



FROM A COTTON MILL TO CAPRI

IHAD some good holidays when I was a little girl with my two baby sisters, Edie and Betty. We filled a big old kitchen bucket with water, and put a bit of salt in.

Then we paddled—and that magical old iron bucket was Blackpool, or Brighton, or any place we saw on a postcard! And wherever it was the tide was always in.

Penny wise

SOMETIMES in summer Dad took us on a penny tram-ride from Rochdale to Hollinworth Lake. He lifted us on a high wall to sit and eat our sandwiches and share a bottle of lemonade.

I've seen a bit of the world since those days, but I have never tasted cham-

pagne better than that lukewarm, fizzy lemonade that we passed from hand to hand, with sticky little earnest fingers marking the next share.

Life was simple in those days and a penny bought a lot of fun.

First holiday

PROBABLY my best real holiday was the first one I ever took, in 1931. I had just finished the film "Sally in Our Alley." It had been very tiring. I sat in my London garden under dusty green trees, with a whole month's holiday granted me and no idea how to spend it.

I was reading a book, "South Wind," by Norman Douglas, about Capri. It sounded so amusing, enchanted and distant! I sighed and wondered if I'd ever see such lovely places.

Suddenly I realised—I had money in the bank and a free month—why didn't I go to this Capri place and see it for myself?

I set out from London next day with a couple of friends. I wore an old leather coat and had pushed a few odds and ends, blouses and underwear in a little suitcase.

I got across France by train to the Italian frontier. Then I found my passport wasn't in order! I didn't know a word of Italian. I didn't want to be stuck there.

So I started to sing quietly a little Italian comic song.

The frontier guard looked up from my passport and beamed: "Aha! *Artista!*" and stamped it without another word.

Grazie, Gracie!

I WAS in Italy for the first time in my life. I asked the train porter: "How do I say thanks' in Italian?"

He told me, "Grazie." Well, that was easy—nearly my own name. "Grazie," I said. We both laughed. I could speak Italian!

The first station was called *Uscito*. The next station was called *Uscito*, too! I began to panic. Was I on a circular tour? Then I found "Uscito" was the notice meaning "Way Out."

At Rome my taxi-driver, without looking round at my old leather coat and little suitcase, drove me straight to the biggest hotel in the city. I stared at it from the taxi window. My knees wobbled. I was afraid to get out. I had to speak sternly to myself: "Go on, Gracie—you can afford it for one night, anyway!"

Just swank!

AS SOON as they gave me a room I spent all that evening sending postcards of the hotel to everybody I knew in England, to let them see where I was putting up! Swank!

At Naples we saw Vesuvius burning and could hardly sleep for worrying about it. Capri is across Naples Bay, ninety minutes by white ferry-boat. I didn't know where to stay in Capri, but a sunburned, kindly old carriage-driver drove me around the little island and sang to me.

It was a beautiful day,

When her passport was not in order, the girl from Rochdale sang herself over the Italian frontier.

By GRACIE
FIELDS

and such sea, rocks and scenery! Flowers everywhere, and everybody seemed to be happy and to have time to be kind.

Down beside a heavenly little rocky bay we found an attractive, broken-down old house. The walls were old and crumbly. But there was a wonderful atmosphere of dignity and peace about that old house.

Peace at last

IT WAS advertising a room to let. And it was the house of an elderly Italian marquis, the Patrizi family, who had once owned nearly all Capri.

Well, I stayed there. They made me a cup of good tea. And I fell in love with Capri. That old house of the Marchesa Patrizi is now my villa, "Song of the Sea."

And to-day, even after 20 years, I still visit Capri whenever I can spare the time. It is seldom for long, but I always find peace and friendliness there.

My holiday in Capri has brought me pleasure all my life!