

## HOUSEKEEPING IN FLORENCE.



is astonishing with how much volubility some people can state as facts matters of which they are in the main absolutely ignorant. A tourist will stay in a fashionable

hotel at a certain town for a couple of days, and his bill will most probably startle him by its heaviness; he will thenceforward go home and say, "I have been to —, and I can confidently state that it is one of the dearest places in the world!" Another, a Bohemian, will, in the course of his peregrinations, drop into some wayside inn, and, after having regaled himself heartily for a few pence, vent forth his gratitude to the world by vehement protestations that — is, to his certain knowledge, the cheapest corner of the globe. Such statements as these are valueless.

To speak with authority upon the house-keeping of any town or country one must have taken up one's abode in the place, have lived amongst its people, visited its shops, and traded for its merchandise.

The writer, before coming to Florence, was quite at a loss to know whether it was a reasonable or costly city in which to live, so conflicting were the statements made concerning it, so unreliable and uncertain all the information received. The object of this article, therefore, is to state in pounds, shillings and pence the actual cost of living either simply or sumptuously, and consequently to aid any whose footsteps may lead them to this land of flowers, this monument of glories past, this city of the Medici—this Florence.

"O Florence, with thy Tuscan fields and hills,

Thy famous Arno, fed with all the rills,  
Thou brightest star of star-bright Italy!"  
Coleridge.

To begin this article in a general way, it may be well to state that, in the principal hotels, terms are just as high in Florence as in other European towns. Dinner costs from four francs to six francs a head, *déjeuner à la fourchette* two francs to four francs, and service one franc. The price of rooms varies from three to five francs daily. Wine is usually included in the tariff, and the cookery is decidedly good.

The principal restaurants are in the Via Tornabuoni. "Doney and Nipoti" and Capitani are both excellent, the former is the "Gunter" of Florence, and a dinner with wine and ices included may be had for seven francs. At Capitani the prices are somewhat lower—the tariff varying from four to six francs.

There are, of course, besides these an immense number of Italian restaurants where dinners can be got for three francs or less. The cooking is invariably good, the company interesting, and itinerant musicians aid the digestion and dignify the viands.

With *pensions* Florence is liberally provided. These are well warmed in winter and are provided with all desirable comforts. The prices vary from five to ten francs a day, but terms can be made for a lower sum if the tourist intends staying for any length of time. A student could be found a small room and fairly liberal table for about 100 francs a month.

Cab fares are at the following rates: For a course within the city, one franc during the day; 1 franc 30 centesimi\* for the night. If taken by the half hour, 1 franc 20 centesimi for the first half hour and 75 centesimi for the following. The prices are slightly higher at night-time. Trunks or bags are charged for at 50 centesimi the piece.

The principal Italian moneys are the following—

The lira, equal to a franc, equal to tenpence; the soldo, equal to a sou, equal to a halfpenny; and the centesimi, ten of which go to our English penny, and a hundred to the franc or lira.

Most of the houses along the Lung Arno, in the Borgognissanti, and in the principal piazzas are let in lodgings. Good single rooms can be obtained in these fashionable quarters for from 25 to 35 francs a month, suites of two or three rooms from 60 to 100 francs.

On the left bank of the Arno is the student's quarter of Florence, and consequently the unfashionable and cheap part of the town.

Here a good suite of rooms, either on the *terreno* (ground floor) or on the fourth storey, can be got for about 40 francs a month. This suite would be ready furnished, and would consist of two bed-rooms, sitting-room, dining-room and kitchen, sufficient for two or three students to live comfortably together.

Assuming that you have set up house by yourself and that you have not sufficient means to supply yourself with a servant, the next important business is to buy your food.

In the winding, dusky streets, little shops, set sometimes back like caves and sometimes standing boldly forward, will assert themselves. Greengrocers with luscious fruit and vegetables, tobacconists where you can also get salt, sugar, and postage-stamps, and grocers with macaroni of various shapes and sizes and great chunks of salame and carne-secca, inviting entry.

