

behind and are climbing swiftly the heights to Fiesole, with what is said to be the loveliest panorama in the world spread around us, it seems to go on unfolding itself ever more and more until at last we arrive at a kind of great platform on which stands the Cathedral of Fiesole; then we turn suddenly to go down a road that, at first sight, appears almost perpendicular. "Don't worry; he's a good driver." The words are scarcely spoken when the car suddenly rounds into a gateway in the cliff side and, there, in a moment, our minds are filled with wonder and surrender to the perfect, living picture that meets us, exquisite in its quiet, delicate, peaceful beauty, its suggestion too of a preservation, a vitalising of the hoary traditions that cling about Fiesole. Just picture, if you can, the high cliff on one side of the drive, on the other a narrow, sloping vineyard, rich with its purple harvest. Look beyond it and you will get a glimpse of the Indulgence Steps, with their avenue of tall cypress trees. Beyond them still you see a great buttress-like wall with a large square stone set in it—the stone on which the first Florentine Christians were beheaded, and an object of veneration throughout long centuries. Above all is spread the soft Italian sky. Then build for yourself in imagination the centre of this living picture which we would discover to you. Picture the old gateway and the pink turreted gables of the ancient monastery of San Girolamo; creeping about them are rose trees, white jasmine, and the bluest clematis you can imagine—its blossoms are about as large as small saucers and their deep, almost vibrant, blue melts away as it reaches their creamy centres. Then fill in your picture further—in groups here and there, about the old arched gateway, are figures in long graceful veils of the colour of the Italian skies, their faces are framed in snow-white coifs and their eyes and lips are smiling a welcome as we drive up. Listen, can you hear the "Blue Nuns of Fiesole" speaking their kindly greetings as they gather about the car. Such was our first experience of Italy, such the climax of a long and somewhat tiring journey, and in the garden of our memories, of a land abounding in treasures of art and the remnants of an age-long civilisation, there will remain always a little shrine and, if you would know the name of it—well, they call it San Girolamo.

As we pass into the paved courtyard under the cliffs, which leads to one of the entrances, we are at once conscious of a sense of the age of our surroundings, of a kind of penetration of super-sensible realities, of an extraordinary feeling that about this place lies the impress of the stress, the struggle, the sorrows, the prayers, and the loving-

kindness that characterised the lives of those who, from century to century, made the history of San Girolamo. But that is another story, and in a later issue we hope to tell you something of this wonderful place, of the Cathedral of Fiesole and, also at some future time, something of the wonderfully efficient hospitals of the Little Company of Mary in Italy.

We pass through a red-paved corridor into the ancient cloister, with its pillars, its tall palms, and wonderful old well. We walk the pavements which many Fathers of the Church must have trod and where often surely the Medici must have passed, in conclave with the Blessed Carlo. Through another paved corridor we reach the hall, with its carved bookcases, its pictures and its quiet coolness.

A smiling maid serves to tired travellers a delightful tea, while the "Blue Nuns of Fiesole" press us to eat more and more of their delicious white bread and butter, asking kindly questions now and then, as we laughingly recount to them how St. Joseph delivered us from many threatened *convetemps* on the long, long journey from England. Next we are conducted to our quiet rooms, with their white beds shrouded in dainty mosquito nets, and we have pointed out to us a large card on the wall, decked with sprays of asparagus fern, and on it, in old English lettering, the one word "Welcome." And so here, on the heights of Fiesole, after a toilsome journey, the "peace of the hills" is about us at last, hills that you cannot but think of as memorials of a great and noble idealism, memorials of the heights of Christian sacrifice, of a monumental faith and a great love of humanity now reflected for us, after the passage of centuries, in the beauty of San Girolamo, and in the gentle, unostentatious, watchful kindness of a perfect hospitality. For these days in Fiesole were made, indeed, one delightful harmony. On that following our arrival, the car appeared again, after we had been

consulted and advised as to what we should see; no questions were permitted as to whence or how it came there. "We have our own little way of organising these things" was the only answer we got about that wonderful smooth-running chariot that drove us round to see many of the wonders of Florence which otherwise would have passed us by, and on the last afternoon it took us far among the hills, "Just to give you an idea of Fiesole."

In the evening time we would roam with one of the Sisters about the grounds hearing the tales, new and old, that make up the story of Fiesole; we saw preparations being made for the vinting and longed that we might have stayed but a few days more to see this accomplished. When it takes place, visitors, neighbours and servants all come to help



SAN GIROLAMO.
The Indulgence Steps.

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