A Journey Through Dalmatia

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TOWERING clouds hung like gigantic white drapery over the immense amphitheater of Trieste and as the bright steamer glided farther into the sea, crystal blue in the dazzling sun, a panorama of majestic beauty arose before our eyes. In the busy harbor brown sails of small craft cut into the silhouettes of trans-Atlantic liners and low-lined, gray English battleships. Above the waterfront luxuriant parks ascended the mountain slopes. Monuments, mansions and villas submerged in the greenery of sub-tropical gardens faded out, as countless white dots, on the crest of the hills.



It was Saturday, noon, and the crowd on board gay and happy. Holiday seekers, they were bound for a week-end on one or another of the numerous small islands stretching along the Dalmatian Coast. Our boat was a splendid ship, spotless and luxurious, a marvel of post-war Italian construction.

All afternoon the coastline of Istria rolled by in an ever-varying panorama. Barren and sun-parched stretches of low land alternated with green vegetation, mostly vineyards and olive groves, reaching down to the sea where white spray angrily battered around lonely cliffs.

Each of the Seven Seas has its peculiar characteristics. In the Adriatic, an indescribable light blueness and delicate haziness seem to merge sea and sky; a crystal limpidity makes the boat appear to skim not through water but through a medium of bluish ether. Watching the keel cut through the transparent fluid and the foam burst into millions of sparkling bubbles, one loses the sense of reality and feels strangely attracted and tempted to descend and float forever in this realm of enchanting nothingness.

The first islands we passed on the steady Southern course were small ones, just tiny barren rocks almost submerged in the immense flood; then larger ones with scanty vegetation of rosemary and a few twisted Southern pine trees and still larger ones with quiet harbors. Hidden behind solemn groves of tall cypresses the stately Summer residences of wealthy Triestians were reminiscent of Boecklin's famous "Island of the Death" rather than of the joy of life emanating from the surrounding overwhelming beauty. On the other islands primitive fishing villages faced the waterfront and clustered around ancient Venician *Campaniles* betraying their origin and early history.

The boat went around cliffs, circled old lighthouses, passed narrow straits and called at old ports; Parenzo, Pirano, once splendid, now almost forgotten names in the history of Venice's ascent to sea power are peacefully basking in today's dazzling sun and yesterday's glory.

The scene was ever charming. A crowd on the wharf curiously awaiting the boat's arrival as the day's most interesting event; a few custom guards, *carrabinieris* and harbor officials, conspicuous for their martial uniforms and aloof bearing; the hustle and bustle during loading and unloading of mixed cargo such as portly wine barrels; a few commands, the siren's blast, the churning of the screw, white foam swishing under the stern and the boat again left the harbor.

The dilapidated, multi-colored housefront with its porticos and open air bodegas receded and disappeared behind a curtain of yellow lateen sails of fishing craft anchored along the quays. Ivory clad ramparts and weather beaten butresses of towering ancient fortresses sank lower and merged with the *campanile* and the maze of brown-tiled house roofs. Another harbor, strange, picturesque and alluring, is left behind. A paradise for the painter, the archeologist and the wanderer intent on seeking refuge from the beaten track, but no *sejour de luxe* for the tourist accustomed to comfort and sanitation.



A Harbor in Dalmatia

After hours of sailing Pola came into sight. The ship turned through narrows between barren mountain slopes, once honeycombed with invisible and invincible heavy batteries of the old Austrian defense. Before the war Pola