

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07918-1 - A Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily: Tending to Illustrate Some Districts which Have Not Been Described by Mr Eustace, in his Classical Tour

Richard Colt Hoare

Excerpt

[More information](#)

A

## CLASSICAL TOUR

THROUGH

## I T A L Y.

---

JOURNAL OF A TOUR FROM SIENA TO THE MAREMMA, VOLTERRA, POPULONIA, ISLE OF ELBA, PIOMBINO, AND GROSSETO.

---

COR MAGIS TIBI SENA PANDIT.

SUCH are the cordial words with which the traveller is greeted, on entering the city gates of SIENA ; and, if I may be allowed to judge by my own particular feelings, he will have no reason to repent of a residence in that city. In many respects SIENA has claims superior to any other town in Italy, particularly as an eligible summer residence. Its situation amongst the Apennines is airy and healthy ; the heat of its climate, even in the midst of summer, is not oppressive : its society is agreeable and unaffected ; and the purity of its language and accent is generally allowed to surpass that of any other province. It becomes, therefore, a most desirable residence for those who wish to be instructed in the language of the country, and who are desirous of avoiding the

VOL. III.

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07918-1 - A Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily: Tending to Illustrate Some Districts which Have Not Been Described by Mr Eustace, in his Classical Tour

Richard Colt Hoare

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 2

## CLASSICAL TOUR

oppressive heats of Florence, the pestilential vapours of the Campagna, and the musquitos of Naples.

As a school of early painting, SIENA disputes precedency with Florence; and Guido da Siena, who was born in 1191, and who has left a painting in the church of S. Domenico, with the date of 1221, seems to bear away the palm of priority from Cimabue, whose birth is stated to have been in the year 1240.

Many excellent specimens of early fresco paintings are dispersed about the city, especially one of Christ by Sodoma, in which there is a dignity of character, added to an humility most truly appropriate.

But the object most worthy of the traveller's notice at Siena is the Cathedral, which, as far as regards its pavement, may be deemed *unique*. The following minute account of it, extracted from the *Diario Senese* by Gigli, and the *Lettere Senesi* by Della Valle, may prove interesting to my readers.

The *Duomo*, or cathedral church, claims particular attention, as one of the finest buildings in Italy; and a slight sketch of its history may not, therefore, be unacceptable. This metropolitan church occupies the site of a Heathen temple, dedicated to the goddess Minerva. It was consecrated for the Christian worship by Pope Alexander the Third, in 1169. In 1250, the choir was faced with black and white marble, and in the succeeding year the rest of the edifice. The marble pulpit was erected in 1266; and in 1284, the façade towards the Hospital, executed, after the design of Nicolo da Pisa, by the three sculptors Lapo, Donato, and Goro, who on that account were declared citizens of Siena. Duccio of Siena began the picture for the

## THROUGH ITALY.

3

high altar, and completed it in 1310, having received sixteen *soldi* a day for his labour. This picture now stands by the side of the altar St. Ansano, and is coloured on the back. In 1333, the marble façade was perfected, and adorned with various devices. In 1338, at a period when the population of Siena amounted to one hundred thousand souls, the inhabitants began to enlarge their cathedral; but the fatal mortality of 1348 put a stop to their works, and the funds which had been raised for the execution were applied to other purposes more necessary. The particular curiosity, of which this church may justly boast, is its elegant mosaic pavement. Duccio of Siena, in 1350, began that part of it, which is beneath the altar of St. Ansano. In 1424, the pavement under the three steps of the high altar, representing David, Sampson, Moses, Judas Maccabeus, and Joshua, was completed; and forty years afterwards Matteo da Siena proceeded to embellish the part under the altar, of the crucifix, with the history of the martyrdom of the Innocents. The twelve sybills were added in 1483; and in 1500, Domenico Beccafumi, *alias* Mecarino, completed this magnificent pavement, by executing the middle part, next the pulpit.

Many other interesting particulars, respecting the paintings and decorations of this cathedral, may be collected from the *Diario Senese*, by Gigli, and the *Lettere Senesi*, by Della Valle; from whom I have drawn the preceding account of this most beautiful work in mosaic. The style differs entirely from that adopted by the Greeks and Romans, who invariably used small square *tesseræ*, of various colours; whereas these at Siena are large pieces of marble artfully inlaid, and resemble, in effect, drawings in black and white chalk. This exquisite work is held in proper estimation by the *curatores* of the church, is kept covered with planks, and displayed only on particular occasions.

B 2

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07918-1 - A Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily: Tending to Illustrate Some Districts which Have Not Been Described by Mr Eustace, in his Classical Tour

Richard Colt Hoare

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 4

## CLASSICAL TOUR

A beautiful and perfect portion is to be seen under the bishop's pulpit.

SIENA was formerly a Roman colony, distinguished by the title of *SENA JULIA*, and it still bears for its arms the device of Romulus and Remus suckled by a wolf, several of which are sculptured on pedestals in different parts of the city. For many successive years it continued to enjoy its independence and republican honours. About the year 1541, it became a prey to the foreign factions of France and Spain, which at that period disturbed the tranquillity of Italy. In 1554, it was ceded by the Emperor Charles the Fifth to his son Philip, who, in the following year, relinquished it to Cosmo the First, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and since that period it has continued a part of the Tuscan dominions.

