

PEASANT ART IN ITALY



EDITED BY
CHARLES HOLME

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PREFATORY NOTE

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POSITANO, SALERNO, CAMPANIA. FROM
A WATER-COLOUR DRAWING BY W. RUSSELL FLINT

INTRODUCTORY NOTE. BY SIDNEY J. A. CHURCHILL, M.V.O.

ETHNOGRAPHICALLY Italy extends much beyond the limits of the kingdom as at present constituted, the natives of Nice, Malta, Savoy and Trent being considered as Italians, and enjoying all the rights and privileges of Italian subjects, notwithstanding the fact that politically they are under alien dominion. Like some of its neighbouring empires, the kingdom of Italy is a combination of various nationalities, which, previous to the union of Italy as it is to-day, presented a good deal of divergence of customs and aspirations, although almost all these nationalities belonged to the Latin race. The Italians of the North are more assimilated to Gallic ideas; those of the Bergamasco to Teuton influence; and in Lombardy Austria has left her mark. Venice and the South, with its Oriental relations, show much of the Eastern in the character of the people. It must not be forgotten, too, that the mercenary hordes that were enrolled under the Papal standards have also left traces of their sojourn in the land. The Albanian and other colonists who settled in Italy have retained their individuality and customs unaffected by their surroundings, and, like them, the Lombard colonies, which were settled down for political and other purposes in different parts of Italy.

Before the Union of Italy the land was subject to the feudal system, and the peasant proprietor, as he is now, was an unusual factor. That he had comparative wealth must be assumed from the prohibitions enacted against him in the Sumptuary Laws of different regions. Thus, in the city of Arezzo and its province, in the year 1568, the peasant woman was not allowed to wear silk garments of any sort with the exception of a silk net for her hair, a silk bonnet, silk ribbons and a silk girdle; round her neck she was permitted to hang a necklace, not exceeding three scudi in value. Her girdle was not to cost more than that amount, and she could wear two gold rings of the same value. She could have a rosary valued at one scudo; while as trimmings for her bodice or petticoat and sleeves, which were then always detachable, she could employ velvet, silk, damask and any other non-prohibited stuffs. She was allowed a hat of silk or of straw—thus showing an early use of straw for the head-dress—provided that no gold ornaments were used by her except as rings. These prohibitions give one some idea of the affluence the late cinquecento peasant must have attained to in Central Italy if it was necessary to enforce such limitations.

At this same period in Tuscany the peasant woman was allowed to wear the silk garments already mentioned together, with a necklace

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of silver beads. She could display a girdle of velvet and silver studs, with silver buckles and silver-gilt bodkins hanging therefrom. In 1562 the women of Pisa were limited to wearing cloth, a pair of cloth sleeves, a girdle of velvet, with silver-gilt mounts, and its bodkins, two silver-gilt rings, a pendant cross of silver-gilt hanging from a silken end, a straw hat, chemise, collar and cuffs, bonnet and apron of ornamented linen, silk being prohibited in the decoration thereof. This Sumptuary Law of Pisa goes into details of the peasants' attire at weddings as well as at baptisms. At Pistoia, in 1558, the prohibitions were stricter, but we learn that the peasant woman was allowed to wear a *ghirlanda*, or wreath, on her head.

The costumes described in these Sumptuary Laws have been mentioned because, until almost recently, they were the actual attire of the peasants of Italy. The changes in the local costumes are due to the development of railway communication and emigration. The Presepe figures give us more exact details of the costumes of the well-to-do peasants; whilst examples of the now rare Capodimonte ware show us equally faithful representations in colour of the dresses of the peasants of Southern Italy. Pinelli, and other contemporary artists, early in the nineteenth century published engravings of the costumes of the Roman peasant of the day. Baron von Capellius, at Naples, possesses a series of colour drawings for the Capodimonte ware already referred to. These drawings, by different hands, are the originals which were reproduced in the Royal Pottery works at Naples.

Although the picturesque and costly costumes of bygone days are destined to pass away with the times, there is still an immense wealth in the handsome peasant dresses of the Italy of to-day. These garments, and the paraphernalia that go with them, are of extraordinary value considering the humble conditions of the wearers. Sometimes the abandonment of a local costume may be brought about quite accidentally. Some peasant women wearing very attractive costumes, which at once made them conspicuous at Naples whilst they were on their way to the baths at Ischia, felt so embarrassed by the attentions bestowed on them that they changed their more showy dresses for plainer and less attractive black costumes. On their return home the rest of their families all followed their example, and thus a picturesque costume disappeared from that particular district.

The richness of the peasant costume in Italy was not by any means confined to the South. In the North, in Savoy, Piedmont and Lombardy the national head-dress of the women was an imposing and costly affair. The Northern provinces were responsible for the

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more ornate head-dresses of the women. In the Val d'Aosta the women wore a very ornate head-covering, and in Lombardy the *ragiera*, an example of which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In Southern Italy the climatic conditions necessitated greater protection for the head, and the women thus wore a kerchief or scarf. Further south still the women spent so much in dressing their hair that they could not afford to wear anything which was likely to hide the artistic effects produced by their hair-dressers..

The particular crafts of the Abruzzo and the lace-making and embroidery of Italy are both being dealt with in this volume by experts : the former by the learned editor of the *Rassegna Abruzzese*, and the latter by the distinguished authority on old Italian lace.

With regard to woodwork, that which is most characteristic is the result of the patient untrained skill of shepherds and cowherds. The Sicilian shepherds are responsible for spoons of carved wood, with handles representing full-length figures or other designs, and for spindles used in spinning wool or cotton, likewise more or less crudely decorated. Drinking-cups of decorated wood, and small caskets, as well as large marriage-coffers, are produced both in Sicily and Calabria. All parts of Italy produce poker-worked or chip-worked wine-flasks, boxes for flint and tinder, yokes for cattle of all kinds, shepherds' staves, and supports for glasses. The decorated tables and the glasses used by the itinerant water-vendors of Sicily are too well known to require description. The decorated corset-supports, made in Umbria, Tuscany, the Abruzzo, as well as in Sicily, are in Calabria connected with an ancient nuptial custom, the peasant bridegroom offering to his bride on their betrothal a corset-support, decorated by himself with graffiti, representing love and its attributes. More useful decorated wooden implements are drills for preparing the earth to receive the seed at the sowing ; moulds for cheese, butter, or cakes ; carved wooden milking-stools ; tobacco-pouches and buttons of horn. In the Valle di Ayas, in Piedmont, where goats abound, their owners vie with each other in decorating them with carved wooden yokes. The cow-yokes of Parma, ornamented with chip-work and studded with brass, are peculiar to that region. Carved wooden spoons, of design quite different to that met with in South Italy, are to be found amongst the shepherds of the Val d'Aosta and other parts of Piedmont.

The pottery used by the peasant has given him much scope for his ingenuity of form and design. Each district has its special characteristics. Some of the puzzle-jugs have secret contrivances whereby the drinker, instead of getting water into his mouth, may get it upon his clothes. Others have perforations in the neck for

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the snow to cool the contents. Pottery, whether plain or coloured, is common to all Italy. In Sicily oil-lamps are to be found in every conceivable shape. In Naples some of the forms, made about a hundred years ago, are very interesting. In South Italy and in Sicily terra-cotta figures, representing native types, are fairly common. Caltagirone, in Sicily, is famous for such figures in terra-cotta. Naples produces coloured figures of popular characters. Much more useful and homely utensils for domestic use exhibit a good deal of originality both in design and decoration.

Until quite recent years, before the penetrating influence of the railway had disturbed the local customs and traditions of centuries of seclusion, the methods employed by craftsmen and artisans were those which had been inherited from previous generations of workers. Castellani, searching the world over for certain methods of soldering sand-like particles of gold to beads for necklaces, at last noticed Etruscan-like work in the personal adornment of a peasant woman. Questioning her, he learnt that what she wore was modern, and made in the district whence she came. From there Castellani brought workmen to Rome, and with their assistance revived the goldsmiths' work of the Etruscans. The methods employed were the secrets of those who exercised them. Even to-day there is only one family who knows the alpha and omega of the craft.

