

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892)

### Washington's Birthday, 1888

We left Venice early in the morning, by train, for Padua, We, i.e. my friend, whom we shall call P. for short and I had been in Venice for several days and has spent most our time swearing, at the weather for it either rained, hailed or snowed separately or in combination all the time during our visit, at the boots, who didn't know how to make a fire, at the stove, that wouldn't draw and finally, at that infernal idiot, who named the country, that we were then in, sunny Italy.

We reached Padua about ten o'clock and immediately began to think of breakfast. This consisted of "Biftek," Spaghetti, rolls strewn over with little black specks resembling fly specks, and that choice product of the Italian vintage, Chianti. I say choice then, for we had never tried it before and its musty aromatic taste touched our palates kindly, but we soon got tired of it.

After breakfasting to our heart's content and rubbing up our Latin to see how much we had to pay for our meal, we started out to see the town. The first thing we came to was a quaint old gate, with an old frame, sort of a Spring Grove Avenue toll-gate house in the center of the entrance. In and about this lounged a number of Custom House officials, with long, wicked looking steel rods in their hands, with which they prodded the loads of hay, that the country people were bringing into the city.

Having nothing proddable in our possession we got through safely and wandered up the main street of the town. Padua is a quaint old town and the buildings are piled together in a sort of happy-go-lucky, go-as-you-please fashion. They have an arrangement here, we noticed it also in Bologna, which is very convenient, if they always have as much rain as it was our fortune to

meet in Northern Italy and that is the Arcade system. The houses, with the exception of the first floor, are built out level with the curb or what serves for a curb in that country and are supported on pillars.

The first floor is, say, ten feet from the street, which leaves a dry, covered but not overly clean walk and this arrangement continues for squares, interrupted only by the intersecting streets. We took a humid and outside view of the old University, which has a modern front and saw a lot of names engraved on a tablet set into the wall. There were probably names of distinguished men, but as we didn't know any of them, we passed on, without, possibly, the proper amount of veneration.

After leaving the University we wandered in through the arcades spoken of above, till we came to quite a large square, to the left of the street. Fronting the street was a small, oval-shaped park, separated from the rest of the square by a stream, perhaps ten feet wide, walled in with white marble. On this wall, at intervals of twenty or thirty feet, were marble pedestals surmounted by statues of notable personages. To the left of the square was a huge building, used as a barracks. The rest of the square was filled with soldiers, drilling, for usual late winter war rumors were in the air and the compact of the Dreibund had just been made public.

The soldiers in their natty uniforms of blue, with gaiters, presented a fine aspect. They were small in size but wiry and active and looked ready for business and I remember thinking that if there should be a war, that Italy would make a name for herself. During the maneuvers the band, which for the infantry is composed entirely of buglers, marched back and forth through the park, playing the most inspiring airs and what is more inspiring than bugle music! After watching them for a while we wandered to an old church across the square, that we had started out to see. In it were many very fine monuments and some exquisite woodcarvings of the

seventeenth century. Shortly after we started for Bologna, on our bicycles. P made it safely and as he had only had it a short time, his movements were rather uncertain and reminded me rather strongly of a man's movements coming home from a Kneipe, Anglicé, a meeting where a man drinks as much as he can and then starts in again to see how much more he can hold.

The road ran through an uninteresting country, to show its contempt. The road need not been so stuck in itself for it was very bad; we certainly weren't stuck on it, although we frequently were in it for they had been having some of that perennial rain that I have been speaking of. The road was so bad, that we had to ride on a sort of pathway at the side, which was ill suited to P. and his unsteady gait.

After a while I heard a noise on the road and a sort of subdued splash in the surrounding country and looking down saw P's head sticking out from a mass of wheels, bundles, etc. Fortunately he wasn't hurt, except as to his feelings and to any question, how it happened, he said, "I turned to look at a pretty girl in a donkey cart." That was a failing of P's, looking at pretty girls, with or without the donkey attachment, but he is married now, requiescat in peace! To soothe his lacerated feelings and scrape of the mud which he had affected, I never knew he was interested in Geology before, we repaired to Trattoria near by and indulged in Chianti!