At the doors of these shops well-developed peasants with rich complexions and dreamy eyes will await your pleasure. If you only wish to spend one soldo on their wares you will still be greeted with enthusiasm, and with marked reverence and politeness. These children of the Lily city possess the art of gracious courtesy, as strongly bred in their being as they have the gifts of simplicity and content.

On entering a shop point to whatever article you require and say, "*Quanti costi questa?*" (what does this cost). The polite peasant will then put a price to which, whether high or low, you must immediately make an objection. The right word to use here is simply "*Ché.*" *Ché* is an expressive little term savouring of contempt. The polite peasant, without a murmur, will forthwith lower the price of his wares, but you must continue saying "*Ché, Ché,*" until your heart tells you he has descended enough. This is the art of "haggling," an art which in Italy has to be thoroughly understood by rich and poor alike; for not only at the little stalls, but sometimes even in the best and most fashionable shops, fancy prices are put on wares in the hopes of fleecing unsuspecting foreigners.

In buying vegetables or fruit, don't forget to ask for some "*odore.*" The writer has often (after having bought 20 centesimi of vegetables) had presented to her gratis as "*odore*" a lettuce, or an onion, a couple of sticks of young celery, mint, parsley and garlic.

\* Ten centesimi=one penny.

The customers are not always content with this present but add to it, of their own accord, a handful of cherries, a couple of pears, or a cooked potato. The writer has never yet been able to reconcile to her conscience this system of open theft; and yet the dear contadine who owns the shop will smile on benignly all the time, and wish their thieving customers "*Buon Giorno*" and "*A Riverderci*" with as much gusto as if they had been duchesses come to spend a fortune on their wares.

The writer has often had blessings called down from heaven for buying from some poor *mendicante* a box of matches for a soldo, or a currant bun for the same sum.

A very useful establishment in Florence is the "48 Centesimi Store." In this can be bought nearly every necessary of life except food. Furniture, cooking utensils, millinery, glass ware, groceries, articles for dress and the toilette, stationery, lamps, small stoves, and artificial flowers—all for the modest sum of 48d.

As for natural flowers, they are as plentiful in this city of the Medici as are weeds in an ordinary country lane. They seem to blossom everywhere; they almost grow under your feet. In the springtime, on the hills, great bunches of red tulips, multi-coloured anemones, and waxy hyacinths may be gathered by armfuls, and the city itself is filled with a luxuriance of odorous blossoms laid out for sale on the cold grey basements of palaces, or in the picturesque baskets of dark-eyed southern maidens.

For the very poor, and those well-versed in the art of "haggling," no better way of business can be contracted than from the barrows of itinerant vendors. The vociferous yells of these men, as they pass by, are sufficient to wake the "seven sleepers," and you will be warned of their arrival long before they come in view. From these barrows may be obtained cherries strawberries and grapes, often at one soldo the pound.

Materials for dresses, corsets, powder-puffs, linen, dried fruit, bright ribbons, paper and hats, are all items of the barrow-men, and may be purchased at a price which would sound laughable to English ears; yet the inevitable "*Ché*" is here as necessary as elsewhere, for the rascals, seeing you have an English look, will slyly insert an extra soldo unless you show them that you are awake to their tricks.

Food is, on the whole, cheaper than in England, especially vegetables, and fruit, oil and wine.

Meat is fairly good and cheap. Beef-steak or veal cutlets can be got for a franc a pound, chickens for from 1 franc 50 centesimi to 3 francs apiece. Mutton, for some reason or other, is very little eaten.

Groceries, such as tea, sugar, salt and condiments in general, are very dear. Sugar costs over 1 franc the pound, and tea sometimes as much as 6 francs. A good plan, in coming over to Italy, is to bring a pound of tea with you, as that quantity is allowed to each person without the payment of duty.

Bread, milk and butter are slightly cheaper than in England. The brown country bread, which is excellent and nutritious, may be got for from 30 to 50 centesimi the loaf, according to size. Rolls and large currant buns can be got for 1 soldo the piece.