It is the same with all crafts. Certain districts, and certain families only in a place, possess particular secret processes for making dyes for textiles or colour for pottery. Protection has been a fundamental principle of all Italian crafts, from the earliest recorded days till now. For this protection, and for the exclusion of the stranger—even from a neighbouring town—guilds were formed under very strict regulations, limiting the members and imposing special conditions of a most drastic character for the admission of the candidate whose forbears had not belonged to the same profession, or for those who were not natives of the place.

The influence of the Church on peasant art has always been very great. The demand for carved figures, for ornamented wood-work, for embroidered vestments, for chased and delicately enamelled church plate, has been a powerful incentive in the development of local talent, with results which may be seen in many out-of-the-way, almost inaccessible, mountain hamlets of the present day. It is wonderful to think that such beautiful work has been produced by peasants far away from the educating influence of the greater centres, where skill is more easily acquired by emulation and the study of what others have accomplished. The monks and nuns were, some of them, accomplished artists; but their talent, in many cases, was shut



“IL PASTORELLO.” FROM AN OIL PAINTING BY ARISTIDE SARTORIO

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up in their monasteries and convents, from which the public was vigorously excluded.

The spontaneous manifestations of peasant art, as they previously existed, have gradually fallen into decay all over Italy. The efforts of a few enthusiasts, who have endeavoured to preserve both the folk-lore and the peasant art of the people from entire decay, have resulted in important action towards the preservation of what still exists, and the revival of ancient crafts and industries which had almost disappeared. Notable amongst the schools which have been organised is that which is associated with the name of the Duca di Cesarò, so ably managed by the Baronessa di Renzis; the Institution lovingly presided over by the Princess di Resattana—the *Industrie Femminili*, of which M^{me}. Elisa Ricci is an energetic supporter and office-bearer; the more commercial enterprises which have achieved important revivals, such as the *Salviati* works at Venice; the *Castellani* workshops; the *San Giorgi* textile reproductions; Miss Mabel Hill's schools for woodcarving and textile industries at Taormina, and many others. Some of these institutions, it is true, do not produce work which is now used by the peasants, though they are restoring and improving crafts which the peasants exercised in the past.

This brief introductory note on the art of the peasant in Italy would be incomplete without the mention of individuals to whom the country should be grateful for having zealously striven, at much personal sacrifice, to create ethnographical museums in Italy. Foremost for his intelligent industry, for the capacity which he brought to bear on his work, and for the results obtained in the endeavour to awaken his countrymen to the importance of the subject, was Lamberto Loria, to whom was to have been entrusted the writing of an introduction to this book. No one could have crowned these efforts to make the present work a satisfactory record of Italian peasant art with better hopes of success than he who had ransacked Italy in its most inaccessible mountain fastnesses for examples of, what seemed to be, trifles of carving on wood, horn or bone from the hands of nomad shepherds; fragments of iron wrought by illiterate village blacksmiths, as expressions from their innermost souls; delicate flowers laid as votive offerings before some Madonna; lacework-grills shaped out of iron by men whose talent was innate and whose decorative ideas sprang from the nature around them; and bits of lace, drawn-thread work, carpeting, bed coverings, leather-work, etc., without end. Loria was not satisfied with simply collecting, his was not solely the desire to acquire and possess—he went further. He tried to propagate a love for the

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study of Ethnography around him, and begged his friends and admirers not only to collect, but to note the circumstances connected with the object acquired and its place of origin. He created quite a nucleus of intelligent co-operators; he enlisted the sympathy of wealthy enthusiasts who helped to finance his efforts; and finally, he saw the culmination of his work at the *Mostra di Etnografia Italiana* at Rome in 1911, whither he had carried the Ethnographical Museum already founded by him at Florence. Not satisfied with even this triumph, he endeavoured to induce the Government to create a Central Ethnographical Museum at Rome with the material already accumulated. Unhappily, his sudden death in April of this year prevented him seeing his work permanently housed at Rome under official support, and, incidentally, deprived this volume of its most distinguished collaborator. Loria was born in Egypt in 1855, of Israelite ancestry.

Already, in 1881, Professor Pigorini proposed the creation of an Italian ethnographical museum; Dr. Angelo Mocchi, as far back as 1902, collected material for a collection of Italian peasant art; Bellucci's unique work has been referred to elsewhere in this volume; Professor Paolo Montegazza, at Florence, has gathered together much material with regard to folk-lore; Professor Giuseppe Pitrè, of Palermo, has seen the efforts of years of patient collecting rewarded by the creation, under his competent administration, of the Sicilian ethnographical museum at Palermo; Professor A. Salinas has already exhibited, at the National Museum in Palermo, the costumes of the natives of the Piano dei Greci and the interior of a peasant's room.

One of the most important elements of popular life in Italy is the Festa; the further south the traveller goes the more importance he will find attached to local Festas, which are usually bound up with local traditions. Some of these Festas are of very ancient origin, many are exceedingly picturesque. In the ancient kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and especially in Continental Sicily, there are some Festas which enter into the life of the people and which they cling to in an extraordinary manner. There is the Festa of the Liquefaction of the Blood of Saint Jenuarius at Naples, which must be seen to be realised. The vehemence of the woman of the people, her imprecations if the miracle is delayed, and the frenzy with which the miracle is greeted, are proofs that the ancient superstitions in this land still hold deep root. The Festa at Nola; that at Montevergine, when the lower classes vie with each other in the turning-out of especially decorated carriages, the horse-trappings being most ornate and the travellers all being dressed alike; the Festa of Santa Rosalia,

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at Palermo ; that of the Madonna della Lettera, at Messina ; and innumerable other Festas all over the country, when fairs also take place, are really extraordinary proofs of the vitality of ancient traditions in Italy. The Festa of the Ceri, at Gubbio, has been very fully described by H. M. Bower.* Various papers have been published in Italian on the Festa of Santa Rosalia at Naples. At Viterbo an extraordinary *macchina*, representing a campanile of Gothic architecture, standing about 19 mètres high and weighing about five tons, is paraded in the streets on the Feast of S. Rosa, which takes place on September 3rd. Seventy-two devotees of the Saint help to transport the *macchina* through the streets after nightfall. These devotees are all dressed in the livery of the Saint. The first *macchina* was made in 1664, when Viterbo was the scene of great desolation owing to an epidemic of plague. The "Gigli" of Nola (illustrated here) are also colossal structures of carved wood, surmounted by the statues of saints or angels. The Festa takes place in June.

There are several chariots in Italy. That of Santa Rosalia at Palermo has been mentioned ; another is to be seen at Seminara, in Calabria, and yet another at Matera in the Basilicata. The latter is in honour of a dark-complexioned Madonna in the duomo of Matera. There are various other dark-visaged Madonnas who are venerated in Italy. That in the Carmine at Naples has a very famous popular festivity connected with her cult. There is also a Black Madonna in the hills near Messina. Some of the chariots used for these festivals are enormous structures, displaying much taste and ingenuity in the construction, so as to make them portable in places where the roads are by no means easy for such huge transportation, and where narrow streets make it difficult to turn such unwieldy tabernacles.

Superstition takes hold of the people all through their lives in Italy. There is scarcely a man or woman, and certainly not a child, who does not carry about from birth some sign of superstition. The child may carry a small *cornio* and a bell ; if his mother is much under the influence of the church the child may also carry an image of the saint after whom he is named. Later on in life he will come in contact, as circumstances call, with other amulets which he must resort to in order to secure immunity from troubles. He may have been the subject of votive offerings of "eyes" against eye trouble, or of some wax representation of any other part of his body, according to such infirmity as he may be threatened with or actually suffering from. Some churches are full of these votive offerings, as well as of pictures of the sufferer and the "grace" which has been vouchsafed him. In the district of Naples there is no house without its lighted

* London, Folk-Lore Society, 1897, 8vo, illustrated.

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candle, or lamp, before the Madonna or the patron saint of the house. Some of these lamps are of silver to show that the offerer has made some sacrifice in order to perpetuate his votive gift; others are of simple glass, with oil and a common wick. F. T. Elsworthy has written on the "evil eye" and its widespread superstition, and R. T. Gunther on "The Cimaruta, its construction and development";* but no one has yet made a more exhaustive comparative study of the amulet in Italy than Professor Giuseppe Bellucci, of Perugia, who is the authority on the subject. He possesses an extraordinary collection resulting from many years of patient and persistent study.

