

EUROPEAN LETTER.

Mr. W. S. Culbertson Describes His Travels through France and Italy.

Lyons, Marseilles, Pisa, Nice – the Latter a City of Beauty and Grandeur –
Genoa, Monte Carlo, Rome, and Incidents of the Trip.

Correspondence of the LEDGER

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My last gave you a glimpse of London and Paris. I will now give you a very brief resume of our trip from Paris to Rome.

The only cities of much importance between Paris and Nice, are Lyons and Marseilles. Of these two the former is about three hundred miles from Paris, and has a population of 400,000. Lyons is an enterprising business place and is noted as the most extensive silk, satin and velvet manufacturing city in the world. Here also are some fine picture galleries, though after seeing those in Paris they appear like very small affairs.

Marseilles, one hundred and fifty miles south of Lyons, is situated on the Mediterranean sea and is the main seaport of France. It is also a large commercial city, with a population of 350,000, and increasing. There are quite a number of towns on the rail road between Paris and Nice, many of them not more than a mile or two apart; most of the land is good and well cultivated and the country looks prosperous.

The next town of note is Cannes, on the seacoast, a place of much resort in the winter, as the climate is very mild, and the hotels good. There are many places of winter resort on the Mediterranean before reaching Nice. One is surprised to see the location of these towns, right up on the face of the Alps where the buildings and everything else are supported by immense stone walls; in truth it appears that the Alps and Apennines are walled or tunneled to Pisa, as between Nice and Pisa we passed through one hundred and sixty tunnels, some of them more than a mile long, many of them but a few hundred yards. The distance is about 250 miles, and though we traveled after night occasionally, strange to say we were not troubled with either smoke or cinders in Italy. I suppose they must have smoke and spark consumers, as I never saw a spark from the engines.

Nice is 670 miles nearly south of Paris, on the Mediterranean, and has a population of 70,000. It is a most charming winter resort, being to Europe what Florida is to the United States.

We never enjoyed any place either in Europe or America more than Nice. The hotels are numerous and first class, the mountain scenery, with the handsome residences built high up – the beautiful sea, the grand

Boulevard facing the sea, crowded with splendid turnouts, equestrians and pedestrians, male and female, is as charming a sight as it has been my pleasure to see for many a day. There are many very handsome buildings, public and private. The retail business street is one square back from the sea, and one will see as grand a display of the beautiful, including elegant diamonds and jewelry, as probably in any place of its size. The town of course is settled entirely by French and Italians, but English is spoken at all the hotels, and this is the case at every place I have been, either in France or Italy. I would advise any person visiting Europe not to fail to visit Nice if the time can possibly be spared. Let me also advise that if you purchase your ticket in London for a trip through the continent, do not purchase "second class" if you regard your comfort and happiness. In England second class will do fairly well, and very respectable people travel that way. In France second class cars are not so comfortable and the class of passengers is not so good. In Italy they are very common and the class occupying them are as common and rough as the cars. Another thing – don't take any more baggage than is absolutely necessary. In England and France a passenger is allowed fifty-six pounds and what hand baggage you wish to carry. In Italy they charge for every pound except what you carry.

One must not expect any salt in the butter nor any butter for dinner at any hotel in Europe; nor must one expect to have any vegetables handed with the roast beef, chicken or turkey, not even potatoes – which does not suit me very well, as I am very fond of potatoes with any roast. And just here, while on the subject of eatables, let me contradict an assertion often made that the water in Europe generally, but particularly in Italy, is so bad that persons are compelled to use wine either in the water or in place of it. I am now in Naples, the most southern point in Italy, and where the water is said by many not to be drinkable, yet I find the water here very good and not the least necessity for using wine. My opinion is that those who urge the necessity of using wine are fond of it, and consequently prefer it to water. I drank as cold and as good water in Rome as I ever drank in my life. Excuse this divergence, as I just happened to think of these facts. Will continue our trip from Nice to Genoa, Italy. After leaving Nice ten miles we come to Monte Carlo, the greatest gambling place in the world, patronized by men and women, and here many are financially wrecked every week. This place was started by the man who owned and conducted the great gambling establishment at Baden-Baden, Germany. Compelled by the German government to close his business there, he started Monte Carlo, and notwithstanding the town is hundreds of feet up the face of the Alps, it has been made easy of access by winding roads cut right in the face of the mountain and supported by heavy stone walls. Indeed all the buildings are supported in that way and are very handsome; the hotels are first class, and nothing

that money could do to make the place attractive has been left undone. The man died a few years ago and the business is conducted by his widow and two sons.

The next point of interest is Ventimilla, forty miles distant from Nice, and just over the border in Italy, where baggage is examined by custom house officers. The town is about 5,000 population and has nothing attractive to induce a stop over. The railroad from thence to Genoa leads along and through the base of the Alps, and though there is nothing that I can see to induce men to settle or to build towns upon the sides of steep mountains, yet the whole distance to Genoa is thickly settled and there are many towns. There is scarcely any land that can be cultivated; I did not see a plough used the whole distance, and where there did happen to be a few feet of land, the spade in the hands of women in their bare feet generally did the work. In a few places the mountains are terraced and grapes are cultivated. We have been much disappointed in the fruit thus far, except the oranges we get at Naples; they are just fair, but do not compare with our Florida oranges. The grapes are not equal to ours. In truth I have not seen anything or any place that would induce me to change my Hoosier home. I am proud of being a citizen of the United States of America.