Having briefly described the principal features of this city, and whose immediate environs will furnish a variety of good subjects for the pencil, I shall now introduce my readers into a country highly celebrated in the annals of ancient history, and once inhabited by the civilized Etruscan nation, from whose downfall Imperial Rome derived her growing strength and exalted prosperity: but though at present neglected and depopulated, *ETRURIA* will still afford to the antiquary and historian matter for observation and reflection, and many interesting memorials still remain to attest its former existence and rude magnificence.

My winter had been spent partly at Siena and partly at Florence. But the approach of spring, which in Italy is the most delightful season of the year, roused me from the abodes of ease and dissipation, and summoned me to the field in search of new scenery and fresh information. Novelty has always charms, and to none

## THROUGH ITALY.

5

more than to myself. Hence in all my peregrinations I have been anxious to visit districts little known and unexplored by modern travellers. At this time I resolved to penetrate into the country inhabited by the ancient Etrurians, a people, whose language, and even whose alphabet, have baffled the researches of the scholar and antiquary; a people, whose territory was separated from the city of Rome only by the Tiber; from whom the Romans borrowed many an useful art and valuable science; and whose downfall opened the way to that career of glory, which finally rendered their conquerors masters of the world.

Sunday, April 19. I quitted Siena, and for ten miles followed the great road to Florence. I then turned to the left, and proceeded along that leading to Colle, partly through a wood of evergreen oaks, which here overspreads the mountains to the left. The road was good, and within three hours I performed the journey in my phaeton.

Colle, though a small town, is the see of a bishop, and built partly on an eminence, partly in a plain. It is divided into the upper and lower, *alta e bassa*. The approach is rendered picturesque by a fine bridge of one arch, considerably broad and lofty. It is thrown over the river Elsa, which rises at a few miles distance, and flowing by Poggibonsi and Castel Fiorentino, falls into the Arno at the Ponte d'Elsa, beyond Empoli. In the rock and walls adjoining the bridge the water has already worn several cavities, which must prove dangerous to the structure itself, without a speedy remedy. Colle is remarkable for its manufacture of paper, for which there are thirty mills employed in the town and neighbourhood.

In the church of St. Agostino is a good picture by Ludovico

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07918-1 - A Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily: Tending to Illustrate Some Districts which Have Not Been Described by Mr Eustace, in his Classical Tour

Richard Colt Hoare

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 6

## CLASSICAL TOUR

Cigoli, who is called the Florentine Correggio: it represents Christ taken down from the Cross: the figure of St. Jerome, which is introduced on the left, is a very fine portrait. Near the town is a well, formed apparently of ancient sculpture, though not remarkable for excellence. On the four sides are basso relievos, representing, 1. Ploughing with oxen. 2. Threshing of corn. 3. A vintage. 4. Making wine. It is near the house of Agostino Giugni, where I was tolerably lodged. A new hospital is building at Colle, on a scale sufficiently large to contain an hundred and twenty persons.

Monday, April 20. After dinner I left Colle, and took leave of my carriage. The environs are well cultivated; but as I proceeded, the country became wild, woody, and barren. The road in general is ill paved, and very hilly. To Volterra the ascent is long and steep. I was five hours on my journey, in consequence of the badness of the road, the slowness with which I was obliged to travel on account of my baggage horse, and a violent thunder storm which caught me on my route.

VOLTERRA, in point of situation, is perhaps the most elevated town of residence in Italy. It occupies a species of plain, on the summit of a mountain. This was likewise the site of the ancient town, which is accurately described by Strabo\*. There was, however, a great variation as to size; for the ancient walls embraced a circuit of seven miles, while the modern comprise but

---

\* Volaterranus ager mari alluitur: hoc autem modo ædificatum est oppidum. In profundâ valle sublimis et præceps undique collis extat, cujus in vertice planities est, in hac sita ipsius sunt urbis mœnia, ad quam stad. xv. ascensus est ex basi; rupes tota ardua atque difficilis est.—*Strabo*.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07918-1 - A Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily: Tending to Illustrate Some Districts which Have Not Been Described by Mr Eustace, in his Classical Tour

Richard Colt Hoare

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## THROUGH ITALY.

7

three. Although a considerable difference of opinion has existed among antiquaries respecting the twelve towns of Etruria, Volterra has been generally estimated as one. The place it occupies in history, and the numerous fragments of antiquity found in its neighbourhood, authenticated by Etruscan characters, admit little doubt respecting its right to this distinction.

Of the few remains of Etruscan architecture the most remarkable are, the *Porta dell' Arco*, the *Piscina*, supposed to have been originally a reservoir of water, and the walls, which are still easily traced. The two first are very perfect. From the present fortress I descended through different apertures to the *Piscina*. It is divided into three apartments, and is the most perfect specimen of Etruscan workmanship now existing at Volterra. Exact measurements of it are given in a work, lately published, by the Abbate Giachi (page 121—2\*). This gentleman was not only my guide on the occasion, but also shewed me the most interesting objects in the town and its vicinity. If we may judge from the size of the stones employed in the walls and other buildings, the architecture of the Etruscans was simple and bold; and their knowledge of mechanics very great. From them was probably derived the present Tuscan or rustic style. In consistence and solidity it bears the character of their works, as may be seen by many examples at Florence.