Coral has always been considered a very effective amulet against the "evil eye," and against disaster of all kinds. It will be noticed that the baptismal belt illustrated (No. 290) is thickly studded with coral beads. There is hardly a woman in central Italy who does not wear coral as some part of the decoration she carries, whether as a necklace, rosary, or as a single bead sewn on to some other amulet. In ancient times the coral necklace formed an essential part of the wedding outfit of the woman of the people. It was also held to be a potent amulet where women were concerned. There are other stones which preserve the wearer against the bite of snakes or other venomous reptiles. Certain shells, and even beans, preserved the wearer against witchcraft, sorcery, and misfortune. Some amulets, to be worn by women who are desirous or likely to bear children, are hired out during the period of gestation, just like jewellery is hired out for weddings. Representations of keys are worn to preserve the wearer against epilepsy. These also are given out on hire by certain individuals who are proficient in the knowledge of what amulets should be used on special occasions. The key was also considered efficacious in cases of infantile convulsions.

One of the amulets which has been much written about is the *unghia della gran bestia* (horn of the great beast). This should be the rhinoceros. I have seen a whole horn which belonged to one of the Popes. It was in a finely gilded and stamped leather case, with the former owner's arms impressed upon it. This amulet was employed to preserve its possessor against poisoned food. Bellucci states that the horn employed to-day usually comes from the hoof of a deer.

That these objects are of very ancient origin may be seen from the representation of them in ancient pictures. Bambinos are depicted sometimes with amulets round their necks, and amulets of all kinds have been dug up from the most ancient graves.

* London, Folk-Lore Society, 1905, vol. vi.

