

old man off—his donkey. The driver,—as all Corsican and French drivers invariably do,—had cracked his silk into a series of snaps. These extravagant noises had frightened the old man's donkey, which had shied, and the old man had tumbled. The discourteous crowd roared at the misadventure. We stopped our "breck," helped the old man on, and, amid the renewed adieux of the crowd, we dashed up the narrow streets and soon were again upon the mountains. March had indeed changed her cap. Our view was clouded and a drizzling rain began. While in this predicament, and still undaunted, a singular caravan approaches. Down the mountain, upon Sunday too, rush an excited throng! Forty men are drawing a cart, by ropes, on which is a splendid millstone! A soldier is captain of the gang. A boy on a pony, decorated with ribbons, is dashing with them. Pell-mell they go, flushed either with wine or with the occasion. They are all in high glee, singing a rollicking song. Is this a merry-making of Ceres? Perhaps the stone was cut in some place inaccessible to donkey or horse? Perhaps it is a fête of the village handed down from the time of Dido's niece? Far down the mountain, till the throng passes into the village, we hear the shouts come up; and they are in strange dissonance with the Sabbath bells which peal below with sweet and sad vibrations.

Our ascent was not easy. Our driver said that the horses were fatigued. Even chestnuts had not tempted them to breakfast. We descend from the breck,—to walk. We find, even here, violets and a flower—a delicate, purple, bell-shaped flower—nameless to us, but very sweet, growing in the very road. The wind blows coldly. The tall ilex trees wave like feathers in the blast. Magnificent groves—the vestibule to the great forest—now appear. We reach the top of the

mountain in mid-afternoon; and, *facilis descensus*, we galloped like mad down into a valley; for though Evisa has to be reached by an ascent, still the last stage of the journey is down hill. We had a sight of a striped wild boar on the side of the hill, among the brush. So had the ponies. This sight helped the ponies more than the whip. The wind roared, and the ponies ran. The writer, being an invalid, in search of—sunbeams,—was huddled and hid under manifold wrappages by gentle hands. Our indefatigable driver braved the storm without overcoat and brought us safely through. We met but one human being on this route—a rough-visaged, brigandish-looking person in a coarse blanket, made dexterously into a capuchon, under which his diabolic face was hidden. He, too, was courteous, and showed us a short cut into Evisa. The town seemed deserted. The storm had driven even the chickens under the rocks and into the houses. Here we found the heartiest welcome from M. Carrara, who gave us his two best rooms, and his blushing wine, produced by himself in his vineyard at Porta by the sea. Although we had letters to M. Carrara, he had no advice that we were coming. When we asked what he could give for dinner, he replied, "Un poulet, c'est tout." Well, chicken is not bad. We suggested a variety in the shape of an egg, or omelet. "Oh, yes." We further suggested: "What will you do for us with only one chicken. It is nothing." This urged him to an adventure on roasted chestnuts. A lunch on Porta wine, pure as the blood of a goddess, and roast chestnuts, bursting with white seams and hot, to a hungry traveller! Can there be more cheer for hungry and storm-tossed travellers than we had of Carrara's poulet? We shall see. The storm comes on, the hail beats, the snow fills this upper air. The sunbeams do not appear; but what is more grateful,

the dinner does! Here is our menu in the wilderness of Corsica:

*1st Course*—Chicken soup.

*2nd Course*—Poulet bouilli.

*3rd Course*—Poulet au riz.

*4th Course*—Poulet au champignons.

*5th Course*—Pommes de terre, fried in pig's fat.

*6th Course*—Une crème des œufs, (embryo chickens.)

*7th Course*—Broccio.

*8th Course*—Dessert, raisins, grapes, almonds, chestnuts, all fresh and racy of the soil.

*9th Course*—Une tasse de thé.

We crowed over that dinner—at least I did—and the ladies hid it away as a hen does her chicks under the wing. The females of our party discovered the china closet open and the neatest of china tea sets. We called for our tea in these delicate cups. But in Corsica they excel in chickens, but not in tea. They use cold water and only half draw the tea. We had been served with silver, too! The curious female asked how many families could boast of china and silver! “Only one or two in Evisa.” Remember our host is of the great Borgo family; and Evisa is a village of 1500 inhabitants. We discussed our forest trip; but M. Carrara said it was impossible. We reluctantly gave it up. We were wise, for we learned afterwards that the forest roads were blocked with snow.

