Romantic Cities of Provence

by Mona Caird

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Author: Mona Caird

Illustrator: Joseph Pennell

Edward Millington Synge

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ROMANTIC CITIES OF PROVENCE

CLOISTERS OF ST. TROPHINE, ARLES. By E. M. Synge.

ROMANTIC CITIES OF PROVENCE

BY MONA CAIRD

ILLUSTRATED FROM SKETCHES BY JOSEPH PENNELL AND EDWARD M. SYNGE

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN

TO MARGUERITE HAMILTON SYNGE

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Preface

This volume can hardly be said to have been written: it came about. The little tour in the South of France which is responsible for its existence, happened some years ago, and was undertaken for various reasons, health and rest among others, and the very last idea which served as a motive for the journey was that of writing about the country whose history is so voluminous and so incalculably ancient. Nobody but a historian and a scholar already deeply versed in the subject could dream of attempting to treat it in any serious or complete fashion. But this fact did not prevent the country from instantly making a profound and singular impression upon a mind entirely unprepared by special study or knowledge to be thus stirred. The vividness of the impression, therefore, was not to be accounted for by associations of facts and

scenes already formed in the imagination. True, many an incident of history and romance now found its scene and background, but before these corresponding parts of the puzzle had been fitted together the potent charm had penetrated, giving that strange, baffling sense of home-coming which certain lands and places have for certain minds, remaining for ever mysterious, yet for ever familiar as some haunt of early childhood.

An experience of that sort will not, as a rule, allow itself to be set aside. It works and troubles and urges, until, sooner or later, some form of transmutation must take place, some condensing into form of the formless, some passing of impulse into expression, be it what it may.

And thus the first stray notes and sketches were made without ultimate intention. But the charm imposed itself, and the notes grew and grew. Then a more definite curiosity awoke and gradually the scene widened: history and imagination took sisterly hands and whispered suggestions, explanations of the secret of the extraordinary magic, till finally the desultory sketches began to demand something of order in their undrilled ranks. The real toil then began.

The subject, once touched upon, however slightly, is so unendingly vast and many-sided, so entangled with scholarly controversy, that the few words possible to say in a volume of this kind seem but to cause obscurity, and worst of all, to falsify the general balance of impression because of the innumerable other things that must perforce be left unsaid. An uneasy struggle is set up in the mind to avoid, if possible, that most fatal sort of misrepresentation, viz., that which contains a certain proportion of truth.

And how to choose among varying accounts and theories, one contradicting the other? Authorities differ on important points as radically and as surely as they differ about the spelling of the names of persons and places. There is conflict even as to the names in use at the present day, as, for instance, the little mountain range of the

Alpilles, which some writers persistently spell Alpines, out of pure pigheadedness or desire to make themselves conspicuous, as it seems to the weary seeker after textual consistency. Where doctors disagree what can one do who is not a doctor, but try to give a general impression of the whole matter and leave the rest to the gods?

As for dates——!

Now there are two things with which no one who has not been marked out by Providence by a special and triumphant gift ought to dream of attempting to deal, namely, dates and keys—between which evanescent, elusive and fundamentally absurd entities there is a subtle and deep-seated affinity. If meddled with at all, they must be treated in a large spirit: no meticulous analysis; no pursuit of a pettifogging date sharpening the point of accuracy down to a paltry twelve months. And correspondingly, as regards the smaller kind of keys, no one who values length of days should ever touch them! They are the vehicles of demoniac powers. Of course the good, quiet, well-developed cellar or stable-door key is another matter; and thus (to pursue the parallel) dates can be dealt with in a broadly synthetic fashion, in centuries and group of centuries, so that while the author gains in peace of mind, the reader is spared the painful experience of being stalked and hunted from page to page, and confronted round every corner by quartets of dreary figures, minutely defining moments of time which are about as much to him as they are to Hecuba!

The chronology in this volume, therefore, may be described as frugal rather than generous in character, but what there is of it is handled in the "grand manner."

Such, then, is the history of the volume which still retains the character of its irregular origin. Historically it attempts nothing but the roughest outline of the salient points of the story about which a traveller interested in the subject at all is at once curious for information. The one thing on which it lays stress is the quality of the country as distinguished from its outward features. For to many (for example, to our severe critic whose impressions are recorded in Chapter III.) these external

features are devoid of all attraction. It is necessary to keep this fact in mind.

A wide plain bounded by mountains of moderate height and an insignificant chain of bare limestone hills (the Alpilles); cities ancient indeed, but small, shabby, not too clean, with dingy old hotels, and no particular advantages of situation—such a description of Provence would be accurate for those who are not among its enthusiasts. To traverse the country in an express train, especially with the eyes still full of the more obvious beauties of the Pyrenees and the Alps, is to see all the wonder of the land of the troubadours reduced to the mere flatness of a map. In a few minutes the "rapide" had darted past some of its most ancient and romantic cities—quiet and simple they stand, merged into the very soil, with no large or striking features to catch the eye; only a patch of grey masonry in the landscape and a few towers upon the horizon, easily missed in the quick rush of the train.

A deeper sound in the rumble of the flying wheels for a couple of minutes announces the crossing of some river: long stretches of waste land, covered for miles and miles with sunburnt stones, and again stretches of country, low-lying, God-forsaken, scarcely cultivated, with a few stunted, melancholy trees, a farmstead on the outskirts here and there: these are the "features of the country," as they might be described without departure from bare, literal, all-deceiving fact.

How many travellers of the thousands who pass along this line every year are interested in such a scene or guess its profound and multitudinous experiences? How many realise as they rattle past, that in this arid land of the vine and the cypress were born and fostered the sentiments, the unwritten laws and traditions on which is built all that we understand by civilised life? How many say to themselves as they pass: "But for the men and women who dreamt and sang and suffered in this Cradle of Chivalry, the world that I live in would never have been born, the thoughts I think and the emotions to which I am heir would never have arisen out of the darkness?"

But, indeed, the strange, many-sided country gives little aid or suggestion for such

realisations: it has reticently covered itself with a mantle; it seems to crouch down out of sight while the monster engine thunders by with its freight of preoccupied passengers.

A bare, flat, sun-scorched land.

Yes, these are the "facts," but ah! how different from the magic truth!

With facts, therefore, this volume has only incidentally to do. It is a "true and veracious history," but by no means a literal one. As to the mere accidents of travel, these are treated lightly. Exactly in which order the cities were visited no reader need count upon certainly knowing—and indeed it concerns him nothing—when and where the observations were made by "Barbara," or the "severe critic," or the landlady of the Hotel de Provence and so forth, the following pages may or may not accurately inform him (with the exception, indeed, of the curious, self-revelation of Raphael of Tarascon, which is given almost word for word as it occurred, for here accident and essence chanced to coincide); but he may be sure that though Barbara possibly did not speak or act as represented then and there, she did or might have so spoken or acted elsewhere and at another time. The irrelevancies of chance and incident have been ignored in the interests of the essential. Barbara may not recognise all her observations when she sees them. Tant pis pour Barbara! They are true in the spirit if not in the letter. And so throughout.

From the moment that the original "notes" began to be written, the one and sole impulse and desire has been to suggest, to hint to the imagination that which can never be really told of the poetry, the idealism, the glory, the sadness, and the great joy of this wondrous land of Sun and Wind and Dream.

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CHAPTER I THE SPELL OF PROVENCE

"Aubouro-te, raço Latino—

Emé toun péu que se desnouso

A l'auro santo dou tabour,

Tu siès la raço lumenouso

Que viéu de joio e d'estrambord;

Tu siès la raço apoustoulico

Que souno li campano â brand:

Tu siès la troumpo que publico

E siès la man que trais lou gran

Aubouro-te, raço Latino!"

Latin race arouse thyself!

With thy hair loosened to the holy air of the tabor,

Thou art the race of light,

Who lives in enthusiasm and joy:

Thou art the apostolic race—

That sets the bells a-chiming;

Thou art the trumpet that proclaims:

Thou art the hand that sows the seed—

O Latin race, arise!

From "Ode to the Latin Race," by Mistral.

A PROVENÇAL ROAD. By Joseph Pennell.

CHAPTER I

THE SPELL OF PROVENCE

During the night there was a great and unexplained tumult: rustling sounds in the

little courtyard to which our rooms looked out; whisperings along the corridors; distant bangings; footsteps, voices—or was it the remaining rumours of a dream?

Then a great sigh and a surging among the shrubs in the courtyard. The creepers sway against the windows, and something seems to sweep through the room. Presently a rush and a rattle among the jalousies, and a high scream as of some great angry creature flying with frantic wings over the courtyard and across the sky.

The mistral!

There was no mistaking our visitor.

A great angry creature, indeed, and no one who has seen the Land of the Sun and Wind only under the sway of the more benign power can have any conception of the passion and storm of this mighty Brigand of the Mountain.

We begin now to understand the meaning of the epithet, "windy Avignon." And if one considers its position on the plain of the Rhone and the Durance—the country stretching south and east to the mysterious stony desert of the Crau[1] and the great regions of the mouths of the Rhone—it is easy to see how the Black Wind, rushing down from his home in the ranges of Mont Ventoux and the Luberon, must sweep the streets of the city and fill every nook and corner with whirl and trouble.

The Rhone that "bends round Avignon to salute Our Lady on her high rock," as Mistral proclaims, grows white with anger under the lash, noble river that she is!

Round farmstead and garden, along her banks, and far away on the great spaces of this wonderful country, long, tall rows of cypresses keep guard over house and home; for only these steadfast trees of Wisdom and of Sorrow can stand against the fury of the mistral. For unnumbered ages, long, long before all human history or tradition, he has lorded it over the country, descending after the fashion of the ancient Ligurian inhabitants from the hill-tops, for raid and ravage in the valleys.

Many have been his victims from first to last; among them the daughter to whom Madame de Sévigné addresses her famous letters. She suffers from his onslaught

upon her Provençal château of Grignan, which was nearly destroyed by the monster; unless, indeed, the lady is romancing a little to keep her lively mother amused and quiet; for Madame de Sévigné writes: "Vous dépeignez cette horreur comme Virgile!"

A householder seriously damaged in his property would be most unlikely to describe the disaster thus classically. Perhaps a chimney or two blown off and a roof carried away may have stimulated Madame de Grignan's fancy. There were always those letters to be written and a certain dearth of subjects for a lady besieged by the mistral in a Provençal château. What Madame de Grignan must have said one gathers from the mother's reply—

"Voila le vent, le tourbillon, l'ouragon, les diables déchainés, qui veulent emporter votre château.... Ah ma fille, quelle ébranlement universel!"

The mother recommends taking refuge in Avignon; a curious place to flee to from such a foe! But in those days there was no swift flight possible, and a removal from the howling country to the whistling town was all that could be achieved even by the wealthy. One wonders how the removal of a household was effected when there were no railways and probably few roads—and a mistral at full tilt across the plains!

Poets of all ages have sung of the feats of the amazing wind, and there are descriptions of its furious descent upon the Crau, where in default of anything better to wreak its anger upon, it sends the stones hurling across the plain. Nothing can stand against it. Mistral says that in tempest "il souffle toujours. Les arbres ... se courbent, se secouent à arracher leurs troncs."

The ancients assigned a place to the great wind among their deities, and the Emperor Augustus erected a temple in its honour. It is curious how this pagan feeling of personality in the wind survives to this day.

Its famous namesake, the Provençal poet, whose home is at Maillane, on the great plain among the guardian cypresses, expresses the sentiment in a hundred forms, and

he adduces a still more striking instance in the account he once gave of his father—a fine specimen of the Provençal farmer or yeoman—who had a positive adoration for "le bon vent."

"Le jour ou l'on vannait le blé, souvent il n'y avait pas un souffle d'air pour emporter la poussière blonde, alors, mon père avait recours a une sorte d'invocation au mistral.

"Souffle mon mignon, disait il, et il priait et implorait.

"Eh bien, le vent venait et mon père, etait plein de joie, et il criait 'brava, brava.'"

In his house at Maillane, protected from foreign intrusion by the double army of the winds and the mosquitos, this chief of the Félibres passes his days, rejoicing in their scourges because they frighten away the wandering tourist—"tempted by our horizons and our sky"—from the land of the Sun and the Cypress.

To him the roar and shriek of the mistral is always a "musico majestuoso."

This tremendous being (as indeed he seems when one has once felt the very earth shaking beneath his assault) must be responsible for much in the Provençal character and literature; it is impossible to believe it to have been without profound influence on the imagination of the many races that have made the country their home.

Its voice is elemental, passionate, sometimes expressing blind fury, but often full of an agony that even its own tremendous cry cannot utter; a torment as of Prometheus and a grandeur of spirit no less than his.

The mistral produces effects of astonishing contrast; for when he is silent Provence is the most smiling, kindly land in the world; and half its stories are of gentle and lovely things: of chivalry, of romance, of dance and song and laughter. But when once the Black Wind begins to rouse himself from his lair on Mont Ventoux, then tragedy and pain and despair are abroad on wide dark wings.

All the "merry hamlets" of Provence have delightful courts or places shaded with plane-trees. Here the villagers assemble on Sundays and Saints' days, and here may

always be found a few happy loungers resting on the benches, or playing some game of whose mysterious antiquity they are blissfully unconscious.

It is the country of mediævalism; it is still more the country of paganism, of Greek temples, Phœnician inscriptions and tombs, Roman baths, amphitheatres, aqueducts; it boasts a profusion of exquisite churches, splendid mediæval castles; scenes of troubadour history, of the reputed Courts of Love; of a thousand traditions and stories that have become the heritage of every civilised people.

In the valley of Elorn, near Landerneau—called the Cradle of Chivalry—was found, according to the legend, the veritable round table of King Arthur, and here rose into the sky the towers of the Château de Joyeuse Garde of the Arthurian legends.

But Provence rests its claim to having been the birthplace of Chivalry on better grounds than this, for the first troubadour was a Provençal, the Comte Quilhelm de Poictier; a most debonnaire gentleman, of attractive appearance, courtly manners, and an exhaustive knowledge of the Gay Science, making great havoc with the hearts of ladies.

The colour of the landscape in Provence is as vivid as the history of its people.

A writer speaks of "la couleur violente, presque exaspérée, des montagnes."