Wine, which is sold in the celebrated flaschi, can be got for various prices. The red chianti, which is a pure and excellent wine, if somewhat crude to the palate, costs from one to three francs the flaschi. A flaschi contains about half a gallon; it is a very picturesque-

looking bottle covered with a network of straw. For the preservation of this wine, it must be poured from the flaschi into smaller bottles, otherwise it will quickly sour. Each bottle should then be covered on top with a thimbleful of olive oil, no corks are needed.

New laid eggs may be obtained at eighty centesimi the dozen; cooking eggs are usually one soldo apiece. Vegetables are always cheap, fresh, and good. For the convenience of students they can be obtained at the greengrocer's ready cooked, as well as in their raw state; quite a large quantity of spinach, beans, potatoes, or beets can be got for two soldi.

At some of the smaller restaurants a dish of cooked macaroni seasoned with butter, and either cheese, tomato, or onion, may be got for twenty centesimi. Another excellent and cheap dish is of ready-cooked haricot beans well flavoured; a bowl of these can be got for ten centesimi.

Salad lettuces, when in season, may be had at three for one soldo. Tomatoes at twenty centesimi the kilo. A kilo is equal to nearly three pounds. The Florentine "libro" is slightly less than our English pound—twelve ounces instead of sixteen.

Materials for clothing, millinery and under-clothes cost about the same as in England. Dress-making and tailoring slightly less. Boots and shoes are dear and ugly.

Good servants, more learned in cooking and sewing than in reading and writing, may be got for twelve francs a month. A contadine will come and give your rooms a thorough cleaning and sweeping for eighty centesimi, or one franc.

Pianos can be hired for from eight to fifteen francs a month, according to the quality of the instrument, and as to whether it be "cottage" or "grand."

Altogether, with good management, it is possible to live, and lodge in "La Bella Firenze" for the small sum of eighty francs a month, but you must be a good manager, otherwise you will be easily imposed upon, and your bills will readily mount to twice that sum.

If you are not inclined to do your own cooking, you can order in meals from an adjacent "trattoria"\* for the modest sum of eighty centesimi or one franc. The writer never gives more than 80 centesimi for a meal which is sent in daily, at half-past eleven, in a long closed tin box, with shelves for the different courses. A very good invention for keeping the food warm.

This eighty centesimi meal consists of macaroni or soup, meat and vegetables, and there is such a generous supply of each that the writer invariably has sufficient for both *colazione* (lunch) and dinner. Besides this the writer has left at her door every morning butter for one soldo, milk for one soldo, bread for two soldi, and wine for two soldi. Her expenses are, therefore, rarely over one shilling *per diem*. When the weather is hot it is good to spend the "wine-money" on a pound or two of fruit, cherries,

strawberries, and grapes often being procurable for one soldo the pound.

In the coffee-houses a cup of *caffé-au-lait* can be got for from fifteen to twenty-five centesimi. Ices cost thirty or forty centesimi. Beer, which is good, but far more expensive than in England, costs either thirty-five or fifty centesimi according to the size of the jugs.

There are several modes of conveyance in Florence—cabs, electric tramways, steam tramways, omnibuses, horse tramways, and diligences.

The charge for the omnibus course is ten centesimi on ordinary days, and fifteen on the holidays or *festas*.

The electric tramways, which start daily from the Piazza San Marco, make the object of their course that far-famed, lovely hill Fiesole. The cost of this trip is only one franc twenty-five centesimi for a return ticket, and the air, the views, the sublime scenery obtained on every side, the wild profusion of vines and olives, roses and every trailing flower, are worth a fortune if only to remain in the memory as one sweet spot on

this terrestrial earth worthy of Paradise. The steam-tramways, also, will take you for a few centesimi among scenes of radiant beauty. Cestello with its avenues of chestnuts, Lastra a Signa, that ancient city, is renowned in ages past, Campi, Poggeo, the Viale de' Colli, the vine-clad Chianti, and the wide famed glorious Certosa, from whose ancient monastery the view obtained of Florence is worthy of an Arabian fairy tale.