Oh! long slim-necked bottle,  
Oh! Wickerwork bottle,  
How oft I have gazed on thy rubicund form!  
How oft have I wondered, Oh! Misty Chianti,  
The charm and they power to wean us from self!  
Thanks to thy power, the sky's blue above us,  
The blues have all left us, the sun's shining clear,  
Our bills are all paid and the future looks radiant  
And the fool's sunny Italy really is here!

But I digress. About an hour after we left the Trattoina, Bella Signorina it began to rain, for a change, and as we were in sight of a small town called Battaglia and the road left the

railroad at this point, we decided to take the train, rather than a wetting. We reached the station, where our arrival seemed to excite a good deal of interest., for the station master, dressed in blue with a red band around his visored cap, with several assistants and two small boys came to meet us. We found that there was no train to Bologna for several hours and immediately began to think it was about time to exit. The stationmaster, who by the way was quite a character and somewhat under the influence of Chianti or something else equally potent, politely invited us into his office to wait until train time. When he heard we were from America, he began a long, rambling discourse, chiefly in French, interspersed with exclamations of vive l' Amerique, vive le Washington, La Belle Republique, etc. When we had a chance to be heard we mildly suggested, chiefly in pantomime, that we should like to get something to eat. He said certainly and proceeded to lock up the station and accompanied by the whole corps, boys and all, we started off. One of the small boys had studied English and attempted to act as an interpreter, but as about all he could say was, "Sir, will you please give paper and some tobacco," we soon lost interest in him. Particularly as our tobacco was getting low and after several ineffectual attempts, he generally turned the cigarette over to us to make. After our small procession had gone a short distance, the stationmaster of course in the lead, he turned in to an old house and ushered us into a room, long and low, with small windows, dirt floor and a large open fireplace at one end. The blackened rafter overhead showed that the fireplace had been used frequently. An, old gray-haired man sat at a long table drinking Chianti. The room was otherwise unoccupied save by the obsequious host and his frowsy, dirty wife. We ordered a little pitcher of Chianti preliminary to our supper and began to enjoy ourselves, One pitcher followed another and about the second or third, the way that French and Latin words, that I have forgotten for years, began to come back to my memory was a caution.

And another strange thing was that the more we drank the better we understood each other. The more the stationmaster imbibed, the more frequent became the exclamations vive l'Amerique, vive la Washington, till I finally got to thinking and remembered that it was Washington's birthday. I fished out a small Italian dictionary, that I carried for just such emergencies and after looking up the word, proceeded, in choice Italian to tell the assembled populace that it was Washington's birthday. They got on to the birthday part of it fast enough, but mistook the personage and thought it was mine, where upon followed much handshaking, congratulations and drinking of health.

I accepted the honor gracefully and when the clamor had subsided, explained that they had made a mistake. They looked disappointed, but brightened up when I started off again to explain. Then they thought it was P's birthday and we went through the same performance, but when they finally understood that it was Washington's birthday, the applause was doubled and the excitement intense. About this time the small boy wanted some paper and tobacco, but was promptly sat on by P. who happened to be near him.

P. had been in the New York Hospitals for three years and had the sitting on business down to a fine point. About this time the supper came along and we adjourned to another room. The supper consisted of salami. Boiled eggs and more flyspecked rolls and coffee. After supper we went back to the station and his highness kindly set up two bottles of Chianti; after which P. tried to sell a man a ticket to somewhere, I never heard whether he got there or not. When the train came we were escorted to a separate compartment by the whole station corps with the most affectionate adieus, and the last thing we saw as we rolled out of Battaglia, was the stationmaster leaning in the doorway, hat in hand shouting vive la Washington.

We reached Bologna about 9:30 and to the hotel and bed, and so ended Washington's birthday  
1888.

W.L. Mussy  
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