There is no country that can be less conveyed to the imagination by an enumeration of topographical facts. The more exact the description the less we arrive at the land that Mistral sees and loves.

Of this poet, characteristically Provençal, Lamartine is reported to have said—

"I bring you glad tidings, a great epic poet is born among us. The West produces no more such poets, but from the nature of the South they will spring forth. It is from the sun alone that power flows."

It is from the sun that life flows, is the irresistible conclusion that one comes to under the skies of the Midi.

Science has insisted upon the fact, and no one seriously disputes it, but not to dispute and to actually accept are two very different conditions of mind. Legend, proverb, history, song, all seem to tell of a life more intense, more "vibrant," as their great poet describes the Provençals—in the troubadour country than elsewhere; unless indeed one goes still farther into the regions of the sun and falls under the kindred spell of Italy.

In England archæology seems cold and dead. In the South it conjures up visions of a teeming life; generation after generation of peoples, race after race, civilisation after civilisation.

Paradox as it seems, the multitude of dead or ruined or vanished cities that have lined the coast from the Pyrenees to the Var strangely enhances this sense of vitality and persistence of human activities.

But one records and records, and yet one has not Provence. One has but her mountains and contours, her blue sky, and perhaps her wild wind—but there is always something beyond.

One sees the Rhone and the Durance on their way to the sea—splendid headlong rivers; one sees the melancholy brooding wilderness of the Crau, where Hercules and the quarrelsome Titans flung those huge stones at one another in the dim old days; one sees always the strange, fantastic little limestone chain of the Alpilles which finishes to the south-east the great semicircle begun to the west by the higher ranges. The eye follows everywhere, fascinated, the battalions of cypresses, while over all is the flooding light, vibrating, living. And yet after all is said, Provence is still an unknown land.

It is one of the haunted lands, the spell-weaving lands. It enslaves as no obvious technical beauty of landscape can enslave.

Provence is like one of its own enchanting ladies of the troubadour days, and strangely significant is it that this nameless quality of the country should have been

thus reproduced by the crown and flower of its people. For this attribute of charm belongs to knight and baron, soldier and singer, if we may trust the old songs and the old stories. But, par excellence, it belonged to the cultivated lady of the epoch. Take, for instance, the mysterious Countess of Die or Dia, of whose identity nothing is certainly known. She was a writer of songs and the heroine of one of the poetical love-stories of the age: a lady capable of deep and faithful love, unhappily for her peace of mind. Of the subtlety of her attractions one may judge by the power which the mere dead records wield to this day over the imagination. This is how a modern author writes of her—

"Her voice had the colour of Alban wine, with overtones like the gleams of light in the still, velvety depths of the goblet, and when she smiled, it seemed as if she drew from a harp a slow, deep chord in the mode of Æolia. Though not at all diffident, and not at all prudish, she wore usually an air of shyness, the shyness of one whose thoughts dread intrusion."

How our author managed to gather such intimate detail from ancient volumes is perhaps difficult to understand; and doubtless he has reconstructed a voice and a smile from hints of the personality given by musty documents written demurely in the quaint, beautiful old langue d'oc. Still, there must have been some potent suggestion in the chronicles to set the fancy working in this glowing way, and it is a fact that all that one reads of the women of that time has a curious elusive element, producing an impression of some attraction subtler and more holding than can be expressed in direct words.

And Provence has a charm like that of her mysteriously endowed women; unaccountable, but endless to those who are once drawn within the magnetic circle. Have their sisters of to-day none of this quality? One here and there, no doubt, but it is to be feared that modern conditions do not favour the production of the type. Perhaps the women of to-day are making a détour out of the region of enchantment,

but only in order to obtain a broader, more generous grasp of the things of life. Some day they will give back to mankind what has been taken away by the new adventures, and when the tide turns, there will surely pour over the arid world a flood of beauty and "youngheartedness" and romance such as the blinder, less conscious centuries have never so much as dreamt of!

Meanwhile the troubadours had the privilege of dedicating their songs and their hearts to the most fascinating women which civilisation had as yet produced. Perhaps one associates such subtle attraction with the powers of darkness, but there is nothing to show that such powers had aught to do with the charm of the heroines of troubadour song. On the contrary, they seem as a rule to have been of extremely fine calibre; and if one consults one's memories of magnetic personalities—after all there are not a very large array of them—it almost always proves to be the powers of good in its broadest sense, and not of evil, that give birth to the fascination that never dies.

And the fascination of this gay, sad, brilliant, sympathetic country is not dreadful and diabolic. It is compounded of wholesome sunshine and merriment, swift ardour of thought and emotion, of beautiful manners; of the poetry of ancient industries: of sowing and reaping and tillage; of wine-culture and olive-growing; of legends and quaint proverbs, and a language full of the flavour of the soil and the sun that reveals itself to the quick of ear and of heart long before it can be fully understood. For it appeals to the heart, this sweet language of the troubadours, and hard must have often been the task of those poor ladies, wooed in this too winning tongue!

The traditions of chivalry are among the priceless possessions of the human race, and it is in Provence that their aroma lingers with a potency scarcely to be found in any other country. The air is alive with rich influences. The heat of the sun, the extraordinary brilliance of light and colour, the dignity of an ancient realm whose every inch is penetrated with human doings and destinies, all combine towards an

enchantment that belongs to the mysterious side of nature and prompts a host of unanswerable questions. The eye wanders bewildered across the country, wistfully struggling to realise the wonder and the beauty. It sweeps the peaked line of mountains with only an added sense of bafflement, and rests at last, sadly, on some lonely castle with shattered ramparts and roofless banqueting-hall, where now only the birds sing troubadour songs, and ivy and wild vines are the swaying tapestries.

CHAPTER II AVIGNON

"Sur le pont d'Avignon,

On y danse, on y danse!"

"Avenio ventosa, sine vento

Venenosa, cum vento fastidiosa."

Latin Proverb.

"Parlement mistral et Durance

Sont les trois fleaux de Provence."

Old Saying.

CHAPTER II

AVIGNON

How the sun does pour down on to the great esplanade before the Palace of the Popes! It is as warm as a June day in England and twice as light. That astounding building towers into the blue, bare and creamy white, every stern, simple line of it ascending swift and clear, in repeated strokes, rhythmically grand, like some fine piece of blank verse.

The parapet alone shows broken surfaces. Neither cornice nor corbel nor window pediment; scarcely a window to interrupt the mass of splendid masonry, only recurrent shafts of stone (continuing from the machicolations above) which shoot

straight and slim from base to summit of the fortress, to meet there at intervals, as if a line of tall poplars, two by two, had bent their heads together to form this succession of sharply-pointed arches.

The arrangement of massive wall and slender arch gives to the building a singular effect of strength and eternity combined with a severe sort of grace.

PONT DE ST. BENÉZET, AVIGNON. By E. M. Synge.

It stands there enormous, calm, yet with a delicacy of bearing belonging surely to no other edifice of that impregnable strength and vast bulk. The genius of the architect has expressed in these sixteen-feet walls some of the spirit of the palace as well as the rudeness of the stronghold, and has given a subtle hint of the painted halls and galleries wherein half the potentates of Europe were magnificently entertained, where Petrarch dreamed and Rabelais jested.... And that hint seems to lie in the general relations of mass to mass, and especially in the shallow projection and towering height of that endless line of delicate arches. Burke, in his sublime way, assures us that sublimity is the result of monotonous repetition, and this surprising achievement of Papal magnificence certainly bears out the theory.

The palace shows no more signs of age upon it than the glowing tint of the walls through the beating of the sun upon them for hundreds of brilliant years. How brilliant they must have been! What warmth, what light! That is what astonishes Barbara: the light. She cannot get over it. We seem to have awakened into a world woven out of radiance.

Not but that it is a very real and solid world, this sun-created realm of rambling terraces and upward-trending pathways. Rich stone-pines follow the slant of the road, as it mounts the famous Rocher du Dom in easy zig-zags till it reaches the plateau at the summit, where once upon a time, tradition says, all the witches and wizards of the country-side used to celebrate their unholy rites. And thereby hangs a tale—perhaps to be told later in the day.

Half-way up the rock, on a little platform of its own, stands a small Romanesque Cathedral, singularly fine in style, and characteristic of the architecture of the South of France. Creepers are hanging recklessly, alluringly over the walls and parapets of the hill above. On the top there is a little garden, with seats and shrubs and a pond inhabited by ornate, self-conscious kinds of birds. We learn this in later explorations. Just now the instinctive human desire to reach the highest point achievable is half quieted by the warm comfort of this placid spot below, and we turn our backs on the aspiring Mount.

There are sun-warmed stone benches under the young, sparsely-covered plane-trees (no town in Provence ever dreamt of trying to exist without plane-trees), and here we establish ourselves and watch the little events of the square: the soldiers coming and going up the steps of the Papal Palace (now a barracks); the three recruits being frantically drilled (there is always an element of frenzy in French military exercises); the slow moving of the shadows which rudely caricature the huge stone garland on the Papal Mint, a design in Michael Angelo's most opulent manner; the stray cats on the prowl from neighbouring kitchens; the cheerful dog trotting across the square, tail in air, ready to answer to a friendly word with which we detain him from more important affairs.

Ancient as is this city of the Popes, there are no weather-stains, as we northerners understand them, only marks of the sun and wind. A good friend this fierce, cleansing sun, and the wind from Mont Ventoux must sweep away all impurities from the narrow streets, and—il y en a!

Away across the parapet a mass of roofs fills the slope to the river bank—most wonderful of rivers!—and to the south there are hills and bright distances: Provençal hills, distances of the land of "joy, young-heartedness and love." And that makes the thought that we are in Provence wake up with a cry that rings in the heart like a reveillé. And on its heels comes a strange, secret rebound of sadness, keen as the cut

of a knife. As for the cause? Who can say exactly what home-sickness, what vast longing it is that wakens thus when the beauty and greatness of the world and the narrowness of individual possibilities point too clearly their eternal contrast?

PALACE OF THE POPES AND CATHEDRAL. By E. M. Synge.

"I can't get over that light," Barbara exclaims, in renewed astonishment. "I don't feel as if I ever wanted to move from this bench."

And we let the sun make a considerable portion of his daily journey across the palace walls before we move. Already the influence of the South is in our veins. It makes one better understand the genius of this "Rome transportée dans les Gaules." It must have been, in some sort, the capital of Europe, when for sixty years or so the Papal Court drew the great and the famous from the ends of the earth to the gay, corrupt little city.

Seven Popes reigned here, but of the life at the Palace during that time there is singularly little record. Instinctively one tries to recapture misty reminiscences of schoolroom lore, for now the dry facts begin to glow with the splendour and the pathos of real life, as one realises that just on this very spot, in sight of these sunny hills and this rushing river, those ancient things took place.

"Oh! Barbara, how magnificently learned I should be if only I possessed all the information that I have forgotten!"

"What have you forgotten?" Barbara inquires soothingly.

Heavens! What with forgetting and never having known, one felt as arid and futile as an extinct volcano. Had one but enjoyed the privileges accorded to the characters of ancient drama, one would have stretched forth hands in invocation to the mysterious eventful city.

"O city, O immortal city of the Rhone, lift but for one moment the veil that hides from us those tremendous secrets which fill the air with dreams and presences even to this hour!"

Perhaps the appeal was not altogether in vain, for a few isolated facts began to drift, ghost-like, into view. They were images imprinted in childish days while Avignon was nothing but a name, and so the ill-guided imagination had placed the city on the plain; a bare, arid group of houses surrounding a vague, vast structure, against which clouds of dust were continually being driven.

It was curious and interesting to compare this long-cherished picture with the reality. In connection with it was another painted in richer tones. The subject was the journey of Philip of Valois through his kingdom with the kings of Navarre and Bohemia in his train. After passing through Burgundy—broad and spacious Burgundy, with its straggling, brown villages—he arrives here at Avignon, where other kings have hurried to meet him, and is magnificently received by the Pope. Which of the seven Popes was it? Alas! memory failed, but King Philip was lodged over there across the river at Villeneuve-les-Avignon.

"Beyond the island where the huge castle is on the hill?" Barbara inquired. "What a shabby sort of place to put a king."

My idea, too, of Villeneuve, till I saw it, had been a brilliant little pleasure-city, full of splendid cardinals' palaces.

"Let's go and see the town," said Barbara; "perhaps the palaces are still there."

We decided to go that very day. A place is twice seen that is seen at once. Some discerning person had read me Froissart's account of the scene, and I had never forgotten it; the feastings and festivals that burst forth all over the city, till Lent came; and then the thrilling news that went flying through the country that the Saracens were marching against the Holy Land. This was a threat to all Christendom. It was difficult to imagine what it must have been to fear a possible invasion of those terrible enemies.

But the city was spared. The Pope preached a great sermon to his congregation of kings, exhorting them to take the cross. They all obeyed. And then the visionary

pictures became a procession: the King of France with his retinue journeying westward into Languedoc——

"Languedoc?" questioned Barbara.

It was just before us across the Rhone; lovely brown hills on the horizon.

And so the royal company moved in picturesque progress through the provinces of France: Auvergne, Berry, Beauce, and so on, till they reached Paris.

"I should like to have seen it," said Barbara. "I wonder if they wore long robes and ermine."

"Perhaps not quite so beautiful a garb as that, but, thank Heaven, we know they didn't wear tweed suits! When the human race took to doing that they bid goodbye to the charm and romance of life for ever."

"But I think men look quite nice in tweed suits," said Barbara. "I am sure they would look ridiculous now in mantles and ermine."

"Oh, that's another matter. There is always something a little ridiculous about civilised man, 'rough hew him how you may'; but nothing brings it out so fatally as tweed."

Barbara remonstrated, and then wanted to know if I could remember any more.

I could remember nothing about Avignon, but between us we recollected incidents about the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, which took place just at this time. It was a luckless day for France and England when Edward III. was so ill-inspired as to assert his roundabout claim to the throne of France! The fair country became the scene of raids and sieges, ravaging of provinces, taking and retaking of towns and castles, battle and murder and sudden death.

Of this there are of course endless chronicles; of all the moil and toil of war and rapine, of the clash of rival interests, of mad ambitions which, once gratified, left their victims only more wild and craving than before.

