

WHY WE SHOULD SEE ITALY

Travelers to Italy are so many, interest in the sights of Italy is so widespread, it seems at first thought superfluous to ask why we should see Italy. But the very wealth of a traveler's experiences sometimes keeps his mind so focussed on fascinating details, that he fails to realize the extent of the benefits that come to him as the result of his journey.

The land itself is one of the most beautiful on earth. Its head rests on the snowy Alps. The storied Mediterranean Sea has worn its shores into picturesque magnificence of line. Warm south winds and fertile soil make the country glow with verdurous color.

Italy is inexhaustibly rich in the works of a splendid past. Her classic architecture and her later mediaeval and Renaissance architecture include masterpieces that have never been surpassed in artistic feeling and artistic skill. Her treasuries of sculpture and painting hold some of the most glorious things ever created by human powers.

These are sights actually visible in material form to the eyes of one who visits Italy. But even greater still is Italy's historic past, which the traveler, at every turn, feels lingering in the air about him. One great purpose in seeing Italy is to get oneself in closer touch with the marvelous Latin race, that made Italy for more than a thousand years the working center of the whole civilized world. The great generals, the jurists, the engineers, the builders, the great philosophers and orators and writers of old-time Italy, were

among
shaped
character
ing force
to the tv
reality a
their pov
Own
debt to
to-day h
present s
The mur
pire twe
the mode
governm
gineering
the comm
We all s
lish, Fre
for peop
hosts of
of Latin
erary we
ideas, ar
Moreo
significan
of the C
of the -
nearer th
tian chu
the who
all men t
Rome; t
Thousan
to water
2

among the strongest decisive doers that have ever shaped life for succeeding generations. These great characters and the events in which they were the moving force, which are so likely to be shadowy and unreal to the twentieth century man, gradually take on vital reality as one sees Italy, and so increase incalculably their power to instruct and inspire.

Own own life, now, wherever lived, is in positive debt to ancient and mediaeval Italy. The laws that to-day hold European and American society in their present shape were partially made for us in old Italy. The municipal system worked out in the Roman Empire twenty-two hundred years ago is the father of the modern municipal system, and, logically, of federal government. A surprisingly large part of the engineering skill of modern times is founded solidly on the common-sense and ingenuity of Roman engineers. We all speak the language of Rome. Any good English, French, or Spanish dictionary holds surprises for people who do not realize the classic pedigree of hosts of words they use every day. The masterpieces of Latin literature are immortal. Its children,—literary works inheriting from its spirit or its stock of ideas, are still being born.

Moreover, outside Palestine itself, no land was so significantly concerned with the early outward sweep of the Gospel of Christianity. Palestine was a part of the vast Roman empire. On Italian soil, still nearer the empire's heart, many of the earliest Christian churches were organized. No letter written in the whole history of the world has meant more to all men than one which Paul sent to a congregation in Rome; the writer died in Rome and lies buried there. Thousands of martyrs shed their blood on Italian soil, to water the new Faith and make it grow. The

martyrdom of Peter stands commemorated to-day by the central Christian church of the world, built over his tomb. We have to thank the political and social organization of Rome for the historic development of Christianity. The wide reach and splendid organization of the Empire were mightily instrumental in spreading and establishing the Gospel of the crucified Christ. The Empire already covered the whole known world around the Mediterranean. Conquering warriors or captive warriors and missionaries carried the Gospel into barbarian France, England, Germany, Scandinavia,—all over northern Europe. Moreover, it was the later political break-up of the Western Empire which gave the popes their historic opportunity to grow in the splendor and might of temporal power, with all the long train of divergent spiritual consequences thereof.

Seeing Italy thus means not only coming into temporary personal touch with noble monuments of the past, but through them with some of the greatest men and the greatest events in history. It means not only a vital quickening of one's old interests, but a multiplication of interests, the result of which in after years can hardly be foreseen. Much that would otherwise be passed by and lost will be seized and enjoyed because the traveler possesses the key to it. Books, magazines, daily papers, lectures, the talk of returned voyagers, all these, as they touch upon Italy's past or Italy's present or Italy's work for the world in general, will have ever new meaning and ever increasing significance.