

The dust of the ages lies on San Gimignano. It has become almost a part of the Italian sunlight under which it lies. Its towers no longer quake with the tread of conquerors and its streets see no more the flash of the sword. Only in the eyes of the peasants is there a gleam which comprehends and harkens back to the days of the past.

I meandered up the old road toward the town. My shoulders were white with dust, but I felt uplifted. Below me breathed a country of whose existence I had heretofore only dreamed - the sleeping valley of the Elsa. And why, I wondered, should I think of it as sleeping? It has slept since the days of the city-kingdoms of Florence and Siena and San Gimignano. The olive trees and the vineyards are alive but they wave in the winds of another day. Their green even is a dull green, mellowed and enriched by the earth and the sky. They are young and yet they are old. I felt that the earth upon which I walked had little interest in the present. In a mechanical, instinctive way, it nourished the creatures upon its bosom but its eyes were closed and it drowsed with no longer even the murmur of its dreams. To me it said, "Away and away are paved streets and bright lawns and wooden structures. But I shall never see them. I, too, have lived and shall live - long after they are gone. My life is a story-book tale, and my human children live in the light of its memories." I stopped to look at the town above me. Was it also asleep? When it was new, it must have clung to the hilltop like a bird colony on some sea-washed rock; now it had settled into security, and its flagstones were a part of the earth itself. Its towers no longer reached for the sky, and the old town wall lay like an antique necklace about the throat of the hill.

For the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals

National Association of Audubon Societies

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Map showing (shaded) States that have organizations affiliated with this Association

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Map showing (shaded) States that have adopted the Audubon Law protecting the non-game birds

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