

HOW PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE CAN LIVE IN ROME.

By CONSTANCE HELEN ALEXANDER.



I HAVE two motives for writing this article on a very prosaic subject. Firstly, I wish to dispense the general belief that *Rome* is an expensive place to live in; and secondly, I wish to explain and show how moderately professional English people manage to live in this city.

Should any young girl think of visiting the "Eternal City," I would advise her following out closely all the suggestions which my experience and knowledge of Rome has taught me.

We will begin with our "room-accommodation," understanding that our young artist is restricted in means, and has not much money to spend; but a certain refinement of living having been her element for so long, she cannot dispense with it altogether. She must find a lodging, *un appartamento*,* where the *padrona* † *de casa* will cook and do everything for her. And these rooms can be found all over Rome, but I should advise taking the apartment in what is called New Rome, such as the *Ludovisi* quarter, and *Venti Settembre*. New Rome is considered healthier, having the advantages of all modern sanitary improvements. It is best to take rooms on high ground, and though fatiguing, preference must be given to the fourth *piano* ‡ over the first, as besides being above malaria height, there is generally more light and air. So much for the choice of locality and apartment. And now about the food. This is a very necessary detail, and I wish to enter most fully into the subject. As a rule, the Italians live more on farinaceous food and on vegetables than the English, very little meat contenting them. At the same time they do not ignore the use of

meat (as some suppose), but use it more as a condiment and foundation for their soups, and to be chopped up and frittered. Now, as I use the word "fritter," I must expatiate on their art of cooking in the frying department. No one can fry like an Italian, and their omelets even Lucullus must have patronised at his sumptuous suppers. They are very simple in their food, and yet they understand the art of culinary and the use of herbs much better than our English cooks. Most of the *padrone*-folk* living more or less alike, I think I can tell precisely of what our young artist's dinner will consist at twelve o'clock (for that is the hour when the Italian dines). She will be served first with a soup-plate of *consommé* containing lentils or mixed vegetables, then a dainty-looking dish of macaroni smothered in tomato-sauce and grated cheese. This dish is quite an *entremet*, and to be seen at the tables of both rich and poor.

Next will follow the meat-dish in the shape of either cutlets *à la Milanese* with frittered potatoes, or plain *bouilli* garnished with cabbage or beans. And after the meat, there being no puddings or sweet dishes, cheese with dessert and fruit in season. Wine of the country is plentifully served all through dinner—a most excellent tonic even if not appreciated as a drink.

Here is a general *menu* of an Italian dinner, and if the *padrona* be advised beforehand to cook and fry in butter, she will do so. Oil, I know, is very much disliked by English people, though really it is purer than the inferior butter so often used in English kitchens, and really Italian fritters, under a skilful hand, would puzzle many a delicate palate to detect the savour of oil.

Coffee and rolls can be ordered at any hour in the morning. Both the bread and milk is excellent in Rome, and the latter often ordered by the doctors as the chief diet for their patients.

The last meal—supper (*la cena*)—is composed principally of salads, cold meat, fish, wine, and fruit. With the Italian, this last meal in the day is a very movable feast, the time ranging from eight o'clock to ten o'clock, P.M.; but this late hour is certainly not advisable to those who suffer from indigestion.

I think this method of living will be found the cheapest and most comfortable for an artist (or professional of any kind) to live in this capital, and the *padrona* of the house is a kind of protection to her, and often takes a motherly interest in the young foreigner under her wing.

I should certainly consider this a preferable way of living to being more independent and taking merely a bedroom, another style of living among many professional people, and I shall treat of this later on, but first I must enter into the cost of the style of living I have been describing, and which would be

called living *en pension*. Well, it can be found for 4 lire a day, including everything, viz., a simply furnished bedroom (with perhaps the use of a little sitting-room), three good meals, such as I have described, lights, boot-cleaning, and general attendance; a *scaldino*,* or fire, would be, in winter, a small extra.

A *padrona* is always open to an offer, particularly if her room is engaged for the whole season; and rather than lose "a let," would accept any reasonable offer, more especially now when everyone in Italy is suffering from money difficulties and stagnant commercial affairs.

Now, as to public *pensions*, these are too much frequented by the English in the centre of the city near Piazza de Spagna, where they take people in for 5 lire a day; but this would not be so private or home-like as my *padrona* arrangement; still, it would have other advantages in the shape of society, fires, and more refined cooking.