PEASANT HOUSES

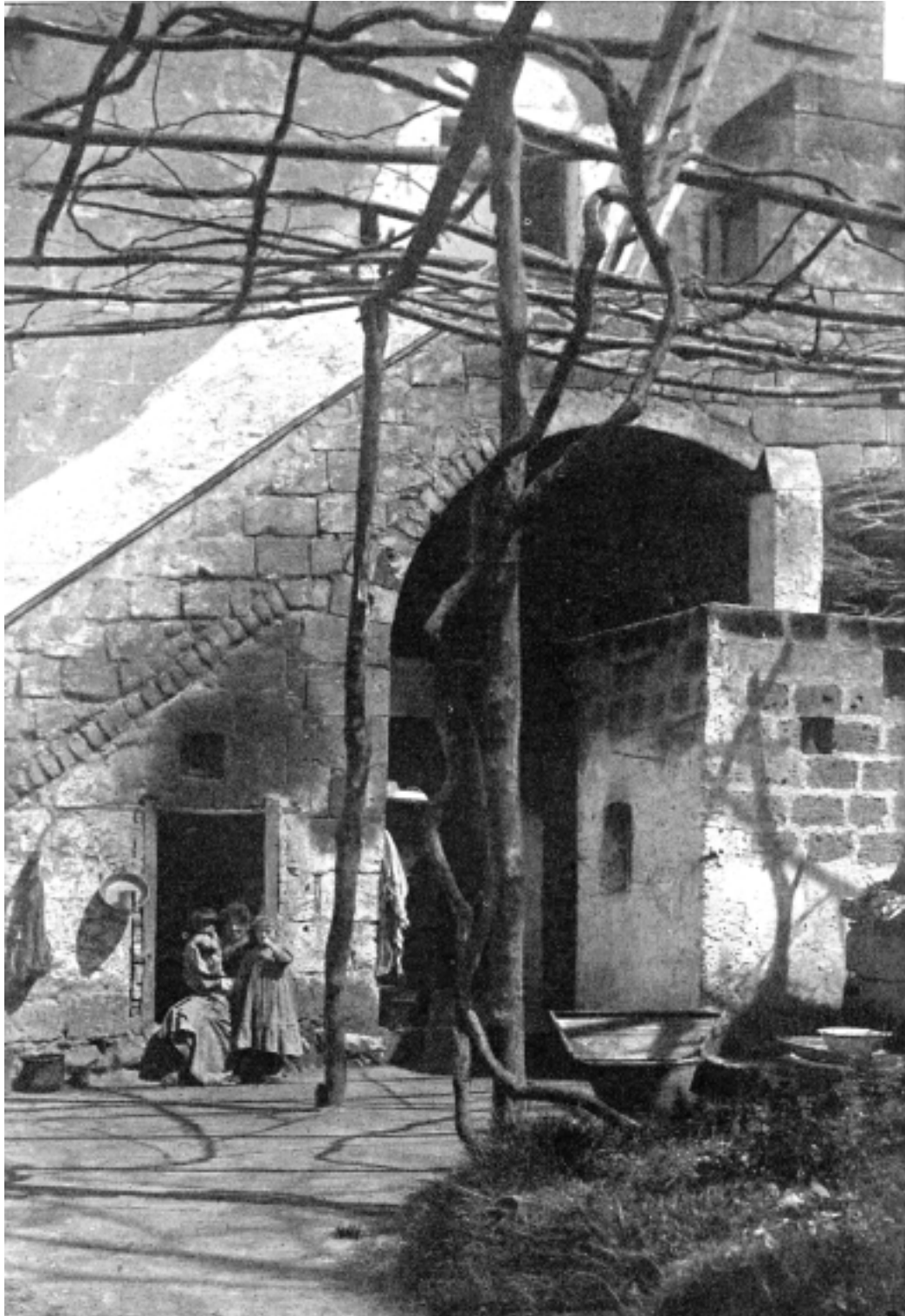


Photo J. F. Greve

1 PEASANT'S HOUSE AT S. AGATA, SORRENTO, CAMPANIA

PEASANT HOUSES



2 PEASANTS' HOUSES AT CADORE, VENETIA



3 PEASANT'S HOUSE AT CADORE, VENETIA



4 PEASANTS' HOUSES AT CADORE, VENETIA

PEASANT HOUSES



4^A MARINA GRANDE, CAPRI. FROM A
WATER-COLOUR DRAWING BY W. RUSSELL FLINT

PEASANT HOUSES

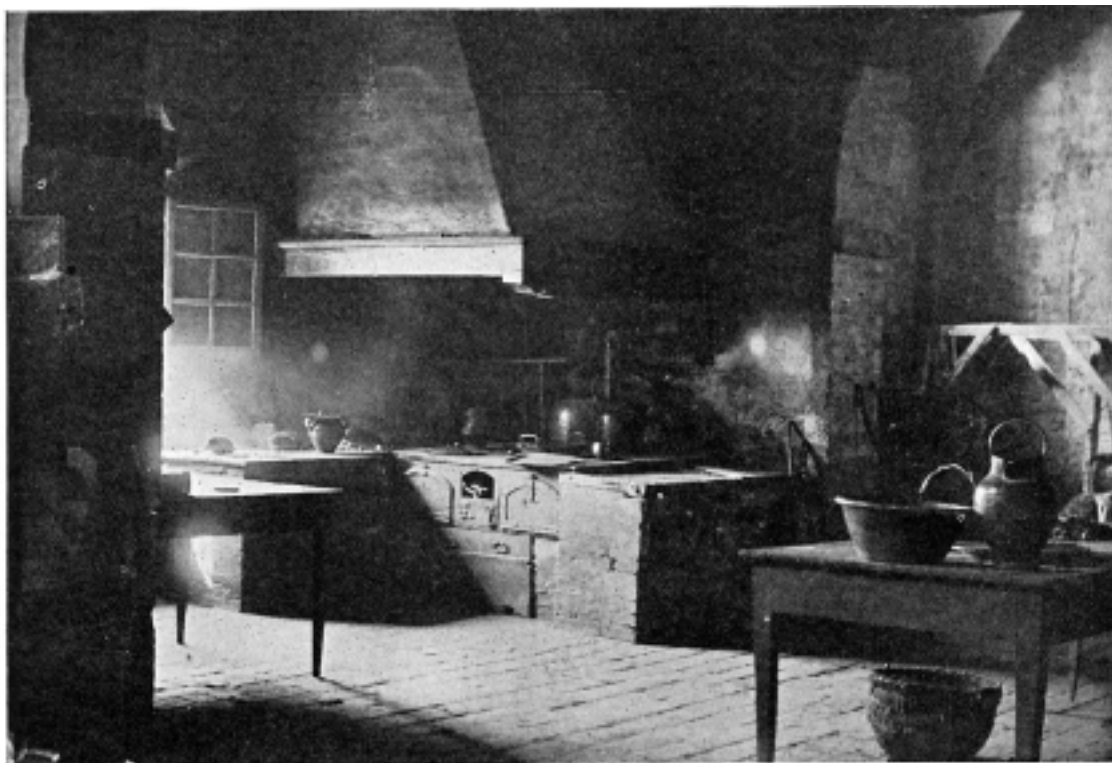


Photo H. Burton

5 PEASANT'S KITCHEN AT MONTE OLIVETO, SIENA, TUSCANY



Photo H. Burton

6 PEASANT'S KITCHEN AT CASENTINO, TUSCANY

PEASANT HOUSES



7 PEASANT'S HOUSE IN THE PUGLIA



8 SHEPHERD'S HUT AT LAZIO
Photos Ins. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo

PEASANT HOUSES



Photo Roccavilla

PEASANT HOUSES



Photo Roccavilla

IO PEASANT'S HOUSE IN THE VALLE DI AYAS, AOSTA, PIEDMONT



Photo Roccavilla

II PEASANT'S HOUSE AT GRESSONEY, PIEDMONT

PEASANT HOUSES

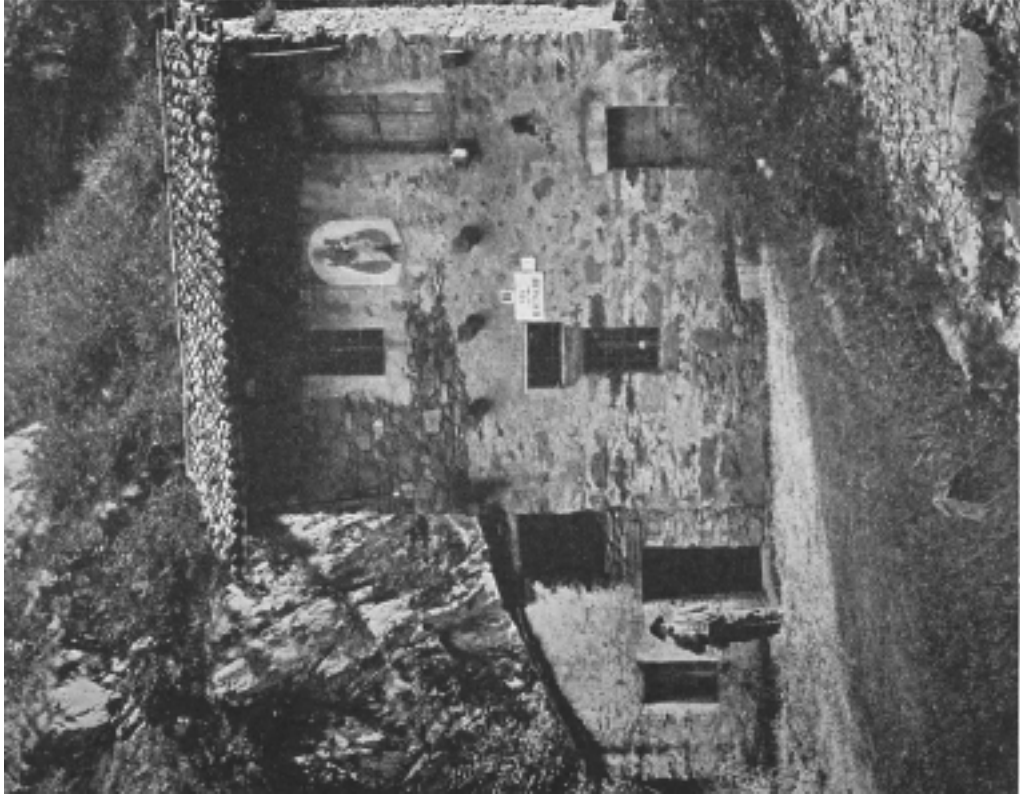


Photo Roccavilla

12 PEASANT'S HOUSE IN PIEDMONT, SHOWING A CHARACTERISTIC WALL-PAINTING

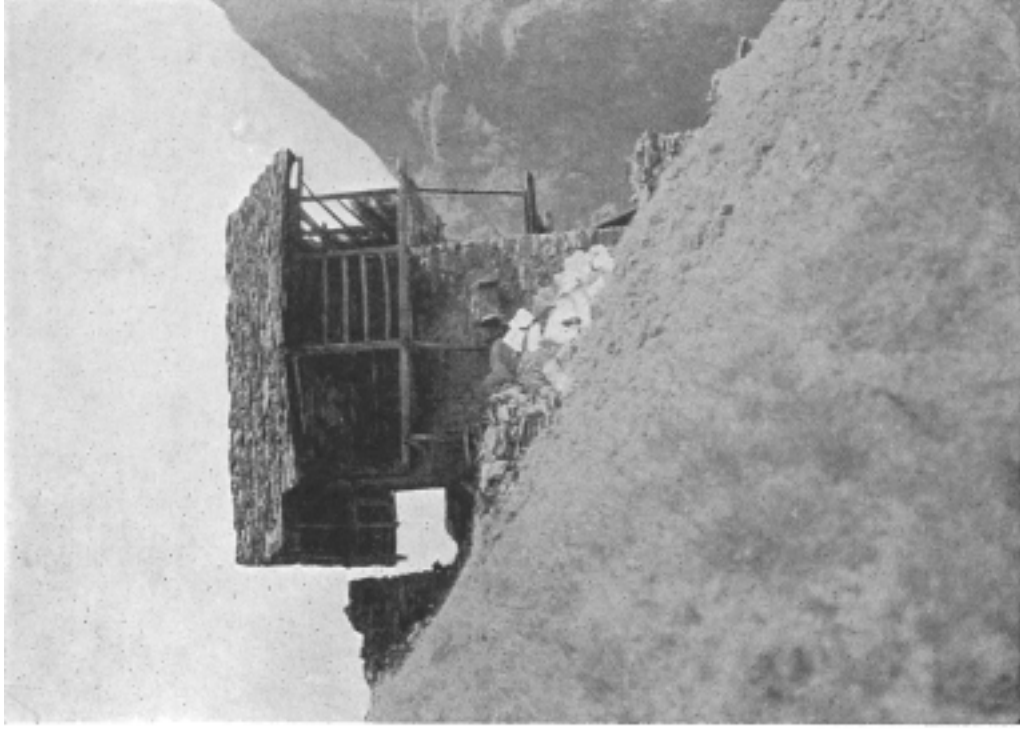


Photo Roccavilla

13 PEASANT'S HUT IN THE VALLATA DEL LYS, GRESSONEY, PIEDM

PEASANT HOUSES

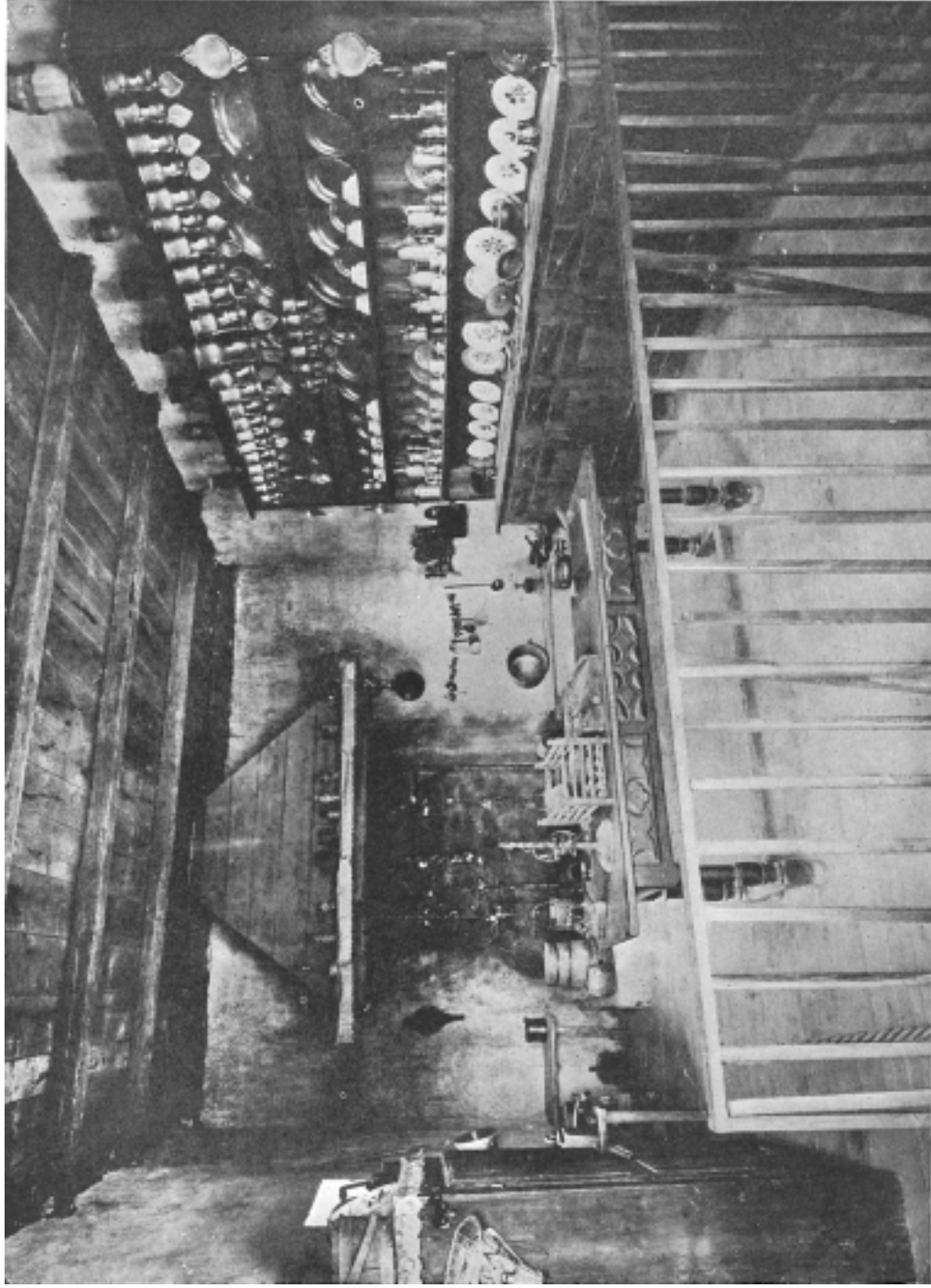


Photo Ins. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo

14 PEASANT'S KITCHEN FROM SARRE, VAL D'AOSTA, PIEDMONT

PEASANT HOUSES

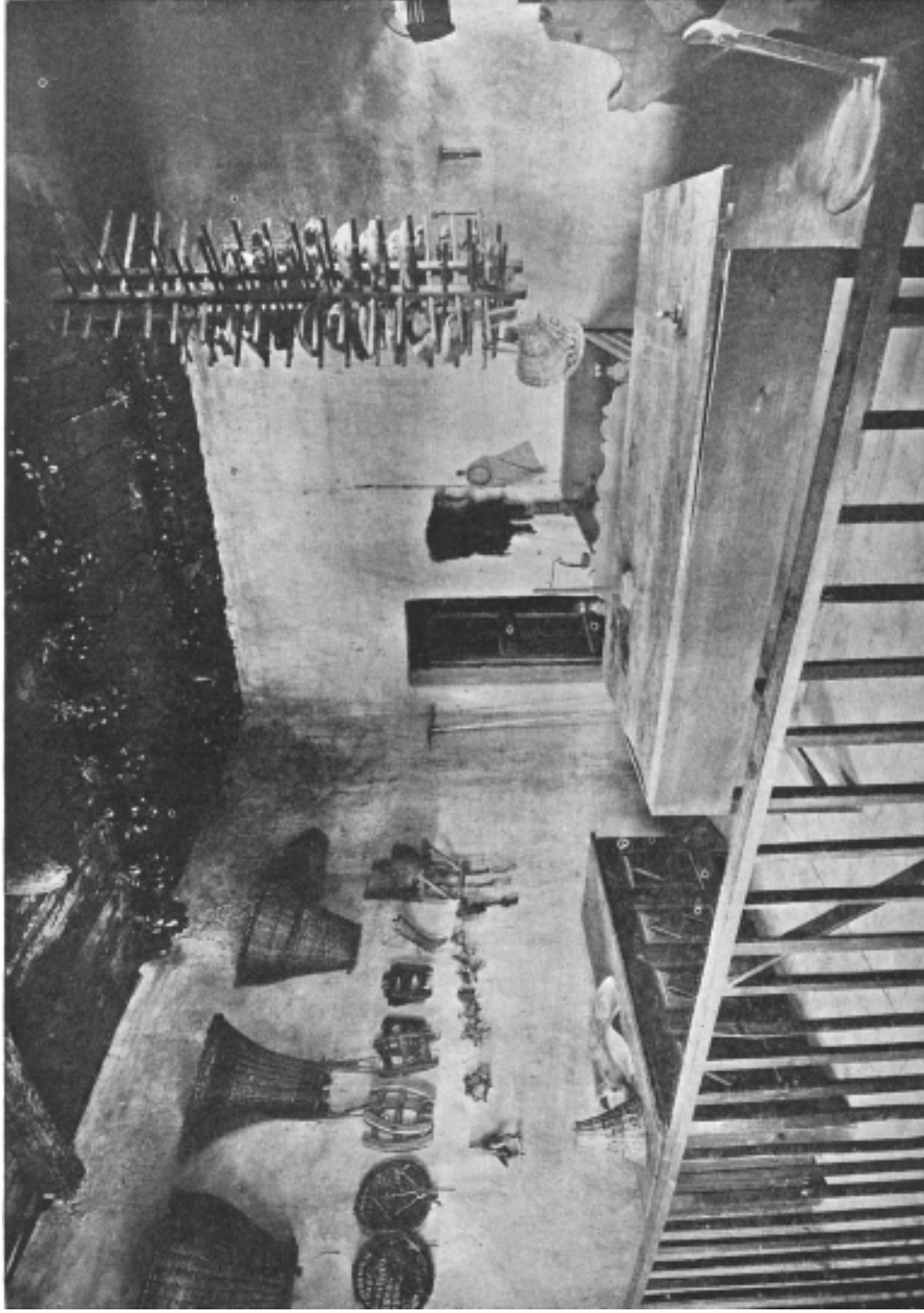


Photo Ins. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo

15 INTERIOR OF A PEASANT'S HOUSE FROM SARRE, VAL D'AOSTA, PIEDMONT

PEASANT HOUSES

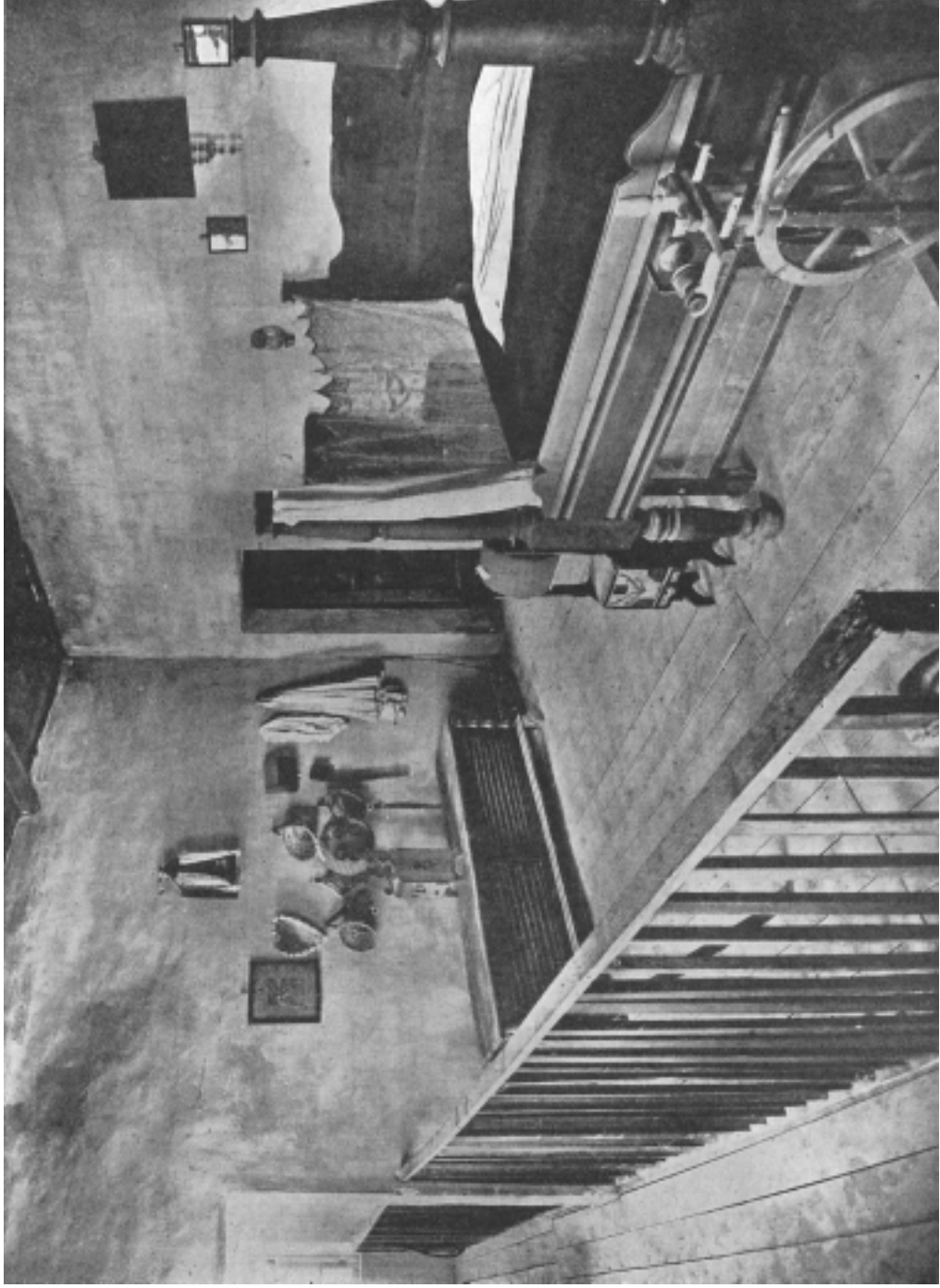


Photo Ins. Ital. Grafiche, Bergamo

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



17 PEASANT WOMEN WASHING CLOTHES, AOSTA, PIEDMONT



18 PEASANT WOMEN AT THE DOOR OF A HEMP MILL, BIELLA, PIEDMONT

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo Roccavilla

19 AN ALPINE COURTYARD, PIEDMONT



Photo Roccavilla

20 WEDDING PROCESSION AT VALDENGO, BIELLA. PIEDMONT

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo Roccavilla

21 PEASANTS GATHERING APPLES, BIELLA, PIEDMONT



