



AN ALPINE PARADISE.

MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO is certainly a typical Italian name. To most people at present it can be nothing more than a name. But what a place the name represents! What a place of perfect beauty is Madonna di Campiglio! Any Catholic would know at once that Madonna di Campiglio must in some way be a name associated with ecclesiasticism. And so it is, as we shall see. It means Santa Maria di Campiglio, or St. Mary's Church of Campiglio.

In a far-away valley of the wonderful and endless world of the Eastern Alps lies Madonna di Campiglio. The majority of Alpine tourists never hear of it. A small minority both hear of it and are drawn to visit it. There is no fear that the traveller who has once visited that spot of enchantment will forget the vision. Many elements combine, wherever the perfection of Alpine beauty abounds, to produce that perfection. The chief of these scenic factors are mountains, snow and ice, clouds, forests, waterfalls, rivers, and flowers. The tourist who comes to Campiglio finds himself treated to an endless variety of all these items of Alpine loveliness.

To come to Madonna di Campiglio is not easy. Neither is it easy to get away. The proper approach is from Trent, the historically famed city of the great Mediaeval Council. To visit Trent is itself a treat. But my own approach to Campiglio has been by a still more attractive route, viz., from Riva, the sweet little Italian city at the head of Lake Garda. Riva is at the gateway of several of the most delightful excursions to be enjoyed anywhere in Europe. It looks to the South down the matchless lake. It looks Northward towards the forest-girdled and snow-crowned Eastern Alps. Though a purely Italian town, it is just within the Austrian border. We reach Campiglio from Riva by a very long day's carriage drive. This takes ten hours and must be begun early in the morning. It is a ride to be remembered for ever. It is one protracted ascent along the sides of mountains that echo the musical thunder of a torrent down deep ravines below. This scenery is of the strange mixture of beauty and wildness

which specially characterises the Eastern Alps.

As the traveller proceeds, he is surprised to find the mountain fastnesses peopled by an intelligent and comfortable peasantry. Sweet little cottages and white-stuccoed and verandaged miniature *trattorie*, or Italian public-houses, shelter-houses for the road-makers employed by the government, cottages of the goat-herds, are perched in picturesque but appalling spots, hanging over precipices in the edge of which the carriage road is cut by mighty feats of engineering. The giant peaks tower up in endless sierras. The road changes the view every moment. It is only a winding thread running along the rocky cliffs, high above the brawling torrent that goes on for ever, but far below the majestic summits of limestone, dolomite, conglomerate and porphyry. And so for a long morning and a long afternoon, till evening is drawing on, the tourist proceeds, till suddenly in the soft evening light, nestling in a lovely valley, he sees Campiglio.

Madonna di Campiglio is not a town, nor a village, nor a hamlet. It is simply an immense hotel, far off in Alpine solitudes; far from cities, far from railways, far from the usual busy haunts of men and highways of traffic. A carriage road reaches it, and that has been specially made by that wonderful road-making military administration, the Austrian government. But the road comes to a dead stop at Campiglio. Beyond, there are nothing but bridle-paths for mules, and even that only in very few directions amongst the tremendous tangle of Alps which seem here on every side to be arranged in geographical knots and bundles. Madonna di Campiglio was an ancient monastery. The old ecclesiastical edifice was destroyed in 1847 by fire. It was certainly a superb situation which the wise old monks chose. A delicious stream rushes by. It is fed by a hundred waterfalls. The valley which is spread out just here is quickly shut in again. It is all out of the sordid ordinary world, and forms a little heaven below of peace and repose, of beauty and purity, of solemnity and calm; a heaven of flowers; a heaven of melody; a heaven of upper azure for temple roof; of massive Alps

for temple colonnades. The old friars had aestheticism in their souls. But they are gone, and the pleasure-seekers have come in. Wise pleasure-seekers! A grand hotel occupies the site.

If you want pure, simple, innocent pleasure, come to Madonna di Campiglio. This valley is higher up above the level of the sea than the top of Snowdon. It is just over 5000 feet in altitude. The plateau in which it comes to an *impasse* and on which the great mountain hotel is spread out is in spring and early summer a flower garden of the gods, sheeted with Alpenrosen. A floral carpet is spread as if by some angelic hands. Now late in summer most of the flowers are gone, but the grass never withers to the dirty brown of the Southern lowlands. The wild solitudes all round are a paradise of the geologist and the botanist. The hunter hears of bears, and there is a fine specimen standing on his hind legs at the drawing-room door, which was shot with another.

Madonna di Campiglio is an elysium of Alpine climbers. There are several in the crowd of pleasant people now here. They are mostly young English gentlemen. Their talk is all altitudinarian. The grand Italian Alps seem to have fixed themselves round Campiglio in a magnificent circle on purpose to be climbed. This is the very heart of the wonderful region so vividly described by Professor Freshfield in his delightful *Italian Alps*. Even ladies comfortably climb Monte Spinah in an hour and a half; and what a panorama unrolls itself around that height! The glorious Bocca di Brenta seems close at hand. Its rocky buttresses rush up to sheet themselves in pure white perpetual snow. And as the eye ranges around the circle both ways snow mountains show themselves in glorious procession. It is a march of hoary giants. Adamello is there with his snow-fields! There is the great ice-field of Adamello! There is gigantic Presanella spreading out the pure crystal expanse that never dissolves its dazzling crystal. It is a feast the eye seldom enjoys. In that pure air and in the midst of that enchanting vision the spectator finds it hard to think of descending, but it is a sight he will always see in the vision of happy memory.