

We Arrive at the Distillery

had been the great naval port, the stronghold of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire on the Adriatic. The Treaty of Versailles smashed the monarchy to pieces and Pola fell to Italy to become a place of no military and little commercial significance. Since then a decided change has come over Pola, once teeming with life and frivolity. The gay casinos are silent, and old Austria's pride, the dreadnought *Viribus Unitis*, rots beneath the tranquil harbor waters. In the unfinished navy yards, enshrouded in death-like stillness, rusty steel girders stretch against the clear sky and like skeleton fingers warningly point toward the ruins of the Roman Coloseum towering above the waterfront. During two thousand years Pola has more than once experienced the eternal cycle of glory and defeat. In the melancholy atmosphere enshrouding the port like a depressing veil, one wonders whether Trieste will be spared a similar fate, for Trieste too has suffered and declined since 1918. It has lost its monopoly as Austria-Hungary's busiest and practically single seaport and has fallen to the rank of an Italian port of minor importance with no hinterland of its own to speak of and with Genoa, Naples and Venice competing for Italy's shipping. In the interests of all countries involved one must hope sincerely for the complete success of Mussolini's farseeing and intelligent statesmanship and his efforts to remedy the economic fallacies of the Treaty of Versailles. By allying Central Europe with an outlet to the sea through Trieste this port might regain her former commercial status of importance.

In the late afternoon we ran into a squall. The sun disappeared behind heavy clouds and as we rounded Capo d' Istria, ill-reputed for its sudden gales, a heavy thunderstorm raged with all the furies of the elements. Through the deluge of pouring rain flashes of lightning struck the sea. Terrific thunder-bolts drowned out the gunfire of giant hailshot battering against the ship's structure. But as suddenly as it came, the fury abated and a strange calm settled over the waters. Far out toward the West on the distant horizon the setting sun broke through the heavy clouds transforming the world of grey into mysterious gold. Above the sun the clouds opened in a giant circle of satanic red and it seemed as though Lucifer would hold court in all his majesty.

It was already night and very dark when we reached our destination. The boat rounded low and barren peninsulas. Through a narrow channel we came into calm and bleak waters. Hills appeared to turn around us dizzily, and with unexpected, almost dramatic suddenness, we sailed into a tiny harbor. It seemed as though the curtain had been lifted before an exotic harbor front. A circle of low-roofed houses glowed in the darkness. A pearly string of flickering lights was reflected from the tranquil waters and danced along the quays; the sails of fishing craft flapped lazily in the damp night air and the sting of tar and wet tow was wafted across.

Around the wharf a noisy crowd had assembled and with loud clamor greeted the boat's arrival. In the excited shouting and bustling to and fro, the noisy recognition of friends on land and boat, the ship's crew had difficulty lowering the gang plank and the richly costumed harbor officials tried to fulfill their petty passport formalities at the risk of being stampeded by the crowd surging toward the land.

In the general confusion we were hurried into a car and soon careened at high speed around sharp corners, followed by shrieking horns blowing through sleeping streets, hopping over cobble stone paving, driving through a silent pine forest and landing finally in the court of a small hotel, our headquarters for the next few days.

The night was not far advanced and the environment alluring enough to do a little reconnoitering. So far as we could make out in the darkness we were located right on the end of a tiny bay surrounded by pine forests. The water in the bay was still, but from afar we heard the roar of the surf. Occasionally the



Sage as it Grows in Dalmatia