When we rose in the morning the ground was covered and the mountains had on white caps. We waited till afternoon before we ventured further on our travel. It lay this time down toward the sea, to Porta and to sunbeams. This route was a continuous descent. The Corsican driver fairly rattles you down the mountain. His sure-footed ponies never leave the path. There seems to be no end to the tourniquets on this zigzagging road. Past beautiful cascades;

and pictures of green and brown—foliage and rock; past the most tempting flowers—all alone, upon this road to-day, we push down, down, toward the coast. At last we reach Porta, and are welcomed by M. Ruelle. Here are to be found iron-works and saw-mills; and here we saw droves of Lucchesi working immense gardens for the cedrat, a kind of large lemon used for confectionery in France. There was no other house in Porta but Ruelle's. He invited us to stay all night. Declining that, we, however, accepted an offer of his rare wines. We walked from his house to the coast. The sea was tempestuous. It was driving in foam over the Moorish tower upon the rocky eminence at the mouth of the River. We cast our horoscope for the day, and concluded to move on to the Greek colony of Carghese.

I would fain have rested here at Porta, if only to enjoy the luxury of the sky and air after our stormful experiences in the mountains. From the region of winter, where the hail dashed into our abode and startled chickens, cats, and human beings by its wild saturnalia, down, in a few hours, to the region of sun and olives, oranges, lemons, and all beauties of vegetable life,—this was worth a respite for a night, if only to indulge in the reflections incident to the vicissitudes of our one day. Think of it! We had been within sight and almost within a few hours' reach of Monte Rotondo. From that point, as I am 'informed and believe,' on a good, clear day, the whole coast from Marseilles to Naples is visible! To say nothing of a *coup d'œil* of Corsica, Sardinia, Elba, Monte Cristo, and Caprera, the human eye can play from the Valley of the Rhone, with its grand and castellated mountains, over the tall white peaks of Provence and Savoy, capturing the strongholds of Toulon and Ventimiglia; saunter amidst the orange gardens of the Duke of

Vallombrosa, at Cannes; surmount the Turbia Mountain behind Nice; clamber, without aid of donkey or guide, through the defiles above Monaco and Mentone; linger with Doctor Antonio and his love around the palm trees of Bordighera; get a straight view of the leaning tower at Pisa; catch a glimpse of the palaces and churches of superb Genoa; and follow the Maritime Alps, which hide the mulberries and vines of Lombardy, until the Valley of the Arno leads it by a silver thread through labyrinths of beauty to gorgeous Florence; thence the eye may roam to the Tiber, with a glimpse of the Pantheon which ‘Angelo hung in the air of St. Peter’s;’ and with the aid of a glass (I do not speak of the fiery Corsican vintage) rest upon the cones of Mount Vesuvius or float upon the richly-tinted and ever-sparkling waters of the Bay of Naples!

I do not know that this is an overdrawn picture of the fancy. Monte Rotondo has been ascended. Judging from the account of that ascent, it is practicable and will repay the exertion. The ascent is from Corte; by a bridle-path up the roaring gorge of the Restonica, through quarries of black limestone and marble, and into the granite region. Passing a few chestnut trees, the utter desolation which the peasant described to me as the caprice of the Eternal Father, begins. A few pines are to be found amidst the precipices and turrets, and other rocky phantasies of the old fires. The clear waters of the Restonica, which washes the boulders almost as white as the snows, still guide you until a pine forest is found nearly at the source of the torrent. You cross the stream, ascend a gorge to the cabins of the goat-herds, where you find milk, hard bread, and kindness. Resting all night, you must be up and *a-foot* to clamber still higher over the loose stone; thence by the Lake Rotondo and several other smaller lakes, into the region of snow.

The traveller is recommended to be at the summit by sunrise, as the whole island, 114 miles long—with all its sister isles and the coast from Civita Vecchia to Toulon—is to be seen. So says the account. This was not tested, however, by my actual observation. *A priori*, it would seem reasonable. I ought not to write of what I did not see. I reserve the rest of my *real* mountain experience for the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VI.