If the annals of the Middle Ages have a moral it is this: Fling away ambition. Fling away this crude passion of kings and captains which seems to drive a man like a fury through his untasted life, never giving him pause to possess what he has won or even to realise the triumph of his achievement.

"Tell me more," demanded Barbara.

But the pictures were at an end. Quite capriciously it seemed, certain scenes had painted themselves on the mind, but what followed chronologically had made no special impression, perhaps because there was a general confusion of wars and tumults, till suddenly we emerge on familiar ground at the battles of Creçy and Poitiers.

We had grown tired of trying to realise the things of the past, and strolled down to the river, to the long suspension bridge, where, as every French child knows, "on y danse, on y danse." And here one has a fine view of Villeneuve, across the Rhone, and looking back, of Avignon. From this point its walls are strikingly picturesque, ramparts of the fourteenth century, built by Clement VI. and described by a modern author as a "remarkably beautiful specimen of mediæval masonry, with a battlemented wall for projecting machicolations on finely moulded corbels"—corbels of four or five courses, which give an appearance almost Eastern to these splendid walls and gateways.

"The intensest life of the fourteenth century," says the same writer, "passed through the Gothic portal over which the portcullis hung in its chamber ever ready to drop with a thundering crash, and fix its iron teeth in the ground."

Barbara asked a great many searching questions about times and manners. But here I began to experience what some discriminating person has called a "reaction against the despotism of facts." I did not know any more. I began to repent of having excited this inordinate thirst for information. However, very little is needed to enable one to achieve a general impression of France in the fourteenth century. One has merely to

think of the fair land under the horrors of sack and siege, burning towns, starving people, all the agonies of chronic warfare. What is more difficult is to descend from the general to the particular, and to imagine what sort of life that must have been for the mortal who was neither a King nor a Pope, nor a plundering freebooter, but only a human being with a life to ruin and a heart to break.

Even while one is dreaming of other things, that wonderful Palace is impressing itself upon the sentiment with steady power. It stands there in the blaze of light, tremendous, inevitable, like a fact of nature. One can scarcely think it away. It resists even that mighty force, the human imagination.

Avignon! the Roman Avenio; a place of many events, many influences, which have helped to make our present life what it is—we are really there, absurdly improbable as it seems; we, with our modern minds, modern speech, modern preconceptions, in the bright land of the troubadours; and, stranger still, in the land where the Phœnicians traded, the Greeks colonised, the Romans built their inevitable baths and amphitheatres; where the ancient Ligurians lived their lives on peaked hilltops, and race fought race and tribe fought tribe, when there was neither Pope in Avignon nor King in France, but only wild gods and wilder chieftains ruling in the lawless, beautiful land.

From the height of the Rocher du Dom (we climb there at last by the zig-zag pine-shadowed road) the whole country bursts upon us, blue, wide, mountain-encircled, radiant; with the Rhone winding across the plain, dreaming of mysterious things. The great river has a personality of its own as strong as that of the palace. It sweeps to the foot of our cliff and takes a splendid curve round the south side of the town, past the ruined bridge of St. Benézet, with its romantic chapel poised midway above the rush and flurry of the river.

Every year, on Christmas Eve, Mass used to be celebrated in this little chapel of the Rhone, and strange must it have been when the yellow lights glowed—just once of

all the nights of the long year—on its lonely altar, and the chanting of priests rose and fell above the sound of the marauding waters. But for their aggressions, the grand old bridge would still be carrying passengers from the Papal city across the two branches of the river and the island of St. Barthelasse to the foot of the tower of Philippe le Bel.

This old tower is, perhaps, the most striking building—except the great castle—in the decaying town of Villeneuve where the Cardinals built so many palaces. Here it was, in that forgotten little haunt of pleasure, that the guests of the Pope were once so gloriously lodged and entertained. And now—sad beyond all telling is the little town! Ardouin-Dumazet, the author of "Un Voyage en France," seems to have been impressed by its forlornness as much as we were, for he writes of it in words that evoke the very spirit of the place:—

"Amas de toits audessus desquels surgissent des eglises rongées par le temps, des edifices à physiognomie triste et vague—La ville est d'apparence morne. Elle dut être splendide jadis: de grands hotels, des maisons de noble ordonnance, des voies bordées d'arcades indiquent un passé prosperé. Les moindres détails: ferrurues de portes et de balcon, corbeaux, statuettes d'angle sont d'un art tres pur. Aujourd'hui on rencontre surtout des chiens et des chats—On pourrait se croire dans une ville morte—On va errer par les lamentables et pittoresques débris de la Chartreuse du Val-de-Bénédiction où sont encore de merveilles architecturales."

Everywhere, indeed, as one wanders, one comes upon these "architectural marvels." A fine doorway giving entrance to a wheelwright's yard; delicate pieces of iron-work on the balcony of a barber's shop; a scrap of stone carving; a noble block of buildings in some ill-kept street.

The symphonic beauty of such relics of the Renaissance which are found in almost every town of the South of France, bears in upon the imagination the truth of the saying of the great architect Alberti that a slight alteration in the curves of his design

for San Francesco at Rimini would "spoil his music."

The traveller who climbs the hill to the vast fortress of St. André—with its battlements of the fourteenth century—enters a scene even more eloquent of desolation. But splendid it must have been in the days of its glory!

CHARTREUSE DU VAL-DE-BÉNÉDICTION, VILLENEUVE-LES-AVIGNON. By E. M. Synge.

The huge drum towers of the entrance gate recall old dreams of romantic adventure. But for the strange silence of the place, it might almost excite expectations of clattering cavalcades, and one knows not what medley of bright figures in harmony with the mediæval background. But the silence broods on, unbroken. A black kitten is the only living thing that meets the view as we pass through the shadows of the gateway. A dishevelled grey village has grown up within the walls, its steep street climbing upward to the summit of the hill, while a cypress-guarded convent stands within its own high walls. Here the sisters pass their lives, doubly immured. If some unhappy nun tried to escape, she would not only have to penetrate the stern boundaries of her retreat, but to scale the ramparts of the fortress into the bargain; the engines of State and Religion arrayed against her; of this world and the next. It prompted one to carry the significant symbol further afield, and to follow in imagination the fortunes not only of the fugitive nun but of the escaping woman!

As we begin the ascent of the desolate street, the black kitten slips coquettishly across the way, at a slant, her tail high in the air, like a ruler, as the School-Board essayist happily puts it. We hail her as alluringly as may be, but she is away beyond our reach up a little outside staircase leading to the doorway of one of the few habitable houses. From this eminence she looks down upon us mockingly, clearly enjoying our disadvantage. This piques us and we engage in pursuit. The imp finally vanishes into the doorway, and presently a miserably clad, dejected-looking woman emerges. Evidently the kitten had announced to her the advent of visitors. She leads

the way, a huge bunch of keys in her hand, the kitten following in a self-willed, flighty sort of fashion. While we are trifling with ancient walls and gruesome dungeons, the kitten is busy catching phantom mice among the heaps of fallen masonry that encumber the grassy hill-top, forlorn remains, indeed, of human habitations.

CASTLE OF ST. ANDRÉ, VILLENEUVE-LES-AVIGNON. By E. M. Synge.

The little chapel of the convent strikes with a chill as we enter—surely it is something more than a chill; a sense of something deathly. In a flash comes the horrified sense of the death-in-life that is hidden behind these mysterious walls. One needs no detail, no assurance; the whole beats in upon the consciousness, steals in like an atmosphere, as we stand in the shadow looking at the little flower-decked altar, musty and tawdry with its artificial flowers and flounced draperies.

"Of what Order are the Sisters?" we inquire, in undertones, after a long silence.

"Sh—h," warns a reproving voice from a hidden part of the chapel, which had been so arranged as to leave the west-end of it invisible to all but the inmates of the convent.

"C'est une des soeurs," whispered our guide, and we turned and left the devotee to her prayers.

A truly amazing thing the human spirit! There are times when one feels entirely divorced from it, as if one were studying its manifestations from the point of view of an alien race. And there is no epoch so baffling to the modern mind as the mediæval. The ancients seem normal, straight-going, and eminently human as compared with the men and women of the Middle Ages.

We are taken to the dungeons in the entrance towers where our feudal forefathers inflicted one dares not think what agonies, and without a pang of remorse; rather with a sense of right and heaven-inspired justice. It was within the walls of this fortress, probably in a cell of the Convent, that the Man in the Iron Mask passed the

dreadful days and nights of his life.

The sentiment of the unimaginative ruffian who could condemn a fellow-creature to this living grave is probably beyond the understanding of a modern—short of a criminal lunatic. We are glad to hurry out again into the light, oppressed by the shadow of misery and wickedness that seems to hang about the place to this hour.

There are many who hold that the world has made no real progress except in material civilisation. That is a subject that might best be studied in some mouldering dungeon, which, be it remembered, was just as much a "necessary part" of the mediæval castle as the kitchen or pantry is of its descendant, the country-house of to-day.

If such strongholds were either let or sold in the feudal era, they were doubtless recommended to intending purchasers as having well-appointed torture-chambers, fitted with all the latest improvements in racks and thumb-screws. Without venturing to claim too much for the average modern, he may be said to have advanced a little beyond the stage when the thumb-screw was an instrument that no gentleman's house should be without. As the change of ideals to which this improvement is due may be said to have taken place in Provence, fostered and impelled, paradox as it seems, within the precincts of the feudal castle itself with its chains and oubliettes, those sighing ruins become strangely moving and significant.

Our poor, half-starved guide, however, looks as if she thought them anything but significant as she leads us up and down the fallen masonry, the kitten following always, and often springing to her shoulders and curving its lithe little body round her neck.

"Il est comme notre enfant," she says, half apologetically. "Nous n'en avons pas, des enfants." And the kitten swirls its tail in her face as if to assure her that it could well fill the place of any number of children. The faithful little acolyte had to be left outside the door leading to the dungeons, for she used to get lost in the passages and

the turret staircase. But there she waited, mewing at intervals, till we re-emerged, and then she sprang with a little purring cry on to her mistress's shoulder.

We were at the entrance gate, and the round of the fortress was finished. We bade goodbye to the woman, who pocketed her "tip" and hastened back with her attendant sprite to the little grey, half-ruined house where she passes her grey, unimaginable life!

CHAPTER III A SEVERE CRITIC—UZÈS AND BARBENTANE

"La cigalo di piboulo,

La bouscarlo do bouissoun,

Lou grihet di farigoulo

Tout canto sa cansoun."

The tree locust in the poplar, the thrush in the wayside bush,

The grasshopper in the wild thyme, each sings its own song.

Mistral.

CHAPTER III

A SEVERE CRITIC—UZÈS AND BARBENTANE

At the table d'hôte of our hotel, a little group of travellers was clustered at the far end of the long, old-fashioned room—silent, French though they were. My neighbour was a pale, faintly-outlined young man, with short, colourless hair. Curious that so artistic a nation should crop its hair so very close, I idly mused. That pallor? Presumably the lack of outdoor exercise, not to enter upon dark possibilities of absinthe and other Parisian roads to ruin.

At about the stage of the entrée the subject of these conjectures, bracing himself to

the task, turned and said—

"Est ce que vous êtes depuis longtemps à Avignon, madame?" (Accent a little provincial, I thought, perhaps Provençal, which was interesting!)

"Non, monsieur, je ne suis ici que depuis hier," I responded, not only in my best French, but with as much sociability as I could throw into the somewhat arid reply, for I desired to prolong a conversation that might throw light upon the fascinating country.

"Ah!" said the close-cropped one, with a gesture that I thought Gallic, "je suis un peu—de—dis—disappointed, as we say in English," he suddenly broke up, with an exasperated abandonment of the foreign lingo. The man was an Englishman, for all he was worth! Barbara laughed aloud, getting wind of the situation. So much for the distinctions of national types. My neighbour had made precisely the same mistake on his side that I had made on mine.

With Avignon he was indeed "a little disappointed." He thought the Palace bare and ugly, and the town dirty and unattractive. The view from the Rocher du Dom? Yes, that was rather fine. Give the devil his due, he evidently felt. What was the height of Mont Ventoux? I longed to rush wildly into figures, but principle restrained me. Did I mean to go to Chateauneuf? Our friend had been there. Tumble-down old place. One could see it from the Rocher du Dom across the river. They made rather good wine there.

Chateauneuf! Good wine there!

Was this the famous Chateauneuf, the ancient country seat of the Popes, the lordly pleasure-house of the most luxurious and brilliant Court of the Middle Ages?—("Not much luxury about it now!" said our tourist)—a vast Summer Palace situated on one of the finest sites of the district, whence one could see Vaucluse itself in the Vale of the Sorgue, Petrarch's beloved retreat from the clamour of the Papal City; and Vacqueiras, the home of Raimbaut de Vacqueiras, the celebrated

troubadour, and many another spot of greater or less renown.

Here, too, a modern singer had been born: Anselm Mathieu, and in the old house of his family the Provençal Félibres used to meet, reciting verses, singing songs, and doubtless pledging one another in the famous vintage of Chateauneuf, the "rather good wine" of our severe critic.

CHATEAUNEUF, NEAR AVIGNON. By E. M. Synge.

He placidly continued his crushing observations. Vaucluse he considered a much over-rated spot, though the cliffs and crags above the source of the river were rather striking. Was there anything more to see in Avignon after one had done the Palace and the Museum? I reluctantly admitted there was but little one could recommend to a critical spirit. Our level-headed tourist had spent an hour in Villeneuve that morning—the little town across the bridge with the big castle, he explained—and found it depressing—everything peeling off. The description was annoyingly apt. There was no gainsaying it. Only it was not exhaustive.

Its author intended to go next morning to see the Pont du Gard, about which one heard so many laudatory accounts. He was told that he wouldn't think as much of it as he expected. How much he expected after this warning I was unable to estimate, but I thought it safe to prophesy disappointment. He said himself that he confidently anticipated it. I wondered vaguely whether the condition of mind thus described was capable of analysis, but did not attempt it. I felt Barbara was emotionally in a state of unstable equilibrium, and dared not add to her provocations. My neighbour further complained that considering the general importance of Avignon and one's extreme familiarity with its name, historically speaking, it seemed surprisingly shabby and small—narrow streets and all that. We admitted the narrow streets.

And there wasn't a decent church in the whole place! Wouldn't compare with Bruges or Rouen. My tourist was at Rouen in the autumn of '98, and at Bruges in September of '99, on a cycling tour—or was it August?