Americans are highly esteemed in Europe. Men with whom I have conversed and who have never been in the United States, appear to have a thorough knowledge of our great progress as a nation, of many things in regard to our laws, progress of cities, opening of new tracts of country by railroads, and our vast resources as an agricultural country. An Englishman whom I met in Rome, who has never visited the United States, was speaking of our resources, and I remarked that we could live very nicely within ourselves. He replied, "Yes, you could, and very near feed the world." This is another digression in getting to Genoa which I hope will be excused.

Well, we are safe at Genoa, after a very pleasant ride of eight hours, as ours was an accommodation train, and consequently made many stops, which suited us exactly, as we wished to see as much of the people, towns, &c., as we could in passing through. Express trains go through in 5½ hours. Genoa is the first sea port we reach in entering Italy. It has a population of 140,000, is situated on the Mediterranean and is a port of entry. It may truly be called a city of palaces. Many years ago it was the seat of government and consequently occupied largely by the nobility. The King's palace is still in good condition and kept just as if he still resided there, although he has not been there for six years – he and the Queen making a short visit at that time. We were shown every room in the building, including those occupied by the King and Queen on their last visit – everything just as it was at that time. The grandeur of the drawing rooms, reception rooms, picture and sculpture galleries, with their

contents, including superb frescoing, is more than I am able to describe. Suffice it to say that everything that genius, art or money could do has been done to beautify the place. The same may be said of the Balbi, Nazro, Durazzo and Brignoli palaces, in some of which the families still reside, but visitors are shown through all except a few rooms.

Genoa being the birth place of Columbus, his memory is greatly revered. The city has erected in one of the public squares a very grand monument to his memory, on which he appears as large as life. We saw marble statues and busts of him in every palace we visited and in most of the public places. There are many churches in Genoa. The most famous is the Cathedral, because of its immense size and great antiquity, having been finished in the Eleventh century. It has some very large paintings and fine statuary. Much the most beautiful church in Genoa is the Annunziata. Its entire finish is superb, the frescoing of the ceiling the most beautiful I have seen in Europe.

The Cemetery of Genoa is entirely different from any in our country. The enclosure is about fifty acres, the whole surrounded by a richly carved marble wall, supported by very handsome marble pillars. The part enclosed and covered with a rounding marble ceiling is about one hundred feet wide, and most of the distance two stories high. The open space is for burying the poor and the protected part for the rich, and here may be found some as beautiful sculpture and monuments as there are in Italy.

There are several Protestant churches in Genoa. We attended the Scotch Presbyterian on Sabbath – a neat, plain building, but it was not well filled. We heard a very good sermon and enjoyed the services very much. Since Victor Emmanuel took charge of affairs in Italy Protestant churches have been established in every town and city.

The hotels in Genoa are numerous and I am informed generally fairly well kept for Europe. We stopped at the Grand and were well treated. This hotel, as well as several others, was built and occupied as palaces. Our room was 36 feet long, 27 feet wide, and the ceiling thirty feet high and beautifully frescoed. All the hotels are kept on the European plan; have restaurants attached in which one can get what he wants at any time; they all have a late dinner from 6 to 7 o'clock, varying at different places, but none earlier than six, at which they are glad to have you dine, costing, without wine, from five to seven and a half francs, or \$1 to \$1.50. The dinners do not compare with the dinners at our good hotels. You Americans who are fond of and think you can't live without hot biscuits, buckwheat and griddle cakes, &c., had better stay at home, for you will not get one in Europe.

I don't have an exalted opinion of Italians. The poor are very poor, generally very indolent and will not work if they can help it. I must confess that I did not find many beggars in Italy, except around the doors of

churches that strangers visit, until we arrived in Naples. There the streets are full of them, - men, women, children – and such persistent begging and beggars I never dreamed of.

From Genoa to Pisa, distance about one hundred miles, we follow the base of the Apennines, passing many towns built on the mountain sides. What land can be cultivated is done by hand. Pisa was once on the Mediterranean, but the sea has receded about ten miles, leaving Pisa an inland town. Leghorn is their nearest sea port. The river Arno runs through the town, and like the Ohio sometimes overflows, causing much damage. About twenty miles before reaching Pisa we pass the celebrated Carrara marble quarries. These extend nearly to Pisa, and employ thousands of men. The marble is a source of great profit to that region. Pisa is noted for its Cathedral and Baptistry – the finest in Italy – and also for its leaning tower. The Cathedral is simply immense and nothing seems to have been left undone that money could do to render it attractive. It contains the bronzed chandelier under which Galileo sat when he conceived the idea of the pendulum. Pisa was his home. The house in which he was born is still standing and was shown to us.

The leaning tower is a curiosity, built entirely of marble, is upwards of one hundred and ninety feet high. Two hundred and ninety-three steps to ascend to the top. It leans thirteen feet and was built or rather commenced in the eleventh century but not finished till in the thirteenth century. There is no certainty whether it was the intention of the builders to so construct it, or whether the sinking of the foundation has caused it to lean.

Pisa is a clean, healthy town, and for its size well built. From here we go to Rome, the home of the Caesars – and get clear of tunnels, as the receding of the sea has left almost a level place, where there is much good land. There is one custom in Italy that I can't understand, and that is in almost every farm house – and some of them are very good – the first story is used as a stable. In this warm country I should think it would keep things lively, as fleas are said not to be scarce.

Will leave Rome, Naples, &c., for another letter, as I have no doubt your readers will feel that they have enough of this kind at this time.

This, March 18, we are in Naples. The weather is about the same as May with us. From our window we can see Vesuvius putting forth smoke and cinders, and to-morrow we visit this famous Volcano. To-day we went to the Isle of Ischia – a scene of desolation – and the horrors of the situation were not exaggerated in the papers. We have had a delightful journey since we landed and all well.

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