*CORSICAN HISTORY—MOUNTAINS AND COAST.*

**B**EFORE starting again, on our mountain journey, it would be well to understand better the historic associations of the isle. The origin of the name, as I have given it, is rather apocryphal. But we are not to be too particular where all is traditionary twilight. Another derivation is from Corsus, a son of Hercules. This is supposed, by some, to be a more ancient name than Cynos, the ordinary Greek appellation for Corsica. According to Fabius Pictor, Therapne was also a name given of old to the island; indeed it was the oldest name. A traveller along the shores of the Western Mediterranean, as far even as the pillars which bear the name of the demi-god, must be struck with the incredible 'labours' which Hercules is reputed to have performed. Not alone Africa and Spain, Gaul and Italy, but all the islands of the blue sea, have earliest associations with the divinity of Might and Muscle. Are those exploits an allegory? Does it not require enormous physical strength to overcome the obstacles to the occupation of a new country? What monsters were there not to exterminate in the pre-historic time? To Hercules, all the force and valour necessary to make the land habitable by man are attributed. For an unlettered people, in its nonage, this allegorical arrangement is convenient: superstitiously transferring to a single divinity the collective efforts of the founders of their race. It

saves the making of books—which is ‘a weariness of the flesh’—and, at the same time, honours the origin of the people with the divine ichor. Sallust politely derives Corsica from a Ligurian lady—Corsa. But I prefer the romantic derivation already given from Dido’s darling niece. Africa, and its Phœnician colonists, had something to do with the earliest history of Corsica. The Phœnicians colonized the island. It took the Romans a century to eradicate them, and to capture it. They began their conquest 260 B. C. Marius founded Mariana and Aleria.

Since my visit to the island, I have seen Mr. Murray’s little Guide to Corsica. In it he devotes scarcely thirty pages to the island. In conversing about the matter, he regretted the meagreness of the volume. I would hardly presume to add to or subtract from anything in his valuable compilations; but from one remark I dissent—that there are no other classic associations with the island, except those of the exiled grumbling philosopher, Seneca. I refer to the Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography, edited by Dr. William Smith, Part VI., under the title ‘Corsica.’ From the score of authors quoted, we learn all about its origin, name, products, forests, honey, wax, fruits, and history. We learn that it was never really subjected to Rome, but was in chronic revolt. The names of Marius, Scipio, Otho, Belisarius, and Totila, are associated with attempts to conquer it, down to the advent of the Saracens; but the most that was made out of the stubborn island was a little tribute in wax and honey. Thus we infer that the isle was ever fragrant. Again, we read that the Corsicans were longlived; and this is attributed to their use of so much honey. Again, this explains what we have seen here every step, the floral opulence of the island.



After Rome tried to hold the island, came Greek, Moor, and Goth. It is Africa and Spain over again, with their vicissitudes. A feudal aristocracy—called *signori*—sprang up in the middle ages. In the eleventh century Pisa obtained a footing; then Genoa, jealous and belligerent, in the fourteenth century. The war between Pisa and Genoa for Corsica is illustrated by the biography of Della Rocca. Until 1768—the year before Napoleon was born—the Genoese held the island, but always under a protest, with a fight on hand. Out of these fights came the heroes of the island. Their line ended with the splendid name of Paoli. In 1768, Genoa sold Corsica to France. In 1769, France defeated the Corsicans at Pontenuova. France held it, unsubdued in spirit, until 1786. The French Revolution came, and fused all elements, and to such an extent, that Corsica gave to France an Emperor—Napoleon; and that too, from the family of a patriot, who was the Secretary of Paoli! But why rehearse these events? My duty is in the sunlight, and on the road.

In closing the last chapter, we were on our way down the west coast. We are making for La Piana. The road soon leaves the sea and ascends again. On this route we had splendid views of mountains and sea-coast. All the fauna and flora were to be found, the former petrified by fire or worn by water in the many-shaped rocks, and the latter dropped deftly into every nook and crevice where water ran or birds flew. One of the attractions of Corsica is its endless variety of scene. We have bird, beast, and creeping thing fashioned by the accidents of the volcano, which heaved this isle out of the blue sea into the blue sky. And after the fires had done their work, the waters gave forth genii to shape the rocks and mountains into statuesque and grotesque forms. Certainly Seneca