Besides all these near excursions there are, of course, many interesting towns and rural spots lying within short train distances from Florence, as Pisa, Bologna, Siena, and Vallombrosa. This latter, though a somewhat costly journey, is one that should be taken by all who have the possibility of doing so, for it is said to be, and with truth it must be, one of the most beautiful spots in the world.

Situated at about 5000 feet above the level of the sea, the air is bright and salubrious, the views on all sides noble and awe-inspiring in the extreme, the diversity of scenery obtained as radiant as it is marvellous. Here the roaring of the cataract mingles its crash



WASHING-UP.

\* Restaurant.

with the gentle murmur of the running stream, and the smiling fertility of grassy slope shows up in clear distinctness the dusky haze of forest pine and branching cedar; here the grotesque shagginess of thickets overgrown lay side by side with banks of tender sylvan blossoms, and above and all around are peaks on peaks of mountains, bare and grey except when clothed in silver clouds, or purple haze of mystic indistinctness.

It was at Vallombrosa that Milton wrote his *Paradise Lost*, and Browning commenting on the fact, says of him—

"He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,  
Remembering Vallombrosa."

Il Paradisino, which is a little further up the mountain beyond Vallombrosa, possesses a beautiful hermitage and chapel, and the view obtained over the adjoining country from the elevation is inimitable in its sublimity.

Before concluding my article, let me answer a question which has been addressed to me from all sides, since taking up my abode in the Lily City. "Is Florence, after all, as charming a city as it is said to be? Is Florence beautiful?"

I answer simply and emphatically, "Yes." No writer has exaggerated its worth, no poet sung too warmly of its radiant loveliness. Florence is beautiful. Beautiful in its architecture, beautiful in its situation, beautiful in its wealth of sculpture and its paintings, beautiful in its winding, dusky streets, its glowing colour, and its matchless frescoes. Beautiful in the winter, when its snow-capped range of mountains melt their whiteness in the lowering clouds, beautiful in the summer, when the

strong, pure sun shines from the azure skies, and the nightingale sings wildly from the perfumed brushwood. Beautiful in its sluggish, green-hued river, from which white houses rise, and into which the willow and the ilex throw their shade. Beautiful in its breadth of fields and smiling vineyards, in its pines and myrtles, and its sad-hued olive branches. Always, at all times, and under all circumstances, beautiful.

For the artist there are the galleries of Pitti and Uffizi, filled to overflowing with all that is greatest of the great and matchless dead; for the lover of architecture the Roman arches, the rugged towers, the churches and cathedrals, numberless and costly. For the curio seeker are a thousand nooks and niches, bas-reliefs and lintels, teeming with the past, and speaking mutely of its glory, and for all and everyone there is the pure, strong sunshine, the glowing skies, the clear, sweet southern air.

Yet, in spite of this, how many are there who, after having given Florence a passing glimpse, return home disappointed with its charms? This is either because they are unable to appreciate the beautiful, or because they see it only through the medium of the tourist spirit—the spirit of hurry and unrest. To these this city of the Medici is bound to lose its subtle charm, for to understand and appreciate it in all its entirety, one must linger thoughtfully amidst its surroundings, and, whilst enjoying its present matchless beauty, be also fully alive to the history of its famous past. Then will the sluggish Arno serve a world for thought, and Taddeo Gaddi's

quaint old bridge become a monument of glory. Then will every dusky street and tower and gable sound the chronicle of bygone greatness, and every ruined arch or broken battlement fill heart and soul with reverence and awe. In yonder crumbling niche the divine comedian sat and gazed upon his lore; within the walls of this old stately house lived Michael Angelo, the man "possessed with four souls." Upon the heights beyond Le Colle, embosomed in its nest of trailing flowers, worked the great master of the moon and stars, Galileo; by this sequestered vine-clad pathway of Fiesole, the monk Angelico planned out and drew with magic art his hosts of seraphim. And the tower of the Signoria, beautiful in its rugged grace; Giotto's Campanile, white and fair as an arum lily rising from its stem; and beyond and above all, watching over the city like a sentinel, and dominating the landscape from whatever point of view, the glorious Duomo. Who but the ignorant could remain unmoved before this feast of beauty—who, amongst those who know, would refuse to sing its praise with poet, architect, and artist?—