If we may estimate the perfection of the Etruscan sculpture, from the numerous basso relievos on the sarcophagi found in this

---

\* Saggio di ricerche sopra lo stato antico e moderno di Volterra, opera del sacerdote Antonio Filippo Giachi, 4to. Firenze, 1786.



neighbourhood, we cannot ascribe to it any very high degree of merit; for though abundant specimens are preserved in the museums, few are executed with skill, or knowledge of the art. But perhaps this may be deemed a partial judgment. Sepulchral monuments were probably kept ready fabricated, by sculptors, to supply the constant demand; and consequently we cannot expect them to exhibit great variety of subjects, or delicacy of finishing. The forms of their vases were equally perfect and elegant. Different parts of Etruria were distinguished for their manufactories of pottery and earthenware. The ware of Arezzo, which was the most celebrated, was red. That of Chiusi differed from the ware manufactured at Volterra, which was very light, covered with a shining black varnish, and decorated with basso relievos, and other ornaments, as well executed as if in bronze. From the numerous sepulchres, or *ipogei*, discovered without the ancient walls, particularly on the hills of Portone and Monte Bradone, have been drawn the valuable specimens of Etruscan workmanship, which enrich the different museums of Europe. But, notwithstanding the number thus sold and dispersed, an extensive collection still remains in the modern Volterra. The principal is that of the *Palazzo Publico*, which has been much augmented by the addition of the celebrated Guarnacci museum and library. It is almost completely disposed in several apartments, and both collections are entrusted to the superintendance of a librarian. An elegant mosaic pavement, found near the ancient theatre, is now lying in one of the rooms. In the forms of the sarcophagi there is little variety, and the same subjects frequently recur. They are mostly drawn from fabulous history, and many from Homer, alluding to the heathen mythology. Some have been gilt, others painted, and the most valuable are inscribed with Etruscan characters. A reposing figure generally forms the lid



## THROUGH ITALY.

9

or cover of the sarcophagus. Many of these are remarkable for the bad proportions of the head and limbs: and, indeed, as I have before observed, few exhibit any excellence in sculpture.

In the Giorgi palace is another collection. One fragment is singular. It represents Polyphemus, with *two* eyes, in the act of raising a rock, to hurl at Ulysses and his companions, who are sailing away in their vessel. This novelty, which may perhaps be ascribed to the inadvertence of the workman, has caused much literary discussion, and given birth to a learned treatise. The figure of Polyphemus is well sculptured.

At the Badia is a small collection, chiefly consisting of vases found in its neighbourhood, many of which are very elegant in form. Here is also a fine Scarabee of Etruscan sculpture.

In the Casa Guarnacci is a celebrated statue of Hercules, by Glycon of Athens, whose name appears on the pedestal. The legs, arms, feet, and lower part of the belly, are in the exquisite style of Grecian sculpture; the muscles strongly marked, and characteristic of the hero and the deity. The head and breast are inferior in every respect. The head appears antique, but from the style and its diminutive proportions, compared with the body, it certainly could not have originally belonged to the *torso*.

Among the numerous *ipogei*, which have been discovered, few remain now open; for after they were ransacked, the entrances were again closed. Still, however, the zealous investigator of antiquities may fully gratify his curiosity, in visiting two which are yet perfect. These are on the *Colle del Portone*, adjoining the Villa Inghirami. One is called *Le Buche dei Saracini*. It is very

spacious, but so low, that I could traverse it only on my knees. From its size and construction, it was probably a public burying-place. The *ipogeo*, belonging to the same villa, is different in structure, much higher, and divided into apartments. Several fragments of alabaster sarcophagi, &c. are still left, in order to give an idea of one of these sepulchres when discovered; for none remain in their antique or original state, having been opened, and perhaps robbed of their most valuable contents, by the barbarians who invaded Italy.

The *Terme*, or baths, of which the form, the pipes for conveying steam or vapour, and some fragments of the ancient mosaic pavements, are still seen, appear to have been of Roman construction. The figure of the theatre, or amphitheatre, may also be traced at Vallebuona. Columns and other relics have been dug up in the vicinity. A cornice of the composite order, discovered here, and supposed to have belonged to the theatre, is obviously of Roman workmanship. But as there were other public buildings adjoining, particularly the baths, in which was found the mosaic pavement, now in the Palazzo Publico, we cannot decisively conclude to what structure such a fragment belonged. The site of what is called the theatre has never been properly searched, so that little can be said respecting its original destination.

The *Casa di Marmi* at Portone, which is described by Targioni, in his Travels through Italy, as entirely built with the fragments of old sarcophagi, no longer exists in the same state, if it ever really did exist, according to his description. But of this I much doubt, for in the whole fabric I discovered only two pieces of alabaster.

So much for antiquities. As to the productions of modern art, little can be expected in a small provincial town.