

THE EUROPEAN TOUR

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649578306

The European Tour by Grant Allen

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GRANT ALLEN

**THE EUROPEAN
TOUR**

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The European Tour

BY

GRANT ALLEN

Author of "Florence," "Paris,"
"Belgium," etc.



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NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

1899

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University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE USE OF EUROPE	1
II. WHAT PARTS OF EUROPE TO VISIT . . .	19
III. THE HASTY VISITOR	35
IV. ENGLAND ; THE COUNTRY	40
V. LONDON	66
VI. FRANCE : PARIS	82
VII. FRANCE : OUTSIDE PARIS	99
VIII. BELGIUM AND HOLLAND	110
IX. THE RHINELAND	140
X. SWITZERLAND, ETC.	156
XI. THE THRESHOLD OF ITALY	172
XII. THE GREAT ITALIAN CITIES	192
XIII. FLORENCE	200
XIV. MORE ABOUT FLORENCE	212
XV. VENICE	241
XVI. ROMEWARDS	257
XVII. AFTER ROME	284
XVIII. THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY	293

The European Tour



CHAPTER I

THE USE OF EUROPE

YOUNG man, *go to Europe!*

It is not without due reflection that I venture thus to reverse the geographical direction of a famous saying. Horace Greeley requires revision. As America now stands, I believe by far the most valuable *education* a young man can obtain is a *European trip*, undertaken during the years most often devoted to a college course. It costs no more; it may even cost less; and I make bold to say it is immeasurably more educative.

If I were a European born, indeed, I would not have the audacity thus to address the American public. Readers might suspect me of that celebrated "condescension observable in foreigners" on which Lowell insisted. But I speak from experience. I am myself a brand plucked from the

burning. Born and bred on the American continent, I came to Europe as a very young man; I have lived here now for over thirty years; and I have slowly learnt how to appreciate its educational advantages. Allowing that America is the best country in which to be born, I still maintain that Europe is the best country in which to get *a year's education*.

I do not mean a year spent at school or college. I do not even mean a year of strenuous and conscientious sight-seeing, undertaken solely with an eye to edification. I mean *a year of travel*, enjoyment, observation; a year of free use of lungs and limbs; a year of pleasant touring through beautiful country and beautiful cities. The best learning of all is the learning we acquire without ever knowing it. Mugging up a subject, cramming for an examination—these are the ways to undermine and destroy our interest in knowledge. Going about the world, to amuse ourselves, with our eyes open,—that is the way to preserve and enlarge it. For everything depends upon the enjoyment we receive. Nothing makes impressions so vivid as pleasure. Just as it is better exercise to play base-ball, cricket, foot-ball, lawn-tennis, to row, to ride, to swim, to climb mountains, than to drill in a prison yard or to walk up and down a

measured mile in Central Park, so it is better education to visit the Louvre, Notre-Dame, Venice, Munich, Athens, than to grub up Greek roots with a dictionary and grammar. Let the other education come afterwards, if you like; but gain first a living interest in the languages, the literatures, the history of Europe by delightful tours through the lands that produced them.

Nor do I intend this solemn advice for paradox. I utter it as serious practical reasoning. You are a father, let me suppose, and you are thinking of sending your son to college. *Why to college?* Now, sit down and argue it out with yourself like a man — which will be really the best for him in the end? Will he learn more that is ultimately useful to him in life by spending three years over *dead languages* which he never fully masters, and for which he can have no personal use hereafter — or by travelling from a year to eighteen months in Europe; seeing England, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland; storing his mind with knowledge of art, knowledge of history, knowledge of geography, knowledge of human nature; gaining an insight into the manner of thought, of speech, of life, and of industry among the *living peoples* who have contributed to build up the population, the laws, and the institutions of his own country? I say un-