I thought it might be August.

Yes (our friend's memory clarified most satisfactorily), it was the last week in August. On the 18th he had left London. I knew that hot weather we had all over England and the Continent at the end of August in that year?

I evidently must have known it, so it seemed scarcely worth while confessing that my memory failed to distinguish the particular heat of that summer from the more or less similar oppressiveness of any other season.

Well, he and two fellows cycled all through Holland and Belgium in ten days and three hours; saw everything. They made an average of sixty miles a day. Barbara, who hailed from north of the Tweed, said "Aw!" and the flattered cyclist hastened to add, with becoming modesty, that of course the roads were good and the country flat. They did ninety several days. Pretty fair with the thermometer at 70° in the shade——

"An interesting country for such a tour?"

"Rather flat; never get a really good spin; though on the other hand, there is no uphill work."

For general interest did the country compare at all with Provence? I wanted to turn my informant from his line of ideas just for the fun of seeing him work back to it, as an intercepted ant or earwig will pursue its chosen path, no matter how many obstacles one may throw in the way. Our tourist doubled and fell into line again almost at once.

Provence? He had been recommended to give it a trial, but so far had seen nothing particular to attract one. Too hot for cycling, and hotels very poor. And, as he said before, there were no churches, let alone cathedrals. Look at the cathedral here, as they had the cheek to call it, perched up on a rock like a Swiss châlet. And what architecture! Baedecker called it Romanesque. He always called things Romanesque when there was nothing else he could decently call them. (This was cheering; a sort

of inverted enthusiasm which at least was less depressing than indifference.) Why couldn't they stick to some definite style—Gothic or something? However, he (my neighbour) didn't pretend to know anything about these matters, though he evidently felt that the architects who couldn't bring themselves to settle down decisively into "Gothic or something" had made rather a poor thing of their profession. It seemed to him that there was a baldness about the buildings here. They might be all right, but so they struck him. Rienzi's tower, for instance—not a rag of ornament!

I had begun to suggest an unsatisfied yearning for a few minarets with a trifle of Early Perpendicular work down the sides, when I became aware that for various reasons—Barbara especially—it was wiser to desist.

It was not till our friend had gone next day to court disappointment at the Pont du Gard that we felt the lifting of the curious, leaden atmosphere that he had thrown around him. His presence seemed to stop the heart-beat of the place, nay, one's own heart-beat, till nothing was left but hotels and averages and heights and dates. Mon Dieu! And some day somebody would have to travel with such a being—perhaps for life. Heaven help the other traveller!

However, after all, it was possibly wholesome to have one's hot-headed impressions subjected to the cold light of an Englishman's reason. Our compatriot, with his severely rational way of conducting himself, had doubtless gathered a crop of solid information, which was more than could be said for our methods. I told Barbara that I was going to regard Avignon henceforth from the point of view of its population and height above the sea, and I hunted up facts in guide-books and put her in possession of all available dates from the earliest ages to the present day. She did not seem to me to assimilate them satisfactorily.

RIENZI'S TOWER, AVIGNON. By E. M. Synge.

The country round Avignon serves to remind one of the fact that it was, in ancient times, a good deal nearer the sea than it is at present. The outlines are like those of a

sea-bordering country; such heights as there are have the character of cliffs, or they are level-topped, smoothed-out hills until one reaches the grotesque escarpments of the Alpilles or the wild masses of the Luberon range, once island summits rising from the waters.

Avignon stands majestically on one of these heights, with the Rhone valley spreading wide on every hand.

It looks like a magic city in the sunshine or in the glow of evening; the interminable Palace, the Cathedral, the spires and towers rising against the sky with that particular serenity of beauty that we think of as belonging to the land of dreams.

A railway journey of about two hours from Avignon takes one to the little ducal city of Uzès, which lies in the heart of this curious lateral country, whose eminences have no peaks or highest points, whose lines are all horizontal.

Upon the sky-line at the end of the leisurely journey appears a striking mass of buildings and mediæval towers, announcing to the lover of architecture that some delightful hours are before him.

A quaint old omnibus takes (and shakes) the passengers—mostly commercial travellers—up the slight hill and in through the grey gates of this stately little city, landing one and all at the big inn in the broad main street. Except that it is so exceedingly quiet, it has something in common with the street of an English cathedral town.

Obviously Uzès has been a place of importance in the past: the public buildings are on a grand scale and of fine design; the Ducal Palace announces the capital of a little Principality or Duchy, and the number of churches would suggest either a large population or a very devout one. But a sort of trance seems to have fallen upon the place, and not even the bustle of the inn at its busiest moments, when the vast, dark-papered dining-room is filled with hungry passengers, can overcome the sense of suspended life that haunts the town.

But in the earlier centuries it had a stirring history. Uzès possessed some valiant seigneurs in the days of Philippe le Bel, for that monarch was so pleased with their prowess that he erected the town into a "Vicomté." It was governed by its seigneurs and its bishops who shared the jurisdiction, and a lively time they must have had of it!

It has always been a fiery little city, and during the religious wars of the sixteenth century was the scene of terrible struggles and massacres, even in the very churches, which were half ruined during this period. Perhaps the tumult of those times has left Uzès weary and sad, for now the place seems dedicated to the God of Sleep.

The shaded promenade or terrace, with its white parapet of short stone pillars, runs round two sides of the Ducal Garden outside its walls—a delightful spot to rest or loiter in, commanding a curious wide view over the country, which is, however, suddenly shut in by a hard, high horizon line as level as if it were ruled, or as if it were the edge of a plain, though it is really a range of hills.

The trees of the shady old garden of the Duché drop their branches over a high wall; at the back of the demesne the Cathedral stands half hidden by some of the buildings of the Duché and beside it rises one of the most singular and beautiful architectural monuments of the South, La Tour Fenestrella, an exquisite Romanesque tower, much smaller but more graceful than the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which it otherwise resembles.

It springs upwards, tier after tier of little arches, with an effect of exquisite lightness and strength, and leaves one wondering why this delicate example of Romanesque work does not enjoy a greater renown.

Many hours might be well spent in this forgotten little city, where in the old days the intense quiet that broods over it—as if invading it from the strange, almost ominous landscape beyond the parapet—was broken by the din of warfare more violent and more unappeasable than any other sort of strife: that of religion.

In early spring the plain of the Rhone in the neighbourhood of Avignon is all flushed with young almond blossoms. The carriage of the tourist trundles past field after field of misty pink, and for the time he might fancy himself in the landscape of a Japanese fan.

Above this plain, perched on a bare hillside that gives a bird's-eye view of the wide expanse of the Rhone valley, stands the ancient village of Barbentane, a name that occurs constantly in the literature of Provence, especially in the poems of Mistral. In Roman days Barbentane or Bellinto, a station on the road between Tarascon and Orange, was an island surrounded by the waters of the Durance.

STREET AT UZÈS. By E. M. Synge.

It is of far less imposing aspect than Uzès and is approached by a long, ascending road, which is continuous with the broad main street of the town, whence other streets climb the hill, wandering into little platforms and nooks and picturesque corners such as only a hill town in the Midi can produce. There are ancient buildings at every turn, and above the rest, beyond the gateway leading up to the windy limestone downs, stands the tall ruined tower of Barbentane, which has a romantic story attached to it. Mistral writes of it:

"The Bishop of Avignon ...

Has built a tower at Barbentane,

Sea-wind it spurns, and tramontane,

And round it demons rage in vain.

He'll exorcise

The walls that rise

With turrets square

From rocks so bare.

Its front looks to the setting sun,

And over the windows one by one—

Lest demon ever through them may pass—

He carves his mitre over the glass."[2]

To this demon-proof stronghold the Bishop appoints a warder, who—as is the way of warders—has a charming daughter, Mourrette. Mourrette has a lover who is determined to scale the walls of the fortress and carry off the damsel or die in the attempt. Unfortunately, he dies in the attempt.

"So true, so brave, he ne'er will stop

Till he grasp her hand at the turret top.

Alas! a branch breaks—with a hideous shock,

Her lover is dashed on the hungry rock."

Tragedy as usual! If all had gone well, the story in all likelihood would never have reached us. We may, perhaps, conclude that life is not quite so dark as history and literature might lead us to believe.

The author of "Un voyage en France" writes:—

"Les cultures enveloppent jusqu'au Rhone le petit massif sur lequel se dresse la haute Tour de Barbentane," and these "cultures"—corn, almond-trees, vines, olives—give an aspect of richness and prosperity to the great valley.

GATEWAY, BARBENTANE. By E. M. Synge.

On the opposite side of it stands an ancient but still inhabited castle belonging to the Comte des Essars (or some similar name), situated upon a sudden height or cliff and approached by a steep and shady avenue which leads to a modern garden of evergreen shrubs, all very carefully grouped and tended. At the highest point appears the great square castle, with its round tower at each corner, and crenellated walls.

The caretaker admits the visitor to a large courtyard and thence to the suites of sombre old rooms with their dark ceilings, stately mantelpieces and rich, ancient

furniture, all spell-bound as if waiting for the life that has gone away. The owners only come there for about a month in the time of the grape-harvest, but the evidence of their presence in little personal belongings, such as racks full of pipes, carved sticks, riding whips, photographs, and so forth, emphasises pathetically the silence of the house, which is speckless and in perfect order, ready at any moment for habitation.

The place is well worth a visit, not merely for its rather sad charm, but because it helps the imagination to reconstruct the life and aspect of the feudal castle; for such edifices as this are generally seen in ruins, emptied of all their splendours. Here rises before one's eye the scene of mediæval romance almost precisely as in the days of the troubadours and their fascinating ladies.

It seemed a pity that our friend the critic had left Avignon without having seen this place where the little touches of the modern (especially that prosaic garden of well-groomed evergreens) would have cheered his soul and proved to him that Provence could, after all, produce something that was not either tumble-down or peeling off.

Such is the contradictoriness of human nature, that we began to regard with regret the certainty that he would not be at the table d'hôte that night to record his disappointments. It was quite interesting to watch the process by which he would throw an atmosphere of spiritual deathliness—a sort of moral incandescent gaslight—over the fascinating things of this despised country.

We realised that, in spite of his powers of disenchantment, we had found a sort of satisfaction (like the satisfaction of a discord in music) in the bleakness of our friend's outlook upon life and things.

It made one, perhaps not very relevantly, think of Madame de Sévigné's phrase:—

"Toujours soutenue de l'ignorance capable de Madame de B——"

"Ignorance capable!" We positively missed it!

CHAPTER IV PETRARCH AND LAURA

"Solea lontana in sonno consolarme

Con quella dolce angelica sua vista

Madonna; or mi spaventa e mi contrista;

Né di duol, né di téma posso aitarme:

Ché spesso nel suo volto veder parme

Vera pietà con grave dolor mista;

Ed udir cose, onde'l cor fede acquista,

Ché di gioja e di speme si disarme.

Non ti sovèn di quell' ultima sera,

Dic' ella, ch'i lasciai gli occhi tuoi molli,

E sforzata dal tempo me n' andai?

I' non te'l potei dir all or, né volli:

Or te'l dico per cosa esperta e vera;

Non sperar di vedermi in terra mai."

Francesco Petrarca (Sonnetto CCXI.)

CHAPTER IV

PETRARCH AND LAURA

How well one understands why it is that the South has produced so much art and so little philosophy! We found ourselves spending hours basking in this delicious sun, while we idly wondered how often the beautiful Laura crossed the square, exactly how she looked, and spoke, and smiled; above all, how she felt: the real truth about that mysterious romance. The customs of the day, the universal habit of love-making as part of the necessary accomplishments of a gentleman, make it difficult to

recognise the genuine love-story when one finds it.

Barbara was much interested in these immortal lovers, much more so than in Rienzi's tower or old churches; and we managed to glean a good deal of desultory information on the subject, which brought us to the conclusion that Laura was a real person and Petrarch's a real passion. The fact that in his prose writings he scarcely ever alludes to his beloved one seemed to us to support our views. He did not care to talk to all the world of what he felt so deeply. Sonnets were more impersonal. In his favourite copy of Virgil he records his first meeting with Laura, and her death twenty-one years later. Barbara considered this conclusive.

"Laura, who was distinguished by her own virtues and widely celebrated by my songs, first appeared to my eyes in early manhood in the year of our Lord 1327, upon the sixth day of April, at the first hour in the Church of St. Clara at Avignon." In the same minute way he records her death while he was at Verona, "ignorant of his fate."

"I have experienced," he adds, "a certain satisfaction in writing this bitter record of a cruel event, especially in this place where it will often come under my eyes, for so I may be led to reflect that life can afford me no farther pleasures."

He appears all through his career to have been struggling between his love for this unattainable lady and the monastic view of life as inculcated by St. Augustine. No wonder his was a tempest-tossed and melancholy soul! Among his published works the imaginary dialogue between himself and the saint lays bare the curious combat of a nature essentially modern in its instincts, while intellectually under the dominion of mediæval theories. His sentiment was noble in character: a noble love for a noble woman; but the pitiless saint will not accept that as an excuse for the soul's enslavement. The monitor does his utmost to prove that it is a chain utterly unworthy of a rational being, whose thoughts should be fixed on things eternal. It does not occur to Petrarch to make high claim for the sentiment itself, still less to

number it among eternal things, as probably it would have occurred to a mind of that idealistic type had he lived a few hundred years later. But his feeling and his mental outlook are evidently not at one. He feels ahead of his thought by many centuries, and never all his life does he succeed in harmonising the two parts of his being, and that is probably why he was always unsatisfied, sad at heart even at his gayest; unable to fully enjoy the savour of life in spite of his extraordinary fulness of opportunity and his ardent nature.

VALE AND SOURCE OF THE SORGUE, VAUCLUSE. By E. M. Synge.

As for the theory that Laura was merely a symbol for Laurea, the crown of poetic fame, it is not easy to accept the view in face of a letter of Petrarch to his friend, Giacomo Colonna, in which he speaks of this supposition: "Would that your humorous suggestion were true; would to God it were all a pretence and not a madness!"

His defence of this passion, in the "Segreto," is described by a writer of to-day as "purely modern."

"Petrarch was modern enough to grasp, and even defend against the perversions of monasticism and the current of theological speculation, one of the noblest of man's attributes."