And now I must speak of the "independent style of living" adopted by many, but not nearly so pleasant. A room, or studio, is taken in some quiet locality of Rome, and this room converted into a kind of gipsy-tent or veritable holdall; very wonderful have been some of the arrangements and contrivances I have seen! The bed is screened from sight with festooned draperies, and the rest of the room dressed up with hangings and *bric-a-brac* till the prosaic bed-room is metamorphosed into a cosy boudoir or artistic studio. It is here my little artist friend sits and works from morn till eve.

As regards her domestic arrangements she finds it more economical to engage a *donna di facienda*, † who, for a mere trifle will come in for two or three hours a day to attend upon her and do the necessary cleaning. Her dinner is sent daily from a "restaurant," and costs 2 lire 50 c. a day, and so generously is she supplied that this dinner serves her for supper as well.

Of course there is a kind of store cupboard in the room filled with many excellent things, such as marmalade, jams, biscuits, potted meat, and sundries of sorts which help to supplement the daily fare. She also possesses every appliance for hot water, and with her spirit lamp and tea-pot never wants for the cup of tea at 5 o'clock.

Some of these studios have nice kitchens attached to them with the beautiful Roman water (*Aqua Marcia*) ready at hand, and when this is the case, many people cook their own food and only have a servant once a week for a general "clean-up."

The bread, butter and milk can always be ordered up to the door. The tradespeople are most attentive to foreigners, and trust them (I think) too much for their own profit.

There is one particular I have omitted, and that is the "washing." This is an expensive item in Rome where no servant is kept, and, therefore, obliged to be sent out. The charge for the simplest ironing is exorbitant. In the case, therefore, of living alone in a studio or room a woman is generally engaged to iron in the afternoon; but of course this would depend on what accommodation the studio and bedroom offered; if impossible, some cheap arrangement would have to be made with a washerwoman, who, if engaged by the month, would undertake to do the ironing at a moderate cost.

* "Una Camera moligiata"—An apartment or furnished room.

† Landlady.

‡ Floor.

* Landladies.

* Brazier or portable stove with hot cinders.
† Maid-of-all-work.

When there is a *padrona de casa*, she undertakes the washing and ironing with her own, charging a small extra to her daily account.

In all the large houses and palaces of Rome the entire washing of the resident families is done in the fountain below belonging to the establishment.

Rome is so overwhelmed with artists and professionals of all kinds during the season, that no young girl need ever live alone, and indeed it would greatly smooth over one difficulty if she found a companion, as it is not considered proper for any girl to walk out alone, and the rule is hardly ever broken even among the lower orders. And although great liberty is allowed to the foreigner still, let me strongly advise young women never to walk out unattended or they will subject themselves to rude staring and insolent remarks.

I am sorry to say that Rome is the last city in the world where a woman can go out unprotected; her presence is in no way respected, and she is molested with men whispering in her ear, and following her to the very door of her dwelling.

Should it happen that a girl finds she must live alone in a studio (or room), then, of course, she has to be very careful in her selection of friends.

To get over this inconvenience and not to exclude herself from all society, it is advisable that she should reserve one day in the week for the double purpose of seeing her friends and exhibiting her works of art. This brings her publicly to notice and enables her to sell her pictures and receive fresh orders. I have known many young artists flourish in this way.

Now the usual charge for a studio unfurnished (if taken for the year) is 30 lire a month, this is the very lowest price obtainable; but for a large studio, with bedroom attached, the rent varies from 60 to 80 lire a month; if taken for the entire year it would be half this price, viz.,

30 lire and 40 lire a month, the proprietor as long as he makes a certain sum a year being utterly indifferent as to the length of the let. There is no difficulty in hiring the necessary furniture for both studio and bedroom, and the price would be something very moderate.

All house-rent is dear in Rome on account of the heavy taxes a houseowner has to pay, but, beyond this item, you can live very inexpensively and even almost luxuriously on small means in this Capital.

It is, though, very necessary to study the market-price of provisions to prevent yourself from being cheated; the Roman servants are not above making themselves richer at your expense! There is always the tariff published in the daily papers and this when once studied is a great defence.

Strangers not speaking or understanding the Italian language are at a great disadvantage, for though the higher orders speak French fluently, the lower classes only speak their own tongue. I advise, therefore, before coming to Italy, a careful study of the language. It is not difficult and could be sufficiently acquired for domestic purposes in one or two months.

Should the "professional" who wishes to come to Rome, be a painter, let me suggest that the room or studio be taken in "*Via Magutta*," as the famous English sculptor Gibson has endowed in that street an English academy for artists where they can copy and paint from morning to night (models supplied). The entrance fee is only fifteen lire a month.