Photo Roccavilla

22 PEASANT CHILDREN, COGNE, AOSTA, PIEDMONT

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo Roccavilla

23 PEASANT WOMAN SPINNING, CASTELDELFINO, PIEMONTE



Photo Roccavilla

24 PREPARING BASKETS FOR THE VINTAGE, BIELLA PIEMONTE

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo Roccavilla

25 PEASANT CARRIERS, VALLE DEL CERVO, BIELLA, PIEDMONT



26 PEASANT CARRIERS, VALLE DEL CERVO, BIELLA, PIEDMONT

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo Roccavilla

27 FEEDING THE FOWLS, BIELLA, PIEDMONT



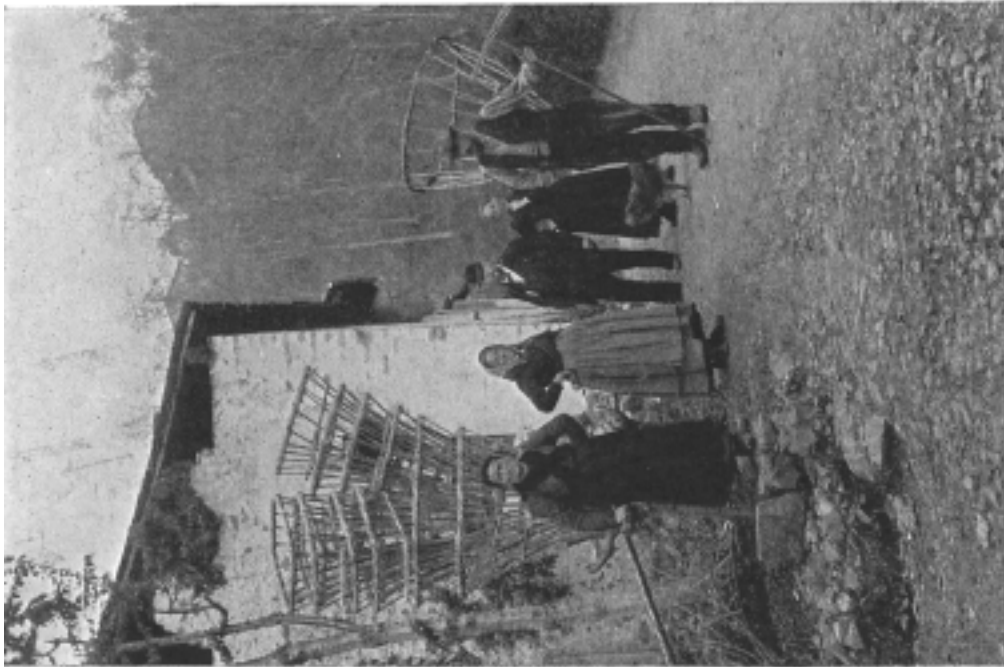
28 PEASANTS BUTTER-MAKING. AOSTA, PIEDMONT

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



28A "PASTORALE." FROM AN OIL PAINTING BY ARISTIDE SARTORIO

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



29 PEASANTS WITH CARRIERS, BIELLA, PIEDMONT



30 PEASANT WOMAN OF ANCONA, MARCHES, GOING TO THE
FOUNTAIN WITH EMPTY AMPHORAE

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



31 WOMEN MAKING PILLOW-LACE
PESCOCOSTANZO, ABRUZZO

PEASANT ART IN THE ABRUZZI.

BY VINCENZO BALZANO

TO those who are interested in the humbler manifestations of Italian art the land of the Abruzzi offers a plentiful harvest: from the most original designs of animals on door-knockers and locks, fashioned by the workers of Alba Fucense, to the keys pierced by Mastro Romolo di Rosciolo, objects which are preserved in the Industrial Museum of Rome; from the iron studs, inlaid with flowers and birds of deeply cut steel, wrought in the workshops of Castel di Sangro, to the cast and beaten copper brasiers, with their ornamentation of cherubs' heads and figures of animals, made by the coppersmiths of Sulmona; from a little iron box, with decorations in bas-relief of more recent date, to a wrought-iron balustrade, with spirals terminating in large roses, bunches of grapes, or clusters of tiny buds, roses, forming an inseparable part of the solid structure and appearing to be a magical flowering of the metal itself.