either did not leave his tower at Calvi to go into the mountains, or else he was cross and unphilosophic, because of his exile: or else he was without refinement or taste for natural scenery. If not one or all of these, he would never have traduced Corsica so outrageously as he did in his *de Consolatione*. He was exiled under the reign of Claudius, and remained in Corsica six years. His tower is one of the monuments of the island. He even abused the water of Corsica. We know that in this he slandered the island. He described the island as utterly fruitless. That is hardly true now, and then there was more cultivation than at present. If there is one thing more than another which Corsica produces, and readily, it is fruit of every kind. Indeed, the orange and lemon are produced the next year after planting. Seneca says the island had no charming trees. He had never seen the evergreen oaks near Evisa, or the splendid larches of Aitone, or the chesnut groves of Castagniccia. They are indigenous, and must have been on the island eighteen hundred years ago.

Again, this philosopher says: 'She produces nothing which other people seek, and is not able to nourish those who cultivate her. What more has she than rocks? Where are to be found more privations? Where does man suffer more? What is more horrible than the aspect of the country?' I have no patience with this old slanderer. At the very time he was writing this libel, Rome was drawing on Corsica for many varieties of marble—the white equal to that of Carrara, the verde antique, whose beauty now decorates the Sistine Chapel—for grain and fruits and fish, and many other supplies. The fish in and around the island are those which Horace celebrated in song, and Lucullus served upon his table. I have seen the nets drawn upon these shores with a

miraculous draught at times, and seldom with a 'water haul.' The fish are gorgeously coloured—having all that the prism can give of hue and all the delicacy the epicure could desire. Green and gold fish, fish all a-flame, fish grey and silver, fish striped with bands of beauty, fish with fins and horns, and fish with black and white spots, and in fine, the devil-fish itself—are here used for food. Here is to be found the chanticleer of fish, *cog de mer*, with brilliant and blue wings; hard to catch, for he can fly out of the net. This chanticleer of fishes is a searcher after sunbeams; and that he finds them in the denser element, his vivid hues attest. Crabs are found here; oysters are plenty at Bonifacio; the languste, or lobster, is common; sardines, mackerel, soles, and whatsoever else is delicate for the taste and suitable for food. Seneca had none of the Apostolic—or Waltonian—predilections, or he would not have abused Corsica.

The people may have been then what they are now, rather independent and indolent; but why should Seneca depreciate what is the glory of Corsica—her rocks and mountains, which he calls horrible spectres—unless the cunning old courtier was home-sick and wanted to be about the palace. Doubtless he deliberately exaggerated the inconsolable state of his exile, in order to interest the Romans in his favour by drawing on their sympathies. He accused the Corsicans of being revengeful. He wreaked his spite for his exile on the people and the land; and even on the rocks. To him the rocks were frightful. Perhaps he had seen some of the grotesque and strange forms cut in the rocks to which I have just referred. May be he had visited the region of Monte Libbio, whose range seems like a wall of ruined towers, guarding one which looks like the hooded head and form of an old woman, and known as 'La Sposata.' Perhaps

he had been to Rocapina, upon whose headland the figure of a lion reposes, head up, one leg down, looking off to Sardinia—a wonderful piece of natural statuary! Perhaps he had seen the rock at the gate of Ajaccio, known as the boot of St. Peter. Perhaps he had seen the anvil-shaped Col dell' Incudine, or the finger-like promontory of the northern end of the island; or, perhaps, he worked up his frightful picture of this charming isle as the German philosopher did his camel, out of his own consciousness. One thing is sure, he could not have visited this part of the island where we now travel; for it would have extorted even from exiled cynicism a tribute to its cultivation, charm, and resources.

Not alone are these rocky shapes or mis-shapes so common as to attract the wayfarer; but upon them are hung, like garlands, many a beautiful tradition of weird story. There is one mountain, Talafonata, which has a hole in it, into which the sun when he gets up, tired with labouring over the Corsican alps, creeps in about noon for a siesta. The people of Niolo say, that the devil—who is represented as an agriculturist,—perhaps because agriculture is held in such low esteem in Corsica,—was one day ploughing with his team of oxen on Campo Tile. St. Martin was coming over the plain; and as he had prejudices against diabolism, he tried to exorcise the devil. A quarrel ensued. While Diabolus was engaged in using harsh language to the Saint, his plough struck a rock. I should not wonder at that at all, nor that the plough broke. The devil attempted to mend it, but could not. Getting as mad as the devil—does at times, he hurled his hammer high in air; it knocked a hole in Mont Talafonata. When he turned to look after his 'cattle,' he found them, by some Medusa-like witchery, turned into stone; and we saw,

