their intelligence, we had the nerve to decline their services, and drove off in haste to see the wonders of the city.

A few minutes brought us to the city wall, stretching long and high into the perspective, where Florentine and Genoese, in days gone by, had pounded away for years, and died or conquered, for the mastery. These walls must have been formidable before the days of heavy cannon, for their massive blocks would soon crumble under the fire of modern artillery. Thence we passed into the city—a busy, bustling place, where people have work even time to beg. The streets presented an unexpected activity. The stores seem meant for business and not for show. As we drove a few squares down the bank of the Arno we observed no tempting fare exposed to popular view in front of their shops, no idlers seeking listlessly into the river. Every person seemed to have something to do, and to be doing it as well as he could. Presently we turned square into the town, as it was necessary to cross it to reach the Campanile, which is placed off in the northwest corner.

Being in a hurry we soon got behind a heavily-laden cart, which was sorely hindered by other carts from going as fast as it might have gone. The strong of people who warranted everywhere save on the sidewalks impeded us greatly. Especially at the narrow place was our patience sorely exercised. Nevertheless, we found amusement in watching the women cheapening the meat and vegetables with numerous and graceful, though earnest, gestures. "Mutton grows," as Dickens calls them, were not numerous; yet their proprietors had no time to take much of an airing beneath their shade, for customers were in plenty, and purchases, if not large, were numerous. The clothes hung up for sale were evidently intended more for use than for show, and the purchasers were not the people of fashion whom one sees at Nice or Florence, but people who mean business.

Finally, the everlasting cart turned with a melodious creak down a side street, and we made our way with more speed towards our destination. A curve, an elbow, a straight line, and they said: "Why, it don't look at all!" So we knew we were approaching the famed monument which had served to illustrate our juvenile geography and history, and in our college days had been called by the "professor lecturing on architecture" the Eighth Wonder of the World. There it was, stumpy at first, because it was so much bigger around than we had imagined, but seeming to rise higher and higher as we approached, and at last rose *it seemed* more and more, until history and geography were justified, and the story, fact and fiction, and our trip was justified, and we concluded that we would remember the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy, as the day on which we saw the Eighth Wonder of the World.

There is no discount on the *leaning* of the tower. There may be on its height—which is not quite 180 feet—but not on its lean. If an Hibernician may be allowed, we were not disappointed as we expected to be. And if any subsequent visitor thinks with Nellie, as he approaches it from the city, that the "Tower don't lean at all," let him restrain his indignation at school-geography and guide-book makers until he walks around it, looking up when he is on the low side of the base, and then if, as he sees the tower actually scudding across it towards the Campo Santo, he is not satisfied, and *doesn't* feel as though the huge mass of masonry was tipping to its feet on his devoted head, let him go inside and peer up towards the bells; and if that doesn't satisfy, let him go up the steps, and when he has reached the third gallery, go out on said gallery and walk around between the body of the tower and the column supporting the second gallery above, where he will be about 80 feet high and will find no rail or guard to keep him from tumbling off, and then he finds himself going down hill one way and up hill the other way, his nerves must be pretty strong if he doesn't feel "a little queer," to satisfy himself thoroughly, he may repeat this experiment on the sixth story, remaining for a moment to look down on the lower side—only for a moment—that will be enough for any ordinary man—and he may then conclude with our fair friend that "it is awful," and all because it *does lean*.

There has been much controversy whether the *lean* is by accident or design; some holding that the tower *slumped* when half built, and, therefore, the upper stories were built more in the perpendicular, to counteract the sink. Others, who represent a number of persons struggling in a boiling pot while several weeks in which the Leaning Tower was a mere mass of masonry, were found in Roman sculptures and inscriptions—are collected in that place; and fragments of a chain, which the Pisans had used to blockade the river, and which the Genoese had broken and carried away in triumph, in 1362, and then restored in 1860 as "significant of a new era," are hung upon the walls. While we were examining these things, a couple of ladies were collecting flowers on the green which formed the court, unknowing that they stood on holy ground.

When it was time to go we called the party together and drove away; but before getting into the crowded streets, we looked back and saw this remarkable group of buildings, standing apart from the town in their own field, and confessed them beautiful in the bright sunshine; and when we heard the bells chiming from the top of the Leaning Tower, as we drove away, we agreed with Nellie that "we had had a lovely day."

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[Correspondence of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.]

PARIS, TUESDAY, Feb. 22, 1870.—The usual series of our customary spring-tide exhibitions of art, industry, &c., has this year, for the first time, been most happily and successfully illustrate our juvenile geography and history, and in our college days had been called by the "professor lecturing on architecture" the Eighth Wonder of the World. There it was, stumpy at first, because it was so much bigger around than we had imagined, but seeming to rise higher and higher as we approached, and at last rose *it seemed* more and more, until history and geography were justified, and the story, fact and fiction, and our trip was justified, and we concluded that we would remember the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy, as the day on which we saw the Eighth Wonder of the World.

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