In the singular dialogue between the poet and the saint, the poet, while making a brave stand for the unconquerable sentiment, finally allows the saint to have the best of the argument.

Barbara flatly refused to listen to the theory that Petrarch and Laura never exchanged so much as a word in their lives, but it is believed by many. The poet is said to have worshipped the lady at a distance across the golden shadows of the Church of St. Clara at Avignon, where she used to come for the celebration of Mass. Her family—if to the family of de Noves she really belonged—owned a château in the neighbourhood. She married into the house of De Sades (or so runs the story)

and she was a niece of the famous Fanette, who was President of the renowned Court of Love at the Château of Romanin in the Alpilles: those strange little limestone mountains that we saw to the south as we looked over the country from the Rocher du Dom.

Some writers, on the other hand, speak of a passionate history, clandestine meetings, tragedy and despair. But of this there is not a hint in the poet's own writings. Nothing certain seems to be known about the matter, and it is even regarded as entirely fabulous by some sceptics who would banish from history all its charming stories, the mere fact of a romantic flavour seeming to them to prove a legend untrue. As if real life were constructed on such dull and unimaginative lines!

If, however, the story of Petrarch and Laura be well founded, he must have been the very prince of lovers, for his love was well-nigh untiring, although seemingly hopeless, uncheered by even an occasional meeting; and it remained in his heart obstinately and irrevocably, in spite of the most persistent efforts of his intellect and his religious sense to oust it; in spite of a life among the Courts of Europe the most brilliant and varied that can be imagined.

Petrarch possessed also the genius of friendship, and had swarms of friends. When Pope Clement VI., one of the number, lay dying in his fortress palace, the poet sent a message: "Remember the epitaph of the Roman Emperor Hadrian: 'Turba Medicorum Perii.'" And he wrote a letter to the Pope in the same strain: "What makes me really tremble is to see your bed surrounded with physicians who never agree."...

One likes to picture him in these old halls and to know that he possessed the genial faculty of making people feel the happier for his presence. Yet it is recorded that "deep remorse and profound melancholy afflicted the poet's soul."

Perhaps his hopeless love may have clouded his spirit, for this does happen in exceptional natures; or is it that, in truth, there are untold agonies, late or soon, in the

hearts of all who have the power to move and to delight?

Certain it is that Petrarch possessed an immense attraction for almost every type of mind and character. He must indeed have been a man of infinite charm. He was the friend of kings, scholars, Popes, princes, soldiers, statesmen. He ardently championed the cause of Rienzi, and of the Emperor Charles IV.; for the idea of keeping up the succession of the Holy Roman Empire appealed powerfully to his imagination, and when that monarch gave up his campaign before he had made good his imperial claims on Italy, Petrarch wrote bitterly reproaching him for abandoning so sacred a heritage.

In Avignon, among hosts of devoted friends, were the Princes of the House of Colonna; and the friendship was not destroyed even when Petrarch sided warmly with Rienzi against the turbulent nobles of Rome, among whom the Colonna were pre-eminent.

But in spite of his popularity in the Papal city, Petrarch heartily detested this Gallic Babylon, as he called it, and loved to retire from its splendours to Vaucluse, not far off, where he tried to regain serenity in the silence of that strangely romantic spot. A sad-looking little house is still pointed out as the home of the poet; with a shady, wild garden running down to the waters of the Sorgue as they rush foaming from the narrow vale, whose stupendous cliffs are as gloomy and hope-destroying as St. Augustine himself!—St. Augustine as represented in the "Segreto" at any rate.

Here, in his beloved retreat, the poet seems to have perpetually tormented himself with reflections about the vanity of life and the folly of human affections, as if the stern figure of his monitor were indeed still shadowing his spirit. But the saint, for all his arguments, cannot conquer the poet's nature, or free him from what he calls the adamantine chains that bind him to Love and Fame.

"These charm while they destroy," he makes the saint declare.

"What have I done to you?" Petrarch exclaims, "that you should deprive me of my

most splendid preoccupations and condemn to eternal darkness the brightest part of my soul?"

It is in the grip of his splendid preoccupations that one sees him oftenest.

Petrarch's parents were forced to leave Florence, where his father was a notary, by the same revolution that exiled Dante, and after some wanderings they fixed themselves at Avignon, sending the poet to study jurisprudence at Montpellier, close at hand. It was on his return to the Papal city, after the death of his parents, that he saw Laura for the first time.

Judging by the sonnets, he met her fairly often afterwards in Avignon, but never with any hope of a return for his passion.

A glance, a word of greeting at most, were all his reward, but out of these he appears to have woven a sort of painful joy. His was an unquiet spirit. One feels it as almost a relief to read of his death and of his peaceful tomb at Arqua in the Euganæan hills above a clear and beautiful river. "It stands on the little square before the church where the peasants congregate at Mass-time—open to the skies, girdled by the hills and within hearing of the vocal stream."

It is a pathetic picture that is left in the mind at the last, as the poet writes from the sweet solitude of his garden at Parma, whither he had retired towards the end of his days, drawn, doubtless, to his native land, for which he had always a profound attachment.

"I pass my life in the church or in my garden," he says. The words are so simple and quiet, and yet they are infinitely pathetic. When one remembers what a centre of emotion and longing and sorrow the human heart must be from its very nature, and what a stormy, ambitious, loving and suffering spirit Petrarch's had always been, the quietness of those words and the picture they call up is more touching and significant than a hundred homilies. One knows a little now what sort of thoughts used to pass through the poet's mind, as he bent his steps towards the great painted

chambers where his entry brought to all quick nerves a touch of sunshine and a wave of harmony.

Barbara gave a little laugh as we ascended the broad whitewashed staircase, once rich with colour, that led to the endless galleries of this leviathan of a palace.

"I wonder what our friend would say to this!" she exclaimed.

"Not a rag of ornament," I quoted sadly.

"Not Gothic or anything," Barbara complained.

"Wait a minute," I warned, as we entered a vast room with a vaulted ceiling, which revealed by one small corner of the huge expanse the magnificent canopy of rich frescoes that had once overhung the assemblies of the Popes. "If it is not Gothic, at least it's—anything!" I cried, with enthusiasm. And truly anything and everything that is sumptuous, mellow, exquisite in wealth and modulation of colour this great hall, with its painted vaultings, must have been. But the splendour had been desecrated by some Vandal, careless of his country's pride. Instead of leaving the great audience chamber to tell its own eloquent tale, the unpardonable one had cut it up into a couple of rooms—lofty indeed even then—by dividing its height, and now the dinners of the troops are cooked irreverently below, while the men spend their leisure in the vaulted upper half of the Hall of the Frescoes; painted, perhaps, by Giotto, if the faint tradition may be believed.[3]

The hall is filled with carpenters' benches, turning-lathes, tools which lie scattered among wood shavings, glue-pots, and various disorderly properties.

Through the enormous window at the end of this haunted chamber of history there is a dazzling view of the plain of the Rhone and the circle of mountains enclosing it, Mont Ventoux, richly blue, rising magnificently in the centre of the amphitheatre.

We thought of Petrarch's famous ascent of the mountain, and of his reflections on the vanity of all things when at last, after a hard scramble, he reached the summit.

"No doubt he was tired," said the practical Barbara.

It was just what she would have said about one of her own brothers with a similar excuse for pessimism.

Perhaps if Petrarch had had a Barbara to look after him he would not have made so many reflections about the vanity of things. She would have treated him as a charming child, whose fitful moods have to be allowed for and soothed. It is indeed a rare man whom women do not feel called upon to treat more or less in that way! However, Petrarch has the support of a modern very different from himself when he complains of the disillusions of mountain climbing. Nietzsche remarks the same thing, but he accounts for it by the fact that the whole charm and spell of the country has come from the mountain which draws one to it irresistibly, but once we are there, the sorceress is no longer visible, and so the charm disappears.

It was in this fortress-palace that the Anti-Pope Benedict XIII. (Pierre de Luna) withstood the attacks of Charles V., whose religious sentiments, outraged by the schism in the Church, prompted him to send one of his generals to drive the pretender from his stronghold. The siege continued for months, and ruined many houses in Avignon and killed many of the people. At last, when the place was stormed the Pope took refuge in the tower and finally escaped out of a secret door.

MILL IN VALE OF THE SORGUE AT VAUCLUSE. By E. M. Synge.

We lingered for some minutes at the great window in the Hall of the Frescoes studying the landscape, and trying to find out the direction of Petrarch's romantic Vale of the Sorgue and the site of the Castle of Romanin and Les Baux in the Alpilles. Near to the window to our left, as a stern foreground to that radiant picture of Provence, stands Rienzi's tower, bare and bald indeed. And there the last of the Tribunes passed days of one knows not what anguish in his dark little prison, while the sunlight beat and beat without upon its ruthless walls. There is a touching story, showing the honour in which the troubadour's profession was held in those days:

that the people of Avignon interceded for the condemned patriot, pleading for his life on the ground that he too was a singer of songs. One is relieved to remember that at least he did not end his days in this miserable dungeon, but met his death in the streets of Rome, at the foot of the Capitol itself.

Alexandre Dumas says of this palace: "We find some sparks of art shining like gold ornaments in dark armour! These are paintings which belong to the hard style which marks the transition from Cimabue to Raphael. They are thought to be by Giotto or Giottino, and certainly if they are not by these masters they belong to their age and school. These paintings ornament a tower which was probably the ordinary abode of the Pope, and a chapel which was used as a tribunal of the Inquisition."

The young woman who showed us over the Palace with sustained hauteur, told us that it was the custom to execute papal prisoners by throwing them from the top of Rienzi's tower. This was the only subject that seemed to interest our guide, a young lady of very modern type, and aggressively "equal." In case we should have any doubt on the matter she adopted an abrupt gait and an extremely noisy and resolved manner of inserting the keys in the locks of the various doors through which she admitted the sightseers. Barbara and I would fain have hung back among the strange little passages hidden in the thickness of the inner walls, ominous little mole-corridors suggestive of plot and passion such as a Court of mediæval Popes could well be imagined to harbour. But our guide fretted impatiently at the exit, eager to hurry us out, and she would scarcely vouchsafe an answer to the meekest of questions. In fact, by the time she had given us a very much foreshortened view of the Palace (I am convinced that she did us out of more than half of the appointed round), most of us felt more or less trampled upon—her equality was such!

It is perhaps a paradox, but it is none the less true that one does not fully realise the character of a scene till one has left it.

Under the shadow of that terrible building we were held by a spell, wandering

bewildered from dusky corridor to darker chamber, scarcely able to take count of our own impressions. They were so strong and they came so fast.

But once out again in the sunshine, we found that the images grouped themselves into gloomy pictures, and all the crime and all the splendid misery of that wonderful stage of mediæval drama seemed to crowd before the mind's eye, re-peopling the melancholy place with brilliant figures, filling it with voices and all the indescribable sound and murmur of a stirring centre of human life.

CHAPTER V THE CITIES OF THE LAGOONS

"The Ligurians—subdued finally by Augustus ... had constituted the first nationality ... of Provence. Perhaps Asiatic in origin, they extended, with the Celts and the Iberians ... from the Pyrenees to the Alps, along the littoral ... at the epoch assigned for the founding of Marseilles, 590 or 600 b.c.

"The Ligurians extended from the seventh or eighth century b.c. from the Pyrenees to the Arno along the Mediterranean shores.

"The Ibero-Ligurians have left memories of three tribes, the Bebrykes, the Sordes, and the Elesykes....

"In spite of the successive influences of the Phœnicians and the Greeks, in spite of the mixture of the neighbouring Celts and the Roman colonists, the type of the Ligurians has perpetuated itself across the centuries."

Paul Mariéton.

CHAPTER V

THE CITIES OF THE LAGOONS

The rivers of Provence are strangely fascinating; perhaps because they so dominate and ensoul the country, and because of their tumultuous flowing. The really fascinating thing for the living is life!

The river Asse is so impetuous that a proverb has grown up about it: "l'Asse; fou qui la passe."

"And fleet Durance ...

Rugged in gait as wild of appetite...."

The Rhone has a little wind all to herself; the west wind that is called lou rosau, the Provençal name for the river being la Rose.

The Rhone and the Durance are very different in character, though it would take some telling to make the distinction clear. Both are swift and strong, but the Durance is always a wild mountain creature, clear and singing, while the Rhone is more humanised, more experienced, more profound in the still passion of its flowing.

Its calm is perfect, its storm tremendous. Rohan le taureau is a name well deserved when the mistral descends from the mountains, waking the "majestic music" of the river; impetuous, stormy, but always with that mysterious under-note of calm that seems to belong to all great things. Even the stern St. Jerome called the persuasive Hilarius "the Rhone of eloquence," because nothing could resist the seductive power of his language.

"His waves like herded cows that roar and bound" is one of Mistral's many descriptions of the river which has inspired poet after poet and traveller after traveller with a sense of its splendid power and beauty.

It is to the rivers, those patient builders, that the Gulf of Lyons owes its curious formation which is of extraordinary interest to the geologist as well as to the historian and the artist.

It was when the glacial epoch of the world was just over and the great glaciers were breaking up along the valleys that lead down to the Mediterranean that the present contours of the Gulf of Lyons began to form. It is the old story of river-borne material forming deltas and bars, but in this case, perhaps because of the great number of rivers—(the Tech, the Aude, the Olbe, the Hérault, the Vidourle, the

Durance, and above all the Rhone)—there has arisen a sort of twin-coast; a double shore enclosing a complicated series of lagoons or étangs producing a labyrinth of land and lake; "ephemeral isles," and wandering waterways, long stretches of sand-dunes—shores that fly before the wind—great swamps and deserts such as the Rhone-enclosed island of the Camargue and the plain of the Crau. In its desolate way, this coast of many changes and fortunes is one of the most interesting features of the country.

On the outer beach break the waves of the Mediterranean; the inner is bathed by the smooth waters of the great chain of lagoons, blue, lonely, strangely bright and still.

ON THE DURANCE. By E. M. Synge.

This lake system in the early centuries was the scene of active navigation and commerce, and on its shores were brilliant cities. A canal or grau connected the lagoons with the sea, and these avenues in the prosperous days were kept carefully open so that the sea could enter and keep the water fresh and moving, and so perfectly wholesome.