"Of all the fairest cities of the earth  
None is so fair as Florence. 'Tis a gem  
Of purest ray, and what a light broke  
forth  
When it emerged from darkness! Search  
within,  
Without! all is enchantment! 'Tis the  
Past  
Contending with the Present; and in turn  
Each has the mastery."—*Rogers.*

## DOCTOR LUTTRELL'S FIRST PATIENT.

By ROSA NOUCHETTE CAREY, Author of "Nellie's Memories," "Little Miss Muffet," etc.

### CHAPTER XV.

"THEY WERE BOTH TO BLAME."

"It befits a son to be dutiful to his father."—*Plautus.*



As Alwyn uttered these despairing words, Greta shrank back in alarm, but Olivia, with a reassuring smile, put her hand gently on his arm.

"Do not talk so wildly, Mr. Alwyn," she said soothingly; "you are

frightening poor Miss Williams. How can you have killed your father when he is not dead? My husband has only just left me. He seems hopeful about him; he thinks consciousness is returning; but he must have perfect quiet. Even our voices may disturb him—that is why I must beg you to come back with me at once."

"You are not deceiving me, Mrs. Luttrell?" returned Alwyn suspiciously. "You are sure that he is not dead?"

"Quite sure," she returned quietly; and then again Greta put out her hand.

"You will come with us, will you not, Alwyn?" she said with sisterly tenderness; "there is so much that I have to hear and that you must tell me, and we must not talk here. To think that we should have met in this way, by accident—if there be such a thing as accident in this life of ours. But no; it was Providence that brought me to this house." And as Olivia followed them down the dark shrubbery she could hear her quiet tones still talking, as though to a younger brother.

Olivia was too tired to do more than wonder vaguely as she listened; the sight of her own little parlour and Martha's sturdy figure arranging the tea-table gave her a pleasant revulsion of feeling. When Martha whispered confidentially, as she brought in the lamp, "The seed-cake is nicely baked; hadn't I better bring it in, ma'am?" Olivia gave a little hysterical laugh. After all that tragedy it was so odd to think of freshly-baked cakes.

"Yes, yes, and make the tea quickly," she said, waving off the little handmaiden impatiently; and Martha, somewhat affronted and vaguely alarmed, retreated to the kitchen.

"What's come over the mistress?" she said to herself. "I have never known her so huffy." But Olivia, with difficulty recovering her calmness, busied herself in ministering to her guests.

"Mr. Alwyn," she said gently, "you must rest on that couch—you are just

worn out; but a cup of tea will do you good. Greta, you must stop and have some too. Do you know this is the first time you have entered this house? Dot is asleep. I am going up to see her now. Would you like to come too?"—for she guessed intuitively that the girl was longing to question her—and Greta with a grateful look followed her at once.

Olivia kissed the sleeping child with her usual tenderness. How she longed to lie down beside Dot and sleep off her overpowering weariness; but the day's work was not over.

Greta, who had only just glanced at the little one, put her arms suddenly round Olivia and drew her down beside her.

"Mrs. Luttrell," she said breathlessly, "tell me what it all means. What has happened to Alwyn, and what makes him talk so strangely? Do you know, for one moment I believed him! In the old time they often quarrelled—but of course it is paralysis." And then Olivia told her all that had occurred that afternoon.

Greta listened with painful attention; then her eyes filled with tears.

"And he never knew that his mother and Olive were dead," she observed. "Oh, Mrs. Luttrell, how sad—how terribly sad it all is! No wonder he looked bewildered, poor fellow; it must have been such an awful shock to hear that, and then to see his poor father fall at his feet."