The workers of Abruzzo, more especially of Pescocostanzo, are celebrated for their gold and silver ornaments for personal adornment. Many of these ornaments are of traditional use and the designing and fashioning of them are also handed down from ancient times. The filigree workers make *criniali* (large ornamental hairpins) and *cannacche* (necklaces of filigree beads). The goldsmiths of Pescocostanzo also excel in the Florentine style of working in gold; that is, the arrangement of small finely cast pieces, delicately retouched by the engraver and soldered together to form some ornamental object. Knitting-needles and distaff-holders, decorated with dancing cherubs, eagles, etc., are made in this manner, as are the gold rings used for betrothals and the dainty phials for perfume (*odorini*), which are one of the first and humbler presents to the betrothed.

The art of wood-carving has always been a decidedly popular one in the Abruzzi. Often, impelled by an artistic instinct, a shepherd will take a block of the hardest wood and, with patient and pious labour, fashion from it the rough form of a saint for his village church, a work marvellously beautiful to him and to those who watch its gradual development. But it would take too long to treat of the traditional evolution of wood-carving among the peasant artists of the Abruzzi, and much of the work has little claim to the attention of posterity; it is hardly necessary to observe that it was mostly very primitive.

Verses carved into the wood of marriage-chests greeted the bride upon her arrival in her new home, as follows: "Onestá fa bella donna." A chest with such an inscription carved on the top

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is in the possession of the commune of Guardiagrele. Verses carved on the staves of the shepherds, with an infinity of patient ornamental detail, are strongly reminiscent of old Etruscan myths and beliefs long since forgotten, but which have left behind them curious customs and rites, the traditions of which still cling to the newer generations who do not seem able to break away from them.