There is little more to say on this subject. I have discussed three different methods of living generally adopted by professionals; but there may exist, unknown to me, many other ways. I can but speak of what my own experience and knowledge has taught me, and of course it is impossible to lay down a rule on such a matter, everything depending on the

amount of money that can be spent. In my treatment I have taken for granted that my artist is poor, but rising. Notwithstanding, a rich person could adopt the same methods on a larger, superior scale.

Before ending my prosaic facts I must give a few motherly hints to the young. It is a great mistake to live in Italy as you have lived in England; the climate is different, and the air is quite a tonic, and as all overheating of the system conduces to fever, it is wisest to select a lighter diet and to eat very sparingly of meat. I have noticed that all who keep to the English diet, indulging in great quantities of meat generally suffer sooner or later, whilst those who live more like the Italian are seldom ill or suffering. If you wish to keep healthy and well eat sparingly therefore of meat, and be careful to keep yourself warmly clothed in the house. In fact, I say, "Don your cloak and furs when sitting in your house, and throw them off when you go out for your walk." The truth is that the houses are very cold in the winter, and the outer air warmer, as the sun is as powerful as in summer.

To those who may be thinking of coming to Rome to try their fortune by teaching, let me tell them that there is no opening here for teaching English to foreigners. The Italians seldom care to study our language, and the few scattered pupils that might be mustered would not repay the trouble and loss of time. The Italians pay very little, and think nothing of offering 1 lira, or 1 lira 50 c. for two hours' instruction.

I sincerely hope these few words may be useful and helpful to at least one of my fellow-creatures.

"For the great wants and needs of man
Have wide manifold unfoldings;
And countless as the stars in heaven,
The variegated mind of men.
But to content one human soul
No greater feat I ask and claim."

VARIETIES.

A BEAUTIFUL THOUGHT.

St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine, was a woman of the most elevated, tender, and devoted piety, and her affectionate and beautiful character has passed into a touching type of womanly saintliness for all ages.

Speaking of her end, Thomas Fuller, the quaint church historian, says:—

"St. Monica, drawing near her death, sent most pious thoughts as harbingers to heaven, and her soul saw a glimpse of happiness through the chinks of her sickness-broken body."

Waller has versified this in the well-known lines:—

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks which
time hath made."

MR. PRESERVED FISH.—One of the oddest of Christian names is "Preserved," and perhaps the strangest instance of its occurrence in real life is the case of a Mr. Fish of New York, who bore that singular prenominal. About the middle of last century, a vessel was wrecked on the New Jersey coast, and when washed ashore, a little child was discovered, secured in one of the berths, the only living thing left. The finder named the boy Preserved Fish, and he bore the name through a long and honoured life to the grave, having made for himself a good position in society.

HOW THEY LIVED IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN BESS.

It is often said, but it is quite a mistake, that Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour breakfasted on beef-steaks and ale, and that wine was such a rarity as to be sold only by apothecaries as a cordial. The science of good living was as well understood in those days as it is now, though the fashion might be somewhat different.

The nobility had French cooks; and among the dishes mentioned by writers of that day we find not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, rabbit, capon, pig, but also red or fallow deer and a great variety of fish and wild-fowl, with pastry and cream, Italian confections and preserved fruits, and sweetmeats from Portugal; nay, we are even told of cherries served up at twenty shillings a pound.

The variety of wines can hardly be exceeded at present; for a writer of Elizabeth's time mentions fifty-six different kinds of French wine, and thirty-six Spanish and Italian wines imported into England.

JUDGE NOT.—The more earnestly we are engaged in trying to make ourselves useful, the less time we have to study about the motives and doings of others. And however careful we are to appear as we are, and to make our actions and purposes harmonise, others may still mistake our motives and our characters. Therefore, by judging others, we wrong them and ourselves.

AN ORIGINAL WAY OF PASSING THE TIME.

When Anthony Trollope, the well-known novelist, was in the post office department, a man kept writing the most outrageous and violent letters of complaint about postal arrangements from some remote part of Ireland.

Trollope was sent off to investigate, arriving at his destination very wet and hungry one dark winter night.

He was met at the door in the most hospitable manner by a delightful old gentleman, who immediately ordered brandy and water very hot.

Then came dinner. Trollope must stay the night. A charming daughter joined in with the old gentleman.

After dinner, Trollope reluctantly proposed business. His host was grossly affronted, and would not hear of it.

The next day, Trollope again pressed the old gentleman about his complaint.

He became very confused. "Well, you see," he said, "the fact is I haven't any complaint; it's all humbug. It is very lonely up here, and so—and so, as I like writing letters, I took to writing to the Post Office—just to pass the time!"

DON'T BE STUPID.—The melancholy girl who thinks the whole world is going all wrong should reflect that, fifty years hence, those days which she despises will be called "the good old times."