

## THE CAMPO SANTO AT PISA.

THE "Campo Santo," or the "Holy Field," once a cemetery, though no longer used as such, is an open space of about four hundred feet in length and one hundred and eighteen feet in breadth, enclosed with high walls, and an arcade, something like the cloisters of a monastery or cathedral, running all round it.

On the east side is a large chapel, and on the north two smaller chapels, where prayers and masses are celebrated for the "repose of the dead."

The open space was filled with earth brought from the Holy Land in the time of the Crusades. The Archbishop Ubaldo, on his retreat from Palestine in 1190, returned with his fifty-three vessels laden with earth from Calvary, whence this spot where the earth was deposited was named the Campo Santo, the "Holy Field."

The space once sown with graves is now covered with green turf. At the four corners are four tall cypress trees, their dark, monumental, spiral forms contrasting with a little lowly cross in the centre, round which ivy or some other creeping plant has wound a luxuriant bower.

The beautiful Gothic arcade was designed and built about 1283 by Giovanni Pisano, son of the great Nicola Pisano.

This arcade, on the side next the burial-ground, is pierced by sixty-two windows of elegant tracery, divided from each other by slender pilasters. Upwards of six hundred sepulchral monuments of the nobles and citizens of Pisa are ranged along the marble pavements, and mingled with them are some antique remains of great beauty brought from Greece.

Here also is seen the famous sarcophagus (of Greek workmanship) which first inspired the genius of Nicola Pisano, and in which had been deposited the body of Beatrice, mother of the famous Countess Matilda.

The walls opposite to the windows were painted in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with scriptural subjects. Most of these are half ruined by time, neglect, and damp; the best preserved are faded, discoloured, ghastly in appearance, and solemn in subject.

The whole aspect of this singular place, particularly to those who wander through its long arcades at the close of day, when the figures on the pictured walls look dim and spectral through the gloom, and the cypresses assume a blacker hue, and all the associations connected with its sacred purpose and its history rise upon the fancy, has, in its silence and solitude and religious destination, something inexpressibly strange, dreamy, solemn, almost awful. Seen in the broad glare of noonday, the place and the pictures lose something of their power over the fancy, and that which last night haunted us as a vision, by day we examine, study, criticise.

The building of the Campo Santo was scarcely finished when the best painters of the time were summoned to paint the walls all round the interior with appropriate subjects. This was a work of many years—it was, indeed, continued at intervals through two centuries—and thus we have a series of illustrations of the progress of art during its first development of the religious influences of the age, and even of the habits and manners of the people, which are faithfully exhibited in some of these most extraordinary compositions.

The earliest of these is a series of subjects from the Book of Job, painted in the time of Giotto (*circa* 1300), and popularly ascribed to that great reformer of painting. Next in date follow subjects of extraordinary power and originality, long ascribed to Andrea

Orcagna. These were to represent what the Italians call "*I quattro novissimi*" (the last or latest things)—Death, Judgment, Hell or Purgatory, and Paradise. Three only were completed. These subjects harmonised peculiarly with the sacred precincts for which they were designed.

We are bound to add that these powerful works, which have always hitherto been associated with the name of Andrea Orcagna, are now supposed by Mr. Poynter, R.A., to have been painted by two artists of Sienna, the brothers Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti; while the same learned authority disputes Giotto's hand in the "Sufferings of Job," and ascribes this latter work to Francesca da Volterra, a contemporary painter.

Other subjects by other artists follow, until we arrive at twenty-one magnificent frescoes from the Old Testament history by Benozzo Gozzoli, of Florence. These were painted between 1469 and 1476. The good people of Pisa showed their appreciation of these beautiful works by the present of a tomb in the sacred ground to the painter.

Among the tombs and sarcophagi which line the lower part of the walls and cover the floor, inscribed to nobles and merchant princes of Pisa, we may still find the one with its old Latin inscription: "Hic tumulus est Benotti Florentini qui proximè has pinxit historias. Hunc sibi Pisanorum donavit humanitas. MCCCCLXXVIII." ("This is the tomb of Benozzo of Florence, who painted these nearest histories. The gratitude of the Pisans gave it to him in 1478.")

If it strikes us as a somewhat odd present to give a tomb to one who was still living, we must reflect that, according to the popular superstition of the day, burial in that sacred earth afforded a sure passport to Heaven. It were then a priceless gift, indeed!—(Account of the Campo Santo of Pisa, taken partly from "Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters," by Mrs. Jameson.)

## PISAN LEGEND.

Pico della Mirandola, a scholar and philosopher of the fifteenth century, tells us that "when the shipload of sacred earth was mingled with the common clay in the Campo Santo of Pisa, a new flower grew up from it, unlike any flower men had seen before—the anémone, with its concentric rings of strangely-blended

colour, still to be found by those who search long enough for it in the long grass of the Maremma."

Since the days of the above-named learned writer, the pretty flower he names has become one of the commonest of the wild flowers, not of the "Holy Field" of Pisa alone, but over all Italy. It now requires but little searching to find handfuls of its pale purple flowers in the Italian fields from north to south. On the ruins on the Palatine Hill in Rome, the little wild flower that came in the sacred earth from Palestine in the eleventh century survives the grandeur of the Cæsars, and flourishes amid the ruins of temples and imperial palaces. Nice and Cannes cultivate rare varieties of this pretty flower, which they send in quantities in the spring to the London market; while in England we know and treasure among our wild flowers a pale and small variety, which in country places we call by its literal Greek name, the wind flower (*anémone*), little thinking from whence this travelled stranger had originally sprung.



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