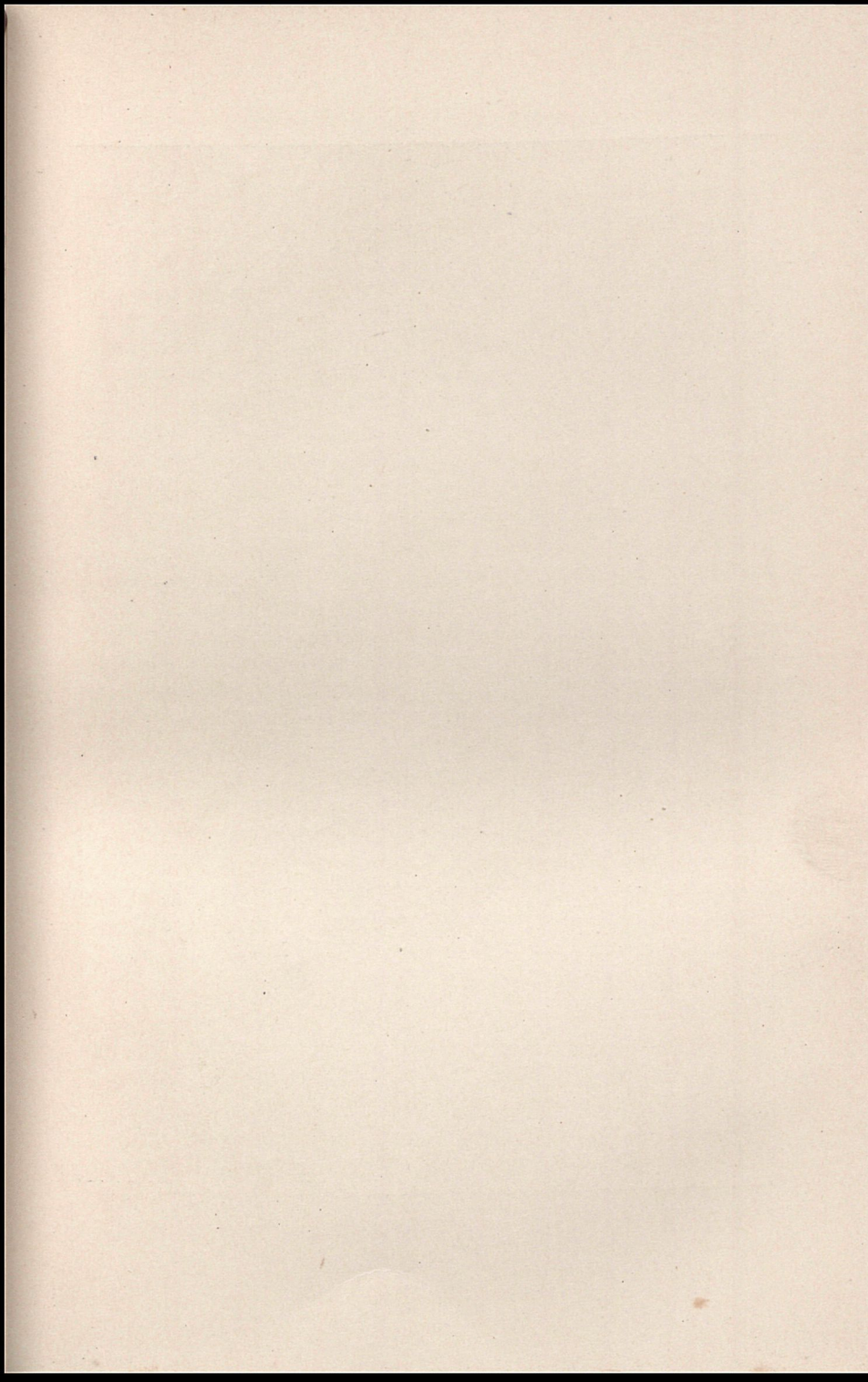
or fancied we saw, several yoke of petrified oxen on our way to La Piana.