In one show-case at the Rome exhibition of 1911 a collection of combs was shown, used for scraping the waste particles from hemp, patiently carved and picked out with some sharply pointed tool; bone buttons, a peg for a loom, a pipe and various articles carved by cow-tenders; cheese-stampers and a doll (the sign for a nursery milk vendor), of which an impression in wax showed the fine and accurate tracery and carving. Very much admired were two razor cases, decorated with symbolical designs, and many wooden spoons for domestic use. In another show-case were exhibited benches and stools, upon the decoration of which the shepherds spend much of their time during the summer season, jealously guarding them from each other until their completion, and even destroying them if they recognise them to be inferior to the work of another. This custom of carving benches is especially popular among the shepherds of the valleys of Velino and Tonca di Leonessa. Two horns aroused curiosity, the larger was for domestic purposes, the smaller was for the personal equipment of the shepherd, who filled it every fortnight or month with salt to season his monotonous daily meal of bread and water (*pancotto*). These horns were covered with ornamental designs and rough figures. A collection of corset-supports, of which the designs were varied but all illustrative of the same symbolisms of religion or love, was shown.

A *cacchio* or wooden collar for ewes at milking was remarkable; also a small book-case with a design of peacocks, and various vases and bottles. Just below was a wooden statue of Sto. Eustachio, carved by a shepherd of Scanno as a votive offering of his house. Ingenious but faithfully reproduced, it was a rough copy of the wooden statue of the patron saint of his parish church. There were numerous needles for knitting stockings, distaffs, and staves, among which was one cut from box-wood and worthy of notice because of its grotesque figures. There were also pilgrims' staves and the small tabernacles carried in pilgrimages to Loretto and Casalbordino; of real interest was a collection of tobacco-boxes, with horn sides and bone bottoms, mostly ornamented with religious and fancy subjects. Of interest, too, were the powder-flasks, rungs for the backs of chairs, two wooden "coppi" or platters, and razor-boxes with various compartments and openings.

To prove that the ceramic arts flourished in the Abruzzi and

PEASANT ART IN THE ABRUZZI

were marked with much originality and independence of thought during the middle ages, abundant evidence has come down to us in the small terra-cotta plaques, cleverly masked with colours, which produce a most beautiful effect, especially when they reflect the sunlight. These plaques were set into the battlements and turrets of the castles of the nobility from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. They were let into the façades of old churches and into belfry walls. The reason for thus decorating the exterior walls of houses with these majolica tiles is perhaps due to motives of economy, but a more likely cause would be the fact that the houses were built at such altitudes that they were constantly swept by the freezing winds of *tramontana*, which are terribly destructive to the softer ornamental stonework.

The more one considers that the hundred or more examples of majolica work, discovered by Professors De Nino and Pincuella in their zealous researches, were all produced by potters with the most elementary sort of instruction and with the scantiest of means at their disposal, pioneers of their industry, humble workers lacking the comfort or incentive of praise and without hope of fame, the more these men deserve the admiration of posterity ; but even this is denied them, for their names remain unknown.

I am inclined to think that the art of the potter must have been instinctive in the natives of Castelli, for this region has always been exceedingly rich in the clay required for the industry ; fuel is plentiful and comparatively cheap, and there is every facility for carrying the finished work to market. These advantages the Castelli seem to have possessed from time immemorial.

But who can tell the names of these potters of the Castelli ? Their modesty, or perhaps their lack of culture, has hidden that much at least from us. One imagines a teacher, then a second teacher with a following of pupils, forming a school, and the seeds of their teaching falling upon minds already imbued with that odd mixture of piety and fantasy, which was the salient feature of the art of the period, has resulted in a harvest of those singular productions of which many pieces have come down to us : bottles and lamps made in the shape of grotesque figures ; clay modelled into equestrian figures of men and women ; women seated ; women with their arms akimbo and baskets balanced on their heads.

Many of these curious pieces, brightly coloured in green, blue and yellow (red was not introduced until the nineteenth century) are still to be found in the homes, both of the rich and poor, of the Abruzzi, together with the ring-shaped flasks peculiar to Pugliera. But this industry has degenerated, until to-day its only products are

PEASANT ART IN THE ABRUZZI

those popular utensils for domestic use which abound in the fairs and market-places of the Abruzzi, and which, in the brilliance of their enamels and a certain rough skill of workmanship in the tracery of the flowers, and, above all, in their colouring, still reveal traces of the sterling qualities of the ancient school.

However, a school is in existence, dedicated to F. A. Grue, and frequented by students who may revive some of the ancient glory of the art. Fedele Cappelletti, of Castelli, is doing good work also, drawing inspiration from the ancient models for which his ancestor, Candeloro, was famous. The records of his life's labour are his wonderful paintings on plates and vessels of majolica. For many years he has been quietly pursuing his work with palette and brush among the clay-pits and roaring ovens of Rapino. It is to be hoped that the last secrets of this ancient art will not disappear with him.

The ceramics common to Paleno, Torre di Passeri and other places in the Abruzzi are still made in the numerous small potteries of the district, and are baked in rude ovens sunk into the earth around the country huts, which, with their cupola-shaped roofs, look for all the world like small temples to primitive gods. Here the more favourite shapes seem to be bottles, flagons and *fiaschetti*, squat-shaped vases with narrow necks, and flat or ring-shaped water-vessels; the decoration always consists of bunches of flowers, the colours being laid on with a coarse brush, or sometimes in spots dabbed on with a small piece of sponge suspended from a stick.

In ancient times, another industry which flourished in the Abruzzi was that of ornamental leather-work. A leather case, in which the monstrance is kept in the church of Francavilla al Mare, and which is decorated with figures and emblems raised from the none too pliable surface, reminds one very forcibly of other work from the tool of the great Nicoló da Guardiagrele. At one time a throne of leather, worked with gold and silver, existed in the church of the Rosario in Guardiagrele. It was a wonderful piece of work, executed by Giuseppe Barterii, who lived in that city in 1500.

In no other form of decorative art more than in that of designing and making embroideries and carpets, have those ancient hieratic and heraldic figures been perpetuated, which, twenty centuries before Christ, had their origin in the nearer Orient. With these carpets of Pescocostanzo before us, woven of wool and marvellous in the harmony of the colours and bizarrerie of the designs, we are reminded of a legend, according to which, in 1600, a great many young Turkish girls were taken prisoners, after a horrible massacre, and brought to Pescocostanzo. These poor half-starved creatures had been driven inland from the coast and arrived at Pescocostanzo with neither clothes

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nor shelter. Many were charitably received into the poorer homes. They were, however, able to earn their bread, for these tousled black heads remembered a glorious and ancient art of their own country, and the large black eyes, still dazed with visions of slaughter and bloodshed, longed for the beautiful designs and soft harmonious colours of their home surroundings. That is the legend ; but the fact remains that the pleasant sound of the looms was heard in Pescocostanzo even before 1600, and that the women-folk had succeeded in weaving wonderful symmetrical designs from a strange medley of figures and colours.

In Scanno the arts of weaving and dyeing had reached so great a pitch of perfection, that when the inhabitants of Santo Lemio put up their first looms, a Scannese woman, Columba Mancinelli, whom Torcia calls "ablest of the place," was chosen by them to teach the arts of weaving and dyeing. King Ferdinand held discourse with her in Caserta, and she received decorations and rewards. The embroideries worked by the women of Scanno also filled Torcia with wonder and admiration. In describing the blue cloth head-coverings, he writes : " They were woven in various kinds of threads and covered with intricate embroideries, which were worthy of Arachne."

As far back as the end of the fifteenth century, the Dominican monastery in Castel di Sangro was a hive of well-organised industry, and as productive as any of the great factories in our busy cities of to-day. A constant procession of mules, carrying bales of crude wool, streamed up to the monastery gate, to emerge from another gate loaded with finished carpets. Another factory in the same city belonged to the feudal lord Ferdinando Francesco d'Alvalos (d'Aquino), Marquis of Pescara, and without any intention of reconstructing the mediæval history of this art of carpet weaving, I will merely draw the attention of the reader to the records in the "Cronaca Farfensi" of a kind of school for women, in San Benedetto di Vallegriana, where beautiful tapestries for churches were woven. These records, according to Muratori, demonstrate the falseness of the assertion, that many of the materials in use in Montecassino and San Liberatore dalla Maiella came from Constantinople.

