

I Destra Desperately

IT has been said that garlic was mixed with the cement that paves the streets of Naples, but assuredly magic mingles with the cobbles that mark the streets of Pisa . . . which may explain why my recollections are so vague concerning this ancient Etrurian city. There are those who say it was founded by the followers of Nestor in their wanderings after the fall of Troy.

I remember the hotel, peering over a stone wall into the muddy Arno, and I remember a mosquito canopy that draped my bed. It was a serious embarrassment to me all through the night, for each time the street would ring with noises, I was pulled by terror from my seclusion to fight clear of its entanglements and gaze apprehensively from my casement.

And nothing came of all the screaming, not even one mild little murder! So far as I could see—the first time—two women, conveying a flock of chattering children, had stopped to exchange compliments across the narrow street. The next time, two bearded ancients, without a complete set of arms and legs between them, gloated, presumably over the prowess of Garibaldi; and the last of my terrified leapings was rewarded by seeing a generously-moustached officer lavish an overflow of brotherly love upon his late-working barber. Imagine a man, here, shaving you and shearing your hair in the middle of the night.

SI . . . si . . . such a staccato-talking people! I had engaged a guide. Pisa, according to *Taming of the Shrew*, is "renowned for grave citizens," and this fellow conformed to type. He was tall, and thin and swart and melancholy. At least, I think he was. They

were either like that—the guides—or short, rotund, mischievous and jolly.

He introduced me to the Halls of Learning, where, as a student of medicine, came the famous *Gallilayo-Gallilayii*. I had not the slightest glimmer of his meaning until reminded by a statue that Galileo was a native of Pisa. How absurdly these Italians pronounce our familiar names!

NEXT, we went to a fine square. He said it was fine, but confidentially, I think he was prejudiced. It was the Piazza dei Cavalieri, the forum of ancient Pisa. Because Cosimo I gave it to the Knights of St. Stefano, they set up a statue to this First Grand Duke of the Medici. I don't know who gave the fountain. It was much more useful, however, than the statue, for, there, a good deal of dirty linen was washed in public. (Linen is here used as a generic term, including hands and faces of adults and children; also cooking utensils). Small pails and urns were filled and carried away, suggesting that much was to be desired in the water system of the city.

In that Piazza, there was a six-hour clock. Although I could not decipher its announcement, I appreciated its intention. Days beyond counting, there seemed to be but six hours from dawn to dark. There was so much to do in Italy!

The guide said that most travellers do not visit Pisa; they see only one corner of it—the Piazza del Duomo. Certainly, this sacred corner is the most magnificent. There stand the Cathedral, the Baptistry, the Leaning Tower and the Campo-