When we reached La Piana, in the afternoon, the whole population, including some hundreds of children, came out to look. As we walked out to look at the sea, under the guidance of the mayor, they followed. He used his bâton to drive them back, in vain. After our view, we were invited into his house, and were there hospitably entertained. It was cool, stony, and clean. It had no cushioned chairs or sofas, and no glass in the windows; but it was hospitable and open.

We had no sooner entered this town than an apprehension seized us that we should have to roost out among the chickens. On looking at our memoranda—for no guide-books give us information—the only inn mentioned was put down as ‘bad.’ We had, on our entrance, luckily passed by it. One house in the main street looked comfortable. We ask whose it is ‘It is the curé’s.’ We are invited to occupy it, all thanks to the curé. We mount to the second étage by a steep wooden stairway, half ladder and half steps, and through the narrow and dark stony passages we reach the third floor. Our horses are stabled on the ground floor. The street is, happily, wide enough for our carriage to repose in over night. We have one chamber, and an improvised couch among the fleas in the ‘Salon de Réception.’ I must say that while Corsica has many virtues, and good food is one of them, the abodes are comfortless and dirty. A bright young boy, belonging to the hotel, and who would take no money for his courtesies, escorted us about the town after our meal. The curiosity to see us was still intense; throngs followed us in the streets, and every window was adorned with female heads. It had been bruited about that we were Americans, and

one citizen asserted that he had had the happiness to see the writer in Washington during the war. As that was not unlikely, we had an interview with this happy citizen. I wondered what could have taken him to America. He told us that he had been to New Orleans on a venture, and was caught there by the war. On trying to get North, he had been captured. As he could not speak English, he was taken before a general, whose name he could not recall, but he was a great astronomer! 'General Mitchell?' I asked. 'Si, signor.' General M. had questioned him, and finding no evil in him, let him pass through his lines to the North. This incident made him quite a hero. Under his conduct we visited the little church, of which the population were proud, because the altar had been given by the Empress Eugénie. The curiosity of these kind people may be pardoned for their hospitality. At dinner, the curé, whose chamber was opposite ours, sent his compliments, and a present of fresh and toothsome prunes, and then some wine. He spent the evening with us, smoking and talking. 'His people,' he said, 'were poor, but *rich*, as they did not require much.' Our beds were hard, though clean. Mine was designated as 'un lit de mariage.' Wherefore? Because the pillows were trimmed with embroidered ruffling. The sheets were very coarse, so as to feel cold.

While enjoying our after-dinner smoke and gossip, quite a scene occurred. In rushed upon us an insane woman, little, thin, and weird. The Madame of our party seemed to be the object of her attention. Before we knew it, the witch was down on her knees before Madame; and before we could understand what she was doing; she crossed herself, then made the sign of the cross on the forehead of Madame. Her incantations were in patois, and not to be understood.





DISGUISED BRIGAND.



We said to her, in Italian, that her language was unintelligible—that we could not understand her: ‘No matter,’ she replied, ‘the good God does!’ Finally, we were given to understand that she was divinely directed to have the benediction from the American Madame! Equal to the occasion, the Madame gave it with a touching pathos and out-stretched palms, that seemed to ‘satisfy the sentiment,’ and which, as an artistic touch, any histrionic Heavy Father would approve!

We heard no more of her, unless it was her voice, whose wild crooning awakened me at day-break, with a song so unearthly in its intonations and so sad in its moaning, that it made the heart ache. The tears seemed to be in her voice as she sang. This was a lyric sample of that national music of which we had heard—a lament much in vogue in the days of the Vendetta, and not yet obsolete. Sometimes, in times of bereavement, these elegies are yet improvised. Their simplicity is very touching. I have read one song, sung by a young girl of Ota, who rejoiced in the name of Fior di Spina, or hawthorn flower. She had killed a lover who had refused her marriage. The burden of her song was that she was very unhappy, though courageous, and had to rove the mountains and wild paths among the bandits, whose brave hearts would protect her. The recitation of our songstress, as we learned, had reference to a brigand and a peasant girl. The girl had been out on the mountains gathering faggots, and had loaded her donkey. She was hastening home as evening came on. It was in the time and region when and where the famous brigand Serafino—(I think I have seen him on the theatrical boards)—lived and preyed. Apprehensive of Serafino, her fears were soon allayed by the appearance of a gentlemanly gendarme. They walked, and