And now we come to the history of lace, which was a product of the Abruzzi in ancient times, just as it is now, and which probably also had its origin in some instinct retained from pagan times. Its history shows the same rapid progress to the very summit of art and beauty. In the beginning of the seventeenth century lace was made with a double thread upon a double row of large pins, without any pins intervening in the breadth of the lace. This caused the lace to be of uniform width and of one texture. Later, when pins were made

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smaller, it was possible to place them between the width of the lace, the work becoming more complicated or simpler according to the disposition of the pins, and designs thus more varied. With the introduction of machine-made pins of every size and thickness, lace-work has grown more and more intricate, and some designs form a kind of metallic incrustation on the lace.

In the mountainous districts, which were very isolated from the centres of artistic culture, such as Castel de Monte, Calanio, Santo Stefano, Liccoli, Genopalene and Pescocostanzo, the inhabitants of which had, from earliest times, shown quite as much aptitude and taste for artistic industry as anybody else, the beautiful art of lace-making remained in its most primitive stages; whilst in Aquila, where the industries of building and weaving were in their glory during the sixteenth century, the art was cultivated to a far greater degree and had a particular and original stamp of its own. The ancient *Aquila* point has remained famous to this day.

It may be said that a close examination of the technical methods of the manufacture of old *Aquila* point reveals the fact that it is composed of a derivation from the conventional seven fundamental stitches of lace-making. This particular combination of stitches represents a new and original departure in the history of the technical side of lace-making. *Aquila* point is not unlike English point, but it has certain net stitches and raised designs which add greatly to the difficulty of its making, and which give to it a lighter, yet richer appearance.

The value of much of the lace of the Abruzzi lies in the method of its making; for while Venetian point and Valenciennes are generally made in many separate portions which are afterwards joined together, *Aquila* point is made with a great number of bobbins, the net groundwork, together with the whole of the design, unfolding themselves gradually, without the operator having to go over any part of the lace twice. The thread used in *Aquila* lace is also noted for its fineness and whiteness; it is all spun by hand and is far superior to the thread in Brussels lace, which, when it is washed, loses much of its lustrous appearance, whereas the *Aquila* thread remains unchanged in its exquisite whiteness.

The little villages of the Abruzzi are numerous, but if we are to believe old chroniclers, each of them had its separate and distinct costumes, all of them attractive and quaint in style and greatly enhancing the natural beauty of their wearers. In their picturesque variety the costumes are significant of both the temperament of the people and the temperature of the region: sombre and severe in those parts where the climate is rigorous, among mist and

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snow ; gaily ostentatious, with brilliant colouring, in those parts near to the sea, where the sky is always blue and the sun always shines.

In Pettocano the women wear tight, high belts round their waists, covered with blue cloth and trimmed on the front and around the arm-holes with ribbons and strings of silk and gold. The sleeves are held on by silk laces and tassels. The skirts fall with ample folds to the ankle and are trimmed round the bottom with ribbon ; half way up a row of lace runs around the skirt. Over the dress an apron is worn which is called *senali* or *mantera*. It is of the whitest silk and woollen cloth, although some peasants now wear other aprons of coloured linen, while the more coquettish ones wear silk. Around their breast they wear the whitest of linen, which reaches up to the throat and is trimmed with lace of more or less fine quality. The hair, which is drawn over the temples, is dressed in a fashion which is copied from the women who live in towns. The head is covered with a conventional white linen head-dress called *tovaglia*. This consists of a piece of linen, about a half a yard wide and two yards long, the ends of which are trimmed with long fringes. It is arranged in such a manner that one half falls down over the shoulders to the waist, the other half is folded lengthwise on the forehead into three folds, which fall down at the side of the face and are joined to the back part of the veil at the broadest part of the shoulders. The head and bust of the wearer appear to be in a niche, or frame, of the purest white linen, which gives great refinement to the features and intensifies the beauty of their colouring. In winter a large shawl (mostly of red woollen cloth) is worn over the other garments, folded in two and arranged with one end tucked inside the other and hanging loosely, in swallow-tail fashion. To-day this custom is only maintained among the elder women of the community. The use of the *fasciatrelli* is, however, quite general. This is a scarf of crimson, or other coloured woollen cloth, which is worn over the *tovaglia* in wet weather. For ornaments, the women wear earrings of various shapes, rosaries and strings of gold beads, and chains and necklaces of gold. On their fingers are rings, with stones or without, and other similar feminine trinketry.

In Cansona, a little district hidden away amongst the western valleys and glens of Maiella, the men wear short trousers to their knees, with white stockings, waistcoats and jackets, and broad-brimmed, cone-shaped hats, which they adorn with ribbons, peacocks' feathers, or flowers. The women wear bodices from which the long sleeves are divided. Their skirts, detached from the bodices, are made with broad pleats and trimmed at the hem with coloured ribbon. An ample apron of woollen, or other material, covers the skirt,

PEASANT ART IN THE ABRUZZI

and on their heads they wear white kerchiefs, folded into a triangle, which they knot under the chin, with two little ends hanging loose. Both men and women protect their feet with strips of leather, which are bound on with strings, or thongs of leather tied round the ankles.

The inhabitants of Scanno wear woollen clothes, whatever the season may be. The men wear short trousers and dark blue jackets, with green or mixed coloured waistcoats and light blue stockings. The skirt worn by the women is, perhaps not inappropriately, called *casacca*. It is of a subdued shade of green, or, upon the occasion of a wedding, scarlet, with tiny pleats at the back which are gathered and joined on to a piece of cloth shaped into the fashion of a loose coat. This garment, once donned, makes the wearer quite shapeless. The bodice (*comodino*), which is divided from the skirt, is of dark blue cloth, with full sleeves pleated at the shoulders and at the wrists, and is trimmed at the edges with coloured ribbons. In the front it is closed nearly up to the throat, and at the back it has small flaps forming tails. The method of buttoning is rather curious and original. Around the neck the *comodino* is trimmed with gathered lace, which forms part of the under-bodice. The apron, which is called *mantera*, is made of material woven of undressed wool and dyed scarlet, crimson, pale grey or violet. The *cappelletto*, a most original head-dress, is shaped like a turban and only differs from that of a Mussulman in being a little higher and having a longer end. It has no folds in front and can be taken off without being undone. The stockings are white, yellow or blue, and not infrequently the shoes are adorned with silver buckles. The face is protected from the rigorous winds of winter by means of a handkerchief folded into a long strip, which is taken under the chin over the cheek and ears and fastened on the top of the head.

At Giulianova the men wear conical hats with large upturned brims, mostly made of thick black felt; round the widest part of the crown a lace is tied, or sometimes a velvet band with an iron buckle. Their waistcoats are of red cloth, with steel or brass buttons, and trousers either quite long or cut short to the bend of the knee. On their heads the women wear a piece of calico, doubled in two, the underneath part falling down the back to the waist, and the upper piece as far as the shoulders. The *bustino*, or *corpetto*, of black or scarlet cloth, is a garment which is fastened tightly round the hips and worn loosely round the chest. In summer time the wide sleeves of the under-blouse take the place of the sleeves of the *corpetto*, which are only worn in the winter. The aprons are very full, but short and mostly white. Chains of coral, with gold mountings and composed of two or three strands of beads, complete the costume.

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



32 PEASANT WOMAN OF ALFEDENA, ABRUZZO, FETCHING WATER
FROM THE FOUNTAIN



33 PEASANT WOMAN OF PESCOSTANZO, ABRUZZO, MAKING
PILLOW-LACE

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



From an Etching by Pagliano

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo, Lombardi, Siena

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo H. Burton, Florence

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo H. Burton, Florence

SCENES FROM PEASANT LIFE



Photo H. Burton, Florence



40 PEASANT COSTUME FROM PESCOSTANZO,
ABRUZZO



41 PEASANT COSTUME FROM PESCOSTANZO,
ABRUZZO

PEASANT COSTUMES



39 PEASANT WOMAN WEAVING, ARI, ABRUZZO



40 PEASANT COSTUME FROM PESCOSTANZO,
ABRUZZO



41 PEASANT COSTUME FROM PESCOSTANZO,
ABRUZZO