

The Picturesque and Reality in *Pictures from Italy*

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1. “There is, probably, not a famous Picture or Statue in all Italy, but could be easily buried under a mountain of printed paper devoted to dissertations on it. I do not, therefore, though an earnest admirer of Painting and Sculpture, expatiate at any length on famous Pictures and Statues.” (5)
2. “ON a fine Sunday morning in the Midsummer time and weather of eighteen hundred and forty-four, it was, my good friend, when – don’t be alarmed; not when two travellers might have been observed slowly making their way over that *picturesque* and broken ground by which the first chapter of a Middle-Aged novel is usually attained – but when an English travelling-carriage of considerable proportions, [...] was observed [...] to issue from the gate of the Hotel Meurice in the Rue Rivoli at Paris.” (8, italics mine)
3. “The sun had long gone down, and the large clear autumn moon had risen high in his stead, throwing a paler, but a gentler light upon the wood of Laye, and the rich *wild forest scenery* bordering the road from St. Germain to Mantes. [...] On one of those spots where the full beams fell, stood the cottage of Philip, the woodman; and *the humble hut with its straw thatch*; the open space of ground before it, with a felled oak which had lain there undisturbed till a coat of soft green moss had grown thick over its rugged bark; the little stream dammed up [...]; all were displayed in the clear moonlight, as plainly as if day itself had shone upon them. [...] on the night of which I speak, two horsemen wound slowly along the road towards the cottage of the woodman, with a sort of sauntering, idle pace, as if thoughtless of danger, and entirely occupied by their own conversation.” (*Richelieu* 19-20, italics mine)
4. “The portrait of Beatrice di Cenci, in the Palazzo Berberini, is a picture almost impossible to be forgotten. Through the transcendent sweetness and beauty of the face, there is a something shining out, that haunts me. [...] *Some stories say that Guido painted it, the night before her execution; some other stories, that he painted it from memory, after having seen her, on her way to the scaffold.* I am willing to believe that, as you see her on his canvas, so she turned towards him, in the crowd, from the first sight of the axe, and stamped upon his mind a look which he has stamped on mine as though I had stood beside him in the concourse. The guilty

palace of the Cenci: blighting a whole quarter of the town, as it stands withering away by grains: had that face, to my fancy, in its dismal porch, and at its black, blind windows, and flitting up and down its dreary stairs, and growing out of the darkness of the ghostly galleries.” (147-48, italics mine)

5. “[The effigy of Christ upon the cross] was hardly in its place, when [the criminal] appeared on the platform [...].

He immediately kneeled down, below the knife. His neck fitting into a hole, made for the purpose, in a cross plank, was shut down, by another plank above; exactly like the pillory. Immediately below him was a leathern bag. And into it his head rolled instantly.

[...] Every tinge and hue of life had left it in that instant. It was dull, cold, livid, wax. The body also.

There was a great deal of blood. When we left the window, and went close up to the scaffold, it was very dirty; one of the two men who were throwing water over it, turning to help the other lift the body into a shell, picked his way as through mire. [...]

Nobody cared, or was at all affected. *There was no manifestation of disgust, or pity, or indignation, or sorrow.* My empty pockets were tried, several times, in the crowd immediately below the scaffold, as the corpse was being put into its coffin. *It was an ugly, filthy, careless, sickening spectacle;* meaning nothing but butchery beyond the momentary interest, to the one wretched actor.” (144, italics mine)

6. “All this, and every other kind of out-door life and stir, and macaroni-eating at sunset, and flower-selling all day long, and begging and stealing everywhere and at all hours, you see upon the bright sea-shore, where the waves of the bay sparkle merrily. But, *lovers and hunters of the picturesque, let us not keep too studiously out of view the miserable depravity, degradation, and wretchedness, with which this gay Neapolitan life is inseparably associated!* It is not well to find Saint Giles's so repulsive, and the Porta Capuana so attractive. A pair of naked legs and a ragged red scarf, do not make ALL the difference between what is interesting and what is coarse and odious? Painting and poetising for ever, if you will, the beauties of this most beautiful and lovely spot of earth, let us, as our duty, try to associate *a new picturesque* with some faint recognition of man's destiny and capabilities; more hopeful, I believe, among the ice and snow of the North Pole, than in the sun and bloom of Naples.” (167, italics mine)
7. “The steamer had come from Genoa [...], and we were going to run back again by the Cornice road from Nice: *not being satisfied to have seen only the outsides of the beautiful towns that rise in picturesque white clusters* from among the olive woods, and rocks, and hills, upon the

margin of the Sea.” (56, italics mine)

8. “In every case, each little group of houses presents, *in the distance*, some enchanting confusion of picturesque and fanciful shapes.” (61, italics mine)
9. “Much of the romance of the beautiful towns and villages on this beautiful road, disappears when they are entered, for many of them are very miserable.” (60)
10. ‘Gentlefolks, I’ve lived many a year in this place. *You may see the cottage from the sunk fence over yonder.* I’ve seen the ladies draw it in their books, a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I’ve heerd say; but there an’t weather in picters, and maybe ’tis fitter for that, than for a place to live in.’ (*The Chimes* 154, italics mine)
11. “When we were fairly going off again, we began, in a perfect fever, to strain our eyes for Rome; and when, after another mile or two, the Eternal City appeared, at length, in the distance; it looked like – I am half afraid to write the word – like LONDON!!! ” (115)

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