

torrent Aygue glides over the edge of the mountains in a long feathery fall, and shivers down into a little emerald-green basin of still water.

The mountain above the waterfall is pierced near its summit by a natural tunnel, through which daylight appears. Near this is the so-called *Grotta del Eremito*, a hermitage very difficult of approach. The front is whitewashed, with a door, window, and half-effaced inscription in red letters, bearing the date 1528. The



CASTIGLIONE.

cell, of irregular form, is about 20 ft. high and 30 ft. deep; in the rocky wall is cut 'Christo lo fece, Bernardo l'abita.'

At 15 k. the road passes within twenty minutes' walk of the hillock, between the Cima d'Ours and El Rasel (1,260 mètr.), upon which rises the dimly curious town of *Castiglione*, much destroyed by the earthquake of 1887.

'Behind, all is a radiant Eden; before us spreads for miles a wilderness of bleak, arid, desolate precipices, without a tree or a patch of verdure to cheer the eye, which wanders on to the distant snows, over billow upon billow of stony acclivity, on which

not a human habitation is to be seen, except where Castiglione rises grey and ghost-like from the mountain side. Even the town itself is as unlike a town as possible—no doors, no windows, no gates, apparently no inhabitants, and no visible approach to it up the precipitous rocks on which it is seated, so that we should scarcely believe it to be a town at all, save for the pointed campanile of its church, which overtops the other buildings. The barren shadowless slopes of rock are exposed to the full beams of the burning sun throughout the summer, while, all the winter long, the frost-laden wind beats furiously upon them and upon the unprotected town. It is not till you reach the foot of the Castiglione rock that tiny windows show themselves like loopholes on the external walls for the better fortification of the place, whilst all the larger windows look towards the street. Some of the latter are mediæval gothic, with a central pillar and sculptured capital dividing them. A rock-hewn staircase, winding round the steep, brings you to the narrow gateway, whence, when you stand upon the little platform in front, you discover a little world of mountain valleys beneath, each with a torrent curling and twisting through its windings.

'Most quaint of all the quaint towns in this wonderful district is Castiglione. Its steep streets twist so much that you can never see more than three doors before you; the approaches to its dwellings are mere footings cut in the rock; its storm-beaten campanile rises from yellow and orange houses, each with a painted image or ornamented roof-coping. And then the inhabitants! One would think all the old women in the Riviera must have been collected and exiled hither, such multitudes of ancient crones do you see, while not another living creature is visible, except the cocks and hens which make the streets one great poultry-yard, and which would seem to be the sole nutriment of the crones, for what else, animal or vegetable, is there for them to eat?'—*'A Winter at Mentone.'*

The road, from the tunnel of the Col di Guardia, has no further interest as far as (22 k.) Sospello. See p. 549.

9. *Castellare*, is accessible by carriage, taking the Rue de Castellare, from the Avenue Victor Emmanuel, and following