Gradually, as one by one the great ports fell into decay, the canals were neglected and the lakes became stagnant, silting up and so developing into poisonous morasses, till the whole dismal regions in the Middle Ages became a place of death.

AIGUES MORTES FROM THE CAMARGUE. By E. M. Synge.

Let any traveller cross the Camargue on some calm afternoon in winter, leaving the wonderful dark walls and towers of Aigues Mortes behind him on the marshy plain, and he will probably be disinclined to admit that any important changes can have taken place since those unhappy days. Nevertheless vast improvements have been made, at any rate as regards hygienic conditions; and though still dangerous in the hot season, these swampy spaces cannot rival the old appalling death-roll which in certain times of the year would summon so many victims from the marsh-encircled towns that there were not sufficient hands left to bury them.

At Aigues Mortes the people used to say that the fever held its spring assizes, and there were out of 1,500 inhabitants never less than five or six deaths per day.

Aigues Mortes is but one of the Dead Cities of the coast; some of these are still existing in that sadly pensive way in which once active and famous centres survive their time of glory; while others are ruined or have altogether disappeared.

The series begins at Port Vendre (Portus Veneris), following the coast eastward past Narbonne, Aigues Mortes, Marseilles (the most famous of all, with its Phocæan colonists) to Olba, whose site every traveller passes on his dusty way to the Riviera.

Many of these ancient cities are now inland, but formerly they were still on the shore; as, for instance, Rousillon (the ancient Roscino), Narbonne, and Illiberis. This last is so ancient that Pomponius Mela and Pliny are quoted as having referred to it as "once a great and glorious city." In their day it was reduced to a small village. Its name is thought to be Iberic or Basque, and signifies a new town (Illi beris).

One seems never able to get back far enough to arrive at the beginning of Illiberis, for the city that was already decayed in Pliny's time had a predecessor called Pyrene, named after the daughter of the king of the mysterious Ligurian race of Bebrykes. Pyrene had for a lover no less a person than Hercules, and she gave her name to the capital of the Bebryke Kingdom and to the great chain of mountains that dominate it.

These vast masses of the Pyrenees seem to be the only fixed thing in this region of deltas; this strange, lone land, which rises and flees in a mist before one's eyes, gathering now here, now there in restless dunes, encroaching on the sea at this point, falling back at that; always wandering and wild; shifting, drifting against the walls of ancient cities; stirring, shivering in forgotten corners, by forsaken ways and shrines; silting up round old wrecks or ruins of years ago, till an island or a mount is born out of the waste; giving way before the rush of some swollen current, as it breaks forth into a fresh channel with bright, victorious waves bearing new fortunes

to whole regions along the coast.

Among the many races that have populated this shore, besides the great and far-reaching Ligurians and Iberians, there were the agricultural Volscians in the fifth century and the Sordares or Sordi, another traditional half-fabulous people who belonged chiefly to the country about Rousillon, the ancient Roscino.

The whole coast was haunted by the Phœnicians from the earliest times; and the Volscians held a large part of the region for centuries, cultivating the land in quiet bucolic fashion. Narbonne, Agatha (Agde), Brescon, Forum Dimitti (Frontigen), St. Gilles, Maguelonne, Aigues Mortes, were among these old cities or ruins, of which Narbonne alone is of much importance to-day.

When they were flourishing, the country was more or less covered with vegetation; and of a dream-like loveliness these twin-shores must have been with their fair cities dotting the green shores; towers and palaces repeating themselves in the stillness of the lagoons; gliding ships richly laden threading the waterways, passing and repassing; a fresh little wind coming in from the sea, and the vast blue of those waters stretching forth to the edge of the world!

The most ancient of the dead cities, those whose origin recedes far back before the Roman occupation, are generally a few miles inland, and mark the old line of the coast.

Narbonne, the famous capital of Gallia, was, like all the Celtic cities, sombre and severe in aspect, with mortarless walls of enormous blocks of stone. The people of Marseilles who traded with Narbonne "found no charm in these marshy solitudes beaten by all the winds in the midst of the indefinite and shallow lagoons, which rendered almost unapproachable the grey walled town whose sadness contrasted strikingly with the magnificence of the elegant Massilia."

Since then the Romans have occupied Narbonne, the Visigoths and Saracens have devastated it. This, the first Roman colony in Gaul, was civilised and Romanised by

Fabius Maximus, a bold undertaking in the newly conquered country inhabited by wild Ligurians and Celts. But the Roman genius for government and colonisation produced its usual brilliant results. Theatres, amphitheatres, baths, temples and palaces sprang up in the Celtic city which the traders from Marseilles had thought so gloomy, and for many a long day Narbonne was the most important of flourishing ports in Gaul always excepting Marseilles the immortal.

At Narbonne have been found "monumental stones" with small caps carved upon them. When a Roman left in his will that certain of his slaves should be liberated, a cap was carved upon their tombs, and so it has become "the cap of liberty," the symbol of a freedom greater than the freest Roman ever dreamt of.

There were also found in the burial-places of children little rude clay toys representing pigs and horses.

More striking and unexpected than these discoveries, however, were those of several tombs said to have been found in the city with inscriptions proving that some Pagans at least believed in immortality, for the survivors speak of looking forward joyfully to reunion in another life with their lost ones.

The towns of Agde and Brescon, or Blascon, follow next in the chain of dead cities, both situated on volcanic islands at the mouth of the Hérault. If the speculations of etymologists have brought them to a correct conclusion, the name of Blascon proves the Phœnicians to have known something of geology. For Blascon is thought to be derived from the Pnician root balangon, to devour with fire; so that these ubiquitous traders must have recognised volcanic soil when they saw it.

Agde (Agatha Tyche—Good Fortune—from the happy position of its port, nautically considered) was a Greek colony from Marseilles carrying with it the cult of Hellas. A temple to Diana of Ephesus was erected on the coast, this goddess being the tutelar deity of the mother city. A few columns of the temple are said still to remain.

Agde was called the Black Town by Marco Polo; and by many a luckless traveller in the Middle Ages, a Cavern of Thieves.

Across the whole of this district between the cities, great roads used to run; the Domitian Way being founded on a primitive Ligurian or Celtic road, and extending from Carthagena through Gallia Narbonensis as far as the Rhone.

The Aurelian Way was another of these routes running further westward, but as to its exact course, no profane outsider may dare to pronounce. It is a subject that destroys all peace in antiquarian circles.

It has been remarked[4] that all names on a certain line of route, ending at Béziers in Languedoc, are Celtic, while all south of that route are Latin. Among the first we find Ugernum (Beaucaire), Nemausus (Nimes), Ambrossus (Ambrusian), Sostatio (Castelnau), Cessero (St. Thibery), Riterræ (Béziers).[5] The second or Latin names comprise Franque Vaux (Francavallis), Aigues Mortes (Acquæ Mortuæ), Saint Gilles (Fanum Sancti Ægidii), Vauvert (Vallis Viridis), Villeneuve (Villa Nova), Mirevaux (Mira Vallis), and so forth.

From their names, therefore, one may judge whether these towns were built before or after the Roman occupation, and thence whether the district was above water at that time, or at least whether it was possible for human habitation. It appears that this historical theory tallies precisely with the geology of the district, and that the whole country—even including the Alpilles, whose peaks formed islands at the beginning of our era—was covered with the sea. Mont Majour, near Arles—where is now a magnificent ruined castle characteristic of the country—the Montagnette de Tarascon, a curious little limestone height among whose recesses is perched a strange old monastery, and one or two other places, form the sole exceptions.

The old beach far inland can be traced easily by the line of sand-dunes often covered with Parasol Pines and white poplars. This line, therefore, marks the scene of some of the great changes and events of French history.

On the coast between sea and lagoon lies Maguelonne, a dead city indeed, but one of the most romantic spots in the South of France. Its fortress-church, gloomily shrouded by a grove of pines, stands on the lonely island, listening, one might fancy, to the incessant beat of the waters on the deserted shores—sole remnant of a great city.

Aigues Mortes with its wonderful walls untouched since they were built by Philip le Hardi; St. Gilles, in the Camargue (famous for its exquisite church), built perhaps on the site of the Greek city Heraclea, which had disappeared even in Philip's time; Arles, "the Gallic Rome," the residence of Roman Emperors and the capital of a later kingdom—these, too, belong to the astonishing list which might lengthen itself almost indefinitely.

Each town, moreover, is the scene of geological changes, of racial, social, and historical romance which would take a lifetime to learn and volumes to relate.

It is a strange, sad story—if truly the decadence of what we call prosperous cities and the desolation of brilliant sights be sad.

"Scarcely two thousand years," says Lenthéric, "have sufficed to convert these lagoons, formerly navigable, into sheets of pestilential water, to annihilate this immemorial vegetation, to transform into arid steppes this gracious archipelago of luxuriant wooded isles, and to outline this coast with a desolating dryness and an implacable monotony."

But at least it is peaceful: at least it is free from the fret and fume and tragedy of human life!

CHAPTER VI THE BIRTH OF CHIVALRY

"Quan vez la landeta mover

De joi sas alas contra 'lrai,

Que s'oblida e s laissa cazer

Per la doussor qu'al cor l'in vai

Ailas! qual enueia m'enve,

Cui qu'ieu ne vai jauzion!

Meraveillas m'ai quar desse

Lo cor de dezirier no m fon."

"When I behold the skylark winging its merry journey towards the sun and then forgetful of itself from sudden inebriety of pleasure, drop down precipitant; Oh! how I long then for a fate like hers! How much I enjoy then the joy to which I'm witness! I am astonished that my heart is not at once dissolved in longing."

From M. Fauriel's "History of Provençal Poetry"

(Poem of the Skylark).

CHAPTER VI

THE BIRTH OF CHIVALRY

It is impossible to wander a day in Provence without being drawn to wonder if not to speculate upon the origin of that extraordinary outbreak of new sentiment that we call chivalry. It seems like a miraculous birth. It is impossible even to imagine what would have been the destinies of mankind had the beautiful inspiration failed to descend out of the blue just at the most brutal epoch of European history.

The life of the early Middle Ages was barbaric beyond all our powers of conception. Might was right in those days in a sense perhaps more absolute than under conditions of primitive savagery.

In fact, there existed a sort of official savagery of Church and State. Tolerance was undreamt of; there was no refuge for the oppressed, no rights for the weak, no honour, no fair play. Such rights and qualities belong to the ideals of chivalry. They had no nook or corner in the preceding era, no niche in the Christian Church; and the

heart in which such outlandish feelings were untimely born must either have hardened or broken—as surely many a heart did break for sheer loneliness, divided by centuries from its brother spirits.

An extravagant picture? Only in the sense in which all rough sketches are extravagant.

AT THE PORT OF AIGUES MORTES. By E. M. Synge.

As for the tide in the affairs of women, it was at the neap. Lecky traces to Jewish sources a good deal of the contempt in which they were universally held. The tenth commandment, we may remember, enjoins that a man shall not covet his neighbour's house, nor his wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his; a fairly plain and unvarnished way of expressing by inference the general view of marital relations.

"A woman," says this author, "was regarded as the origin of human ills"; and he quotes the saying of a Jewish writer that "the badness of men is better than the goodness of women." Our great-great-great-grandmothers, we may remember, used to be sold by their feudal lords to the highest bidder. That counts for something in a people's destiny. "Marriage," says M. Fauriel in his work on Provençal Poetry,[6] "was nothing more than a treaty of peace or alliance between two seigneurs, of whom the one took the daughter of the other as his wife."

Repudiation, the same author says, was a common device: in the case, for instance, of a married noble covetous of new territory, he would become conscience-stricken on reflecting that he was perhaps fourth cousin of his wife, and he hurried to the Church to release him from the burden of sin, the Church being complaisant towards a wealthy penitent.

"The exaggerated pretensions, refinements, subtleties of this [chivalrous] love," M. Fauriel continues, "took its rise in the interested motives of feudal marriage. The sufferings of women as wives partly explain the adoration of the chevaliers."

The women of those dark days were, in fact, born to humiliation and indignity as a mole is born to burrow in the earth. Both sexes suffered vassalage under a feudal superior, but the woman also endured domestic subservience. She was subject to the common lord and to her own particular lord into the bargain.

And we must picture her as enveloped and overwhelmed by these conditions, so that they form for her the canopy of heaven, the very nature and ordinance of things, a set of laws so absolute that she could not so much as think beyond them in her wildest flights of fancy—if flights of fancy were possible to beings deprived of all that makes possible a vital human existence.[7]

Patient Griselda, as we know, was the model wife of the day, and the sentiment of the old story, in gradually attenuating strength, has ruled the ideals and conduct of men and women for weary centuries. Indeed, it remains even to this day as a sort of secret substratum to our current domestic sentimentalities. The ideal, in its original strength, produced a society the most degraded and miserable that the civilised world has ever seen.

It is impossible to conceive anything more hopeless than the condition of the whole population of the early Middle Ages. Where was rescue to come from? What could the most sanguine hope for except a very slow movement towards better things?

Yet that was not what happened.

Into this darkness the light of a new and beautiful ideal began to shine like a veritable ray from heaven!

The clouds seemed to part and the troubled, stupid world became illumined with a spiritual truth which to this hour is the source of the best that we have ever conceived in character and manners.

Suppose it had occurred to no one that to torture and insult a fallen foe was of all acts the most cowardly, that treachery was essentially base; that honour, loyalty, and fair play to friend and foe were the attributes of true knighthood and true manhood.

Suppose that nobody had ever questioned the conduct of such ruffians as the husband of Griselda, or saw that Griselda's patience was in its essence mean-spirited rather than noble; suppose—but it is wiser to suppose no further, for the records of these old cities and castles and the dark stories that occur even among the gayest troubadour traditions, give hints that the mind dares not dwell upon.

It is impossible to state, much more to exaggerate, the profound and indeed creative influence of the new order, often sinned against indeed, but serving as a standard by which a man is instinctively judged, and by which, in his inmost heart, he judges himself. But to whom do we owe this enormous debt? That question has never received a convincing answer. Nothing could have appeared more wildly Utopian than to hope for the birth of such ideals at the time at which they actually arose. To lofty motives of magnanimity, of mercy and tenderness towards the weak, was added the most unaccountable innovation of all: respect for, worship of women; women whose "goodness" had a little while ago been inferior to man's badness. Suddenly this miserable sinner is exalted to the highest honours, set on a pedestal, served and protected and deferred to as a being who alone can inspire great achievements or shed a light and a charm on the path of life.

A knight, it was said, was "the champion of God and the ladies."

"I blush," Gibbon adds, "to unite such discordant names."

The historian evidently does not approve of this new dispensation, and indeed all through his writings displays that ancient deep-seated scorn for the sex he calls frail which chivalry itself has not banished from the heart of man.

The new ideals, it is to be remarked, applied only to the knight and the noble. We have moved a little farther in regarding chivalry as an attribute of the man, though the mediæval notion still lingers that its qualities pertain par excellence to the "gentleman." We have yet further to go in making them extend in their full range to the womanly character. The notion seems to be fairly widespread that it is feminine

to be at least a little treacherous!

CHURCH AT BARBENTANE. By E. M. Synge.

All advance has been, and apparently must be made along the lines of chivalry. There is not a noble deed or a generous thought that does not, in its essence, belong to this wonderful tradition which we accept so unquestioningly that we do not even remember to ask whence it came. Yet so fundamental is it in our most intimate thoughts as well as in our public judgments that one can scarcely conceive any further progress that should not consist in a steady extension of the knightly sentiment, a generous widening of the wisdom of the heart, till every living being capable of joy and of suffering, the greatest and the least, shall be gathered together under the great "Cloak of Friendship."

The early poetry of Provence, like that of every other country, celebrates the wars and exploits of heroes, inspired in this case by the long conflicts with the Barbarians and with the Saracens.

One must not forget that for centuries the people of Gaul had enjoyed the civilisation of the Romans, more especially in the attractive South, where those great colonists had built splendid villas and settled down to a cultured and luxurious life.

The Gallo-Roman society was cultivated in a high degree, after the Roman model. The Gauls had shown from the first great quickness in adapting themselves to the new order, and the country had become truly and completely Romanised, almost the only instance in history of such an achievement. There were schools of grammar and rhetoric in all the towns, and a Gallo-Roman literature had sprung up, which continued to exist for a considerable time, almost a century, after the Barbarian invasions.

In the fifth century in Gaul men were violently discussing the question of Materialism versus Spiritualism in philosophy, and there is a treatise on the "Nature of the Soul" of this period in which the author undertakes to "demonstrate the

immateriality of this substance in opposition to those who believe it inherent in the bodily organs and as being merely a certain state or modification of those organs." The twentieth century finds us still busy with the question.

This civilisation, as is well known, was not by any means immediately destroyed by the Barbarian invasions. The Barbarians admired and imitated Roman institutions and manners, especially the Visigoths, who were less savage than either the Vandals, the Huns, or the Franks.

Their first king, Ataulphe—whose capital was at Toulouse—was more Roman than the Romans; Theoderick II. read Virgil and Horace; and Euric made a code of laws copied from the Theodosian code. The Burgundian chief, Gondebaud, received as a high honour the Roman title of "Patrician," and in his wars with Clovis he "affected quite a Roman repugnance to him and his Franks, on whom he disdainfully bestows the epithet of Barbarians."

It was not till the sixth century, under the rule of the Franks, that the decadence of literature truly began.[8] This decadence is lamented by the famous Gregory of Tours. "The majority of men sigh and sing, 'Woe to our age'; the study of letters has been lost among us, and the people have no longer a man capable of recording the events of the times." It is for this reason that he resolves to undertake the task of historian.

The downward movement which he bemoans continued under the Merovingians and the Carlovingians—only temporarily arrested by Charlemagne's revival of learning—and the country was reduced to something little removed from pure barbarism, though the people still clung to classic customs: the cultus of fountains and woods, practice of auguries and so forth.

In the tenth century the Lingua Romana was spoken in Gaul. The end of the decomposing process had come. The idiom had ceased to be merely corrupt Latin, it was Romance, a definite language on a Latin foundation, but full of words and

forms belonging to the numberless races that had inhabited or influenced the south of Gaul.

And now with the final destruction of the old order and language began the process of constructing the new; the first movement of the Romance-literature, the literature which for two centuries was to dominate Europe and to form and found the ideals of life that we call modern.

The transition stages are marked in the history of the Church. In the ninth century Charlemagne enjoins on the clergy that they shall translate into Romance for the benefit of the people their Latin exhortations, showing that at this date the classic tongue had ceased to be generally understood, at least in the North. In the South it appears to have lingered longer, for at Charlemagne's Council of Arles of about the same date no such order is given, presumably because it was unnecessary.

Later, however, in the Churches of the South the clergy allowed songs and responses in pure Romance to be introduced, and this concession M. Fauriel regards as the beginning of the movement.

He gives an amusing account of one of the earliest specimens of Provençal literature, a dramatic version of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

The foolish virgins arriving too late, appeal in vain to the wise for oil. They refuse, but recommend a good oil-dealer who may perhaps supply them. But he, too, will not assent to their prayer, and alas! the Bridegroom arrives before they have had time to come to an arrangement. He likewise turns away from the foolish ones, saying He does not know them; and—in a singularly un-Christian spirit—condemns them to be at once plunged into the deepest depths of hell.

A troop of demons come in and seize the foolish virgins and drag them down to the flames, while, presumably, their wiser sisters look on complacently, basking in their own virtue and in the consequent favours of the powers that be.

Legends of all sorts made the subjects of literary effort at this time, among them that

of the Sacred Tree, in which its seed, with that of the cypress and the fir, is given by an angel in the Garden of Eden to a son of Adam. The sacred seed goes through many adventures, first with Moses in the wilderness, then with David at Jerusalem, where it develops so rapidly that the singer is able to compose his psalms beneath its shade.

Solomon tries in vain to use a beam from the tree in his temple, but it always becomes a few inches too long whenever it is placed in position and shrinks again on removal. Finally it is taken to be made into the Cross of the Saviour.

At this time, just before as well as after the emergence of the troubadour literature, the Court of Ventadour plays an important part.

One of its counts, Eblos III., was called Cantor because of his devotion to "verses of alacrity and joy." He was a contemporary of our William the Conqueror, a fact which perhaps helps one to place in the imagination this cultivated little Court of Limousin.

CASTLE OF MONTMAJOUR, ARLES. By E. M. Synge.

It was a seigneur of Limousin, William IX. of Poitiers, Duke of Acquitaine, Gascony, and many other provinces, who is usually regarded as the first troubadour; a gay, insouciant soldier, singer, sceptic, and free-thinker of the eleventh century. He is the first trouvère or "finder" (from Spanish trobar) whose poems have come down to us; born in 1071, but doing his work in the succeeding age. From this time onwards we are in the real troubadour-land, and a multitude of singers spring up, as if at the stroke of some magic signal, some mysterious summons from the spiritual realm, to build a new heaven and a new earth for the tormented, war-wearied human race.

Many writers have tried to account for the great movement by the worship of the Virgin Mary; but the Virgin had been worshipped for ages before the birth of chivalry. Certain of its qualities were doubtless fostered by the feudal system which

could only continue to exist if men were faithful to their engagements and the word of honour was held sacred. But there was nothing in feudalism to foster respect for women. As we know, it had quite an opposite tendency. Some writers trace the institution to the Arabs, who, after the conquest of Persia in the seventh century, absorbed the culture of the vanquished race. Rather later than this period (as the author of "Feudal and Modern Japan" points out), during the golden age of those islands, with all Christian Europe plunged in darkness, there was literary activity nowhere manifest save in Japan, China, India, the Eastern Caliphæte and Saracenic Spain. With only one of these lands could the South of France have come into direct contact, viz., Saracenic Spain. From here, therefore, one is almost forced to conclude, came the first definite impulse that set stirring the great emotions and great thoughts of the new movement. The Saracen Arabs are described as a nation of chivalrous soldiers, one of the most cultivated and romantic of the earth, and the Crusaders could scarcely fail to be influenced by such a people.

Nothing can have exceeded the splendour of this romantic Saracen Empire in Spain.

"Palaces, mosques, minarets rose like an exhalation in vanquished Spain," writes Rowbotham in his book on the troubadours.

The country, he says, produced a wealth of valuable metals, loadstone, crystals, silks, corals, rubies, pearls, and the cities were dreams of colour and Eastern loveliness, where there was always the sound of lutes and the enchantment of song. The Caliph lived in unimaginable luxury at Zahra, where the "Pavilion of his Pleasures" was constructed of gold and polished steel, the walls of which were encrusted with precious stones. In the midst of the splendour produced by lights reflected from the hundred crystal lustres a sheaf of living quicksilver welled up in a basin of alabaster. "The banks of the Guadalquiver were lined with twelve thousand towns and villages; lights in never-ending myriads troubled the whole length of the stream. And as the boatmen glided past village after village ... came the perpetual

sounds of instruments and voices."

In the sumptuous houses was generally a cool central court with a fountain, and here for the contentment of all good Moslems, the Saracen minstrels would come and sing of love and beautiful ladies, while the water splashed quietly into the basin in the languorous noonday heat.

There was no variation in the theme: always love and beautiful ladies.

"Shut your eyelids, ye eyes of the gazelle," was the popular mode of beginning the entertainment.

Banished from religion, "music," according to the same author, "became to Moslems an illicit pleasure like wine, and it grew up amid myrtle blossoms and the laughter of women."

A life like this, splendid with colour and brilliance, might well have inspired imitation among the impressionable people of Provence, and so would help to account for certain elements in the movements of chivalry; but it would scarcely account for the romantic adoration of the sex which the Arabs—for all their songs in praise of charm and beauty—treated after the immemorial fashion of the East.

Yet we are told that the first Crusade acted as a sort of edict for their emancipation. "Women who had lived in constant terror ... of ill-usage and violent treatment now came out in crowds—went to distant countries, and a squadron of them even took up arms for the Cross. This brought them into contact with the most gallant men on earth, famous for their passionate adoration of women."

One can see how all this may, and indeed must have ousted many of the older traditions and created a new romantic spirit. The mere fact of increased liberty and experience for the subject sex tended to produce a changed and more human relationship. But it is difficult to believe that the woman of the West owes her salvation to the Moslem!

The charm and romance of the Eastern life gave the impetus; the increased freedom

introduced a more spiritual element, and then the quickened imagination worked subtly as well as rapidly upon minds and hearts already stirring with new ideas and emotions. Happily one can inspire a great deal more than one actually communicates.

But the land which keeps its women shut away in harems and treats them as personal property could scarcely teach the ideas of chivalry to the West. Woman does not owe her redemption to the followers of Mahomet. The paradox is unthinkable. In fact, she really owes it to herself: to some power of intuition, a quick understanding of the bearing of things, of the magic of ideas as distinct from established facts which enabled her to win a steadily widening influence just at that favourable moment when the new thoughts were in the air: honour, loyalty, generosity, fair play. Then perhaps she was inspired to put in her claim for fair play, and when once that notion was really started in men's minds it seemed to take fire with generous swiftness.

In any case, it is to the dreamers—men or women—of the tenth or eleventh century, probably to both, that we owe these saving ideals. Practical men of the preceding ages doubtless laughed at them as sentimental or subversive. Happy the land that still breeds ideas at which the practical man laughs!

CHAPTER VII THE GAY SCIENCE

"Li douz cossire

Qem don amors soven

Domnam fan dire

De vos maint vers plazem

Pessan remire

Vostre cors car e gen

Cui eu dezire

Mas qu non faz parven;

E sitot me deslei

Per vos ges nous abnei

Q'ades vas vos soplei

De francha benevolensa

Domna on beutaz gensa."

From a famous Canzo by Guilhelm de Cabestaing.

"The sweet thoughts which love gives me often, Lady, makes me sing of you many a pleasant song. Thinking, I gaze on your dear and comely self, which I desire more than I allow to appear; and although I seem disloyal for your sake, it is not you I deny. For soon towards you I pray with true love, Lady, in whom beauty is an ornament."

CHAPTER VII

THE GAY SCIENCE

The more we see of cities and castles the more our ignorance chafes us, gets in our way. Our few books were insufficient. There was but one thing to do: call at the famous little bookshop in the Rue d'Agricole at Avignon—which alluring city we made our axis of movement—and lay in a store of enlightening literature.

The shop is now the property of the widow of the poet Roumanille, who with Mistral and Théodore Aubanel founded at Avignon the celebrated Félibres, that wonderful band of poets—Troubadours of the twentieth century—who have produced a literature in the once despised Provençal tongue, breathing forth all the spirit of their native land. Intense love of that land, of its ancient language, its architecture, costume, history, creeds, has been the inspiration of this brilliant group, and perhaps no other outburst of song has ever been fuller than this is of warmth,

colour, joy, sorrow, and that indefinable quality we call poetry.

The little shop in the quiet Rue d'Agricole was classic ground, associated with many an enthusiastic meeting, many a happy hour of talk and friendship among this warm-hearted fraternity. It was easy to find books, but not easy to select them. There were piles and piles of the works of the Félibres, and this title is claimed by a goodly number of writers not now limited to natives of Provence, but including Englishmen and Americans; and women too, for this genial brotherhood welcomes the sex worshipped by their minstrel forefathers, and every seven years a woman receives the honour of being crowned Queen of the Félibres.

With the kind help of Madame Roumanille, a selection was finally made, the hard task being to choose that which was likely to be really useful to travellers passing through a hitherto unknown country. There were books on every conceivable subject: the ethnology of the Midi, with all its mystery of race and language; the Phœnicians, the Greek colonies, the Celtic, Ligurian, and Gallic inhabitants, endless histories of the Roman occupation from the time when that astounding people settled in the south-east corner of France and called it Provincia, "the Province." Archæology of course has a gala time of it in this thoroughfare of the nations, and the treasures of art are innumerable. The list begins with implements of the Stone Age. Provence in the Middle Ages and the days of the troubadours of course is profusely treated. Architecture also fares brilliantly. Besides the splendid classic remains at Arles, Nimes, St. Remy, Orange, there are churches of a style such as can be found in no other part of the world; a version of the Romanesque which is peculiar to the South of France.

VIEW FROM ST. GILLES, CAMARGUE. By E. M. Synge.

A literature of controversy swells in volume daily: the vexed question as to the spot where Hannibal crossed the Rhone on his way through Spain to Italy having set almost as many professors by the ears as the problem of the exact position of the

great Aurelian road, parts of which have been destroyed. The geology and physical geography of the littoral has occupied another set of savants, notably the well-known Lenthéric, who treats with remarkable vividness what would seem a somewhat unpopular theme: the changes in configuration of the land and the works of natural engineering accomplished by the Rhone as it reaches the sea by its many mouths. Amongst all these subjects it was necessary to make a choice; and here Barbara came to the rescue. She wanted to know more about the troubadours. The books we had brought with us had already awakened interest in their romantic songs.

It soon became evident that unless we were prepared to make a serious study of their works we must be satisfied with a general notion of the civilisation which they may be said to have created. Our authorities therefore had to be consulted judiciously and the temptation resisted to saunter down all the alluring bye-ways that they offered. There were so many other doors to open and curtains to raise if we desired to have even a faint idea of the brilliant drama of this extraordinary country.

FAÇADE OF CHURCH, SAINT GILLES. By Joseph Pennell.

We used to seek some quiet spot in the garden on the Rocher du Dom and read or talk as fancy dictated. Soon we found ourselves in a very labyrinth of story and legend. Veil after veil was lifted and the events of bygone days began to loom out upon the background that was still real and sunlit before our eyes. The lie of the land, the personality of the cities, the part that the castles had played in the romantic story, all rose before us like some bright mirage. The very air seemed full once more of Provençal song and dance: tenso, chanson, rondo, pastorella, descort, ballada; and one could almost hear the twang of lute and ring of voice as the wind swept through the ruined windows, or we caught the hurrying swish and murmur of the Rhone. It was quite an excitement, in turning over the leaves of some old volume to come upon the poems of troubadours whose stories we had smiled or sighed over. For

there was almost always something pathetic about these bright figures of wandering minstrels, with their fine dress, courteous manners, ardent temperament, and too often a disillusioned and lonely end, sometimes fighting against the hosts of Saladin, not seldom within the shadows of the cloister.

In thinking of this world of the troubadours, one must give one's thoughts a longish tether and the imagination a touch of the spur, for their journeyings were far and wide over the country, from the mountain regions in the south-eastern districts of France to the farthest west of Languedoc and the Dukedom of Acquitaine. There must stretch before the mind's eye the whole beautiful region, sea-washed along its southern boundaries, watered by splendid rivers, set with cities and ruins whose names ring through the centuries; and away to the north the vision must fade at its edges into sharp peaks, while vaguely beyond, on the verge of the consciousness, must sweep back wave after wave of mountain country, up and up in steeper and wilder masses to the towers and pinnacles of the Alps.

But the real heart and centre of Troubadour-land is Provence, the region east of the Rhone and south of the mountains of Dauphiny. It includes the whole romantic hill-country on the spurs of the Maritime Alps; and all along its shores to the east, the rocks cut clear and red into the blue of that wondrous sea which has sung its soft and ceaseless song through the tumult of all our civilisations and of all our dreams. And beautiful among them has been the dream of Provence!

Much of the romance and beauty is the gift of the troubadours who taught their countrymen—nay, all Europe—to see life with new eyes. For about two hundred years they sang their songs; till they were silenced in the thirteenth century by the Albigensian wars. They were a race of singers and of lovers, for love was the principal theme and the main interest of their lives. Their love-stories were invariably more or less unhappy, for not only were the times disturbed and the dangers many, but the lovers were seldom wise of heart or rich in knowledge of the

art of life. And so they were tossed on the sea of this rude age, on the sea of their own wild jealousies and distrusts, and sorrow and disappointment generally marked the end of the romance.

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH, SAINTES MARIES. By Joseph Pennell.

The famous Rudel, hero of Rostand's "Princesse Lointaine" who fell in love with the distant princess whom he had never seen, and journeyed far over the sea to visit her, only to die in her arms almost on the instant that he beheld her, was perhaps one of the least unfortunate of the fraternity, for he never knew the bitterness of disillusion; never frittered away his sentiment in little quarrels and misunderstandings, never suffered the miseries of jealousy.

Soon the famous names began to call up to us a living personality like that of a friend: Raimbaut de Vacqueiras, Bernart de Ventadour, Pierre Vidal, Cadenet, Bertrand de Born, Guilhelm de Cabestaing, Pons de Chapteuil.... And then the charming Countess of Die, the Sappho of Provence whose voice "had the colour of Alban wine" according to her modern biographer already quoted. The leaves of the volume were always sharply arrested when we came upon her name.

In vain, it would appear, had she a beautiful voice and a beautiful face, for she fell in love with that Provençal Don Juan, Count Raimbaut d'Orange, who soon grew tired of her, as her sad songs relate.

We were delighted to come upon the following truly disconsolate canzo, for it seemed to bring us in touch with the poor lady:—

"A chantar m'er de so qu'ieu no volria

Tant me rancur de lui cui sui amia;

Car ieu l'am mais que nuilla ren que sia:

Vas lui n'om val merces ni cortesia,

Ni ma beltatz ni mos pretz ni mos sens,

C'atressi'm sui enganad' e trahïa

Com degr'esser, s'ieu fos desavinens."

This was translated into French prose as follows:—

"Le sujet de mes chants sera pènible et douleureux. Hélas! J'ai à me plaindre de celui dont je suis la tendre amie; je l'aime plus que chose qui soit au monde; mais auprès de lui, rien ne me sert, ni merci, ni courtoisie, ni ma beauté, ni mon mérite, ni mon esprit. Je suis trompée, je suis trahie, comme si j'avais commis quelque faute envers lui."

The Countess goes on in the same strain at some length. Raimbaut, it appears, was very popular with the ladies of his brilliant world, but the poetess reminds him that he ought to know who "best loves him and is true withal." But no appeal moves him—to Barbara's great annoyance.

The account of this gentleman's hardness of heart called forth many exclamations, as I read verse after plaintive verse. How any lady could have set so much store on so coarse-grained and worthless a person as the Count of Orange was difficult to understand; but as Barbara conclusively pointed out, she had fallen in love with him for some unfathomable reason best known to the Laughing Gods. But it was very annoying, all that waste of emotion and suffering. We found ourselves almost as much troubled over it as if it had happened to some friend whose infatuation one had tried in vain to cure with arguments and pure reason.

It was a strange, emotional world that we were wandering in, and as the books with which we were trying to find a clue to the puzzle took opposite views of the manners and ideals of the age, it was not a little baffling. To find our way was like trying to get out of a labyrinth. Often an author would insist that these ardent canzos were merely conventional exercises in the style of the day and meant nothing personal. But the theory would not stand investigation. Hueffer, in his book on the troubadours, says of these singers:

"Frequently they may, and in some cases we positively know they did, mistake gracious condescension for responsive love—it was the privilege of high-born and high-minded women to protect and favour poetry, and to receive in return the troubadour's homage."

THE CHURCH OF LES SAINTES MARIES AT NIGHT. By Joseph Pennell.

The fact seems to be that there was perfect social freedom for the forming of romantic friendship between troubadours and ladies on the foundation of artistic sympathy, and this was the relation really aimed at and taken for granted. It was scarcely a friendship as one now understands the term, because the attitude of the troubadour was necessarily (according to the theory) one of extreme homage and devotion, in which the element of romantic love might or might not mingle. But it was modern friendship with that devotional attitude in addition.

One of the most striking characteristics of the age is its "young-heartedness," the quality that every true knight and lady was expected to show. The festivals, the dancing, the prevalence of song and gaiety were all an expression of that youth of the spirit which belongs to certain epochs, races, and individuals, and is by no means incompatible with a profound seriousness of thought and of outlook.

It proceeded, doubtless, from the great vividness of the life, and the immense impetus of thought and emotion that produced and was produced by the new ideals.

"So true it is," says John Addington Symonds, "that nothing lives and has reality for us but what is spiritual, intellectual, self-possessed in personality and consciousness. When the Egyptian priests said to Solon, 'You Greeks are always children,' he intended a gentle sarcasm, but he implied a compliment; for the quality of imperishable youth belonged to the true Hellenic spirit, and has become the heritage of every race which partook of it."

There was a characteristic Charter issued to the "King of Youth" at one of the many festivals or celebrations which set the whole land of Provence dancing and rejoicing.

And there was also l'Abbaye de la Jeunesse, a sort of club which every town, big and little, is said to have possessed, the members choosing a chief of the group annually, to lead their gay processions and inspire their songs and festivals.

One other quaint and humane institution which this singular country boasted was the "Hospice des Mal-Mariés," but except the arresting title nothing seems to have survived in the uncertain records.

The quality of young-heartedness and that other beautiful attribute that the French call "politesse du coeur" belonged essentially to this land and epoch.

Of course among the golden threads some very black ones are interwoven: traits of horrible treachery and barbarity standing out violently amidst the texture of beauty that the finer spirits were weaving for the ennobling of all human life; but these traits were survivals of a former set of traditions and of the instincts which these had created.

"Quand l'Auroro, fourrado en raubo di sati

Desparvonillo, san brut, las portos del mati."[9]

These lines might well describe the historical moment of the new birth. Love was then held to be "the ultimate and highest principle of all virtue, of all moral merit, of all glory," and it produced—that is when it was of the genuine kind demanded by chivalry—a state of "happy exaltation of the sentiment and charm of life." This age seems to have invented—or reinvented—the "joie de vivre" and the "joy of love." It is remarkable that the language of the troubadours had two forms of the word joy: joi and joia; joi being used for an expansive and energetic state of happiness, joia for the passive, reposeful form of the sentiment.

While the troubadours were carrying everything before them in Provence and Italy, the minnesingers were plying their romantic trade in Germany; that is late in the twelfth century; but the Gay Science had spread from Provence to the other countries, the troubadours visiting foreign Courts and giving lessons in their art.

This outburst of poetry is described by M. Fauriel as

"the result of a general or energetic movement in favour of social restoration, of an intense enthusiasm of humanity reacting on every side against the oppression and the barbarity of the epoch. The same sentiment ... impelled them to seek and to find a new type and new effects in the other arts, particularly in architecture. Thence arose palaces and churches...."

It is not a little strange and satisfying to realise that the strong wave of sentiment of which one is conscious in all great architecture was in the Middle Ages the same that produced the magnificent flight heavenwards of the human imagination in all that regarded life, its problems and its relationships. M. Fauriel, on the subject of the freedom of chivalrous love, writes:—

"The exaltation of desire, of hope, of self-sacrifice by which love manifests itself and in which it principally consists, could not have any moral merit nor could it become a real incentive to noble actions except on certain conditions. It was to be perfectly spontaneous, receive no law except its own, and could only exist for a single object."

"A woman," he continues, "could only feel her ascendancy and dignity, as a moral being, in relations where everything on her part was a gift, a voluntary favour, and not in relations where she had nothing to refuse."

As an example of the darker threads we may take the career of Guilhelm de Cabestaing, the unfortunate author of the famous canzo, a fragment of which is printed at the head of the chapter. He is one of the most prominent figures in troubadour history. He celebrated the charms of Berengaria des Baux, but his real love was for the wife of the Count of Rousillon, a ferocious person who suspected the troubadour's passion and set to work to entrap him by questions as to the state of his heart. Guilhelm, seeing his danger, admitted that he was seriously in love, but with the wife of another seigneur.

"Ah!" said the Count, pretending great sympathy, "I will help you in your suit; we will go at once to the castle of the fair lady."

Guilhelm had reluctantly to go, dreading the worst; but the lady, realising the situation, played up to the part, acknowledging her love for Guilhelm, and the Count's suspicions were thus allayed, but only to be aroused again by the canzo ("lou douz cossire") which Sermonda asked her lover to write to assure her that his faithlessness was only apparent. The gruesome end of the story, the treacherous slaying of the troubadour, the serving up of the heart at table to the wife, and her suicide on hearing the ghastly truth, illustrates too well the darker side of the life of the epoch.

FARM IN PROVENCE. By Joseph Pennell.

Pons de Chapteuil was a troubadour whose story greatly interested us, partly because of the romantic idea of the two mountain-set castles, one the home of Pons, at Chapteuil, near Le Puy, the other that of Alazais of Mercoeur, about twenty-five miles distant, "as one would measure across the mountains of Auvergne," says Justin Smith in his charming account of the story.

"Really it seems a little strange and eerie," he exclaims, "the romance between these two castles in the sky—a little like a love-affair between the Jungfrau and the Finsteraarhorn."

The story was tender and bright and sad, as love-stories are apt to be, and very characteristic of the time. First the admiration and sympathy and the necessary adoration, then the taking fire of two generous natures; for this time the hero of romance is one to claim our admiration as a noble follower of the laws of chivalry.

"It was his pleasure to defend the weak of every sort, to be brave, true, faithful, liberal, and always to stand for the right."

Alazais had been married, probably by her father or her feudal over-lord, to Count Ozil de Mercoeur, for whom she made no pretence of any feeling, not even of

esteem. It was evidently a mariage de convenance, as most marriages were in those days, and the love of the Countess of Ozil for her neighbour across the mountains at least did not rob the Count of her affections, since he had never possessed or apparently desired them.

"In essential womanliness," says Justin Smith, "and in the graceful arts of social intercourse, we may think of her as the equal of any lady we have met.... Courtliness was her abiding principle, the true courtliness which consisted in ... graceful speech, in avoiding all that could annoy others, and in doing and saying everything that could make one loved." The mutual attraction of these two, the same writer continues, "penetrated by the fire of two ardent natures, came to be love, as the rich flow of the grape, changing its quality insensibly, acquires in time the sparkle, the bouquet, and the passion that make it wine."

Taking into consideration the times in which they lived, one would suppose that fortune favoured these two, and that for once one should have a nice cheerful story to console us for the many sad ones.

But no; Pons must needs harbour doubts of the sincerity of Alazais, and so he determined to test her by the time-honoured device of exciting jealousy. He therefore proceeded to devote himself ostentatiously to another lady, expecting a "burst of passionate anger" from Alazais. But that lady, one is glad to learn, disdained reproaches and kept a dignified silence. After all, she seems to have argued, Pons was not bound to devote himself to her or to continue to do so if he were tired of it.

So Pons, much astonished and chagrined, "became uneasy," as we are told, "quitted the lady of Roussillon, and returned to pray for pardon." But Alazais apparently thought that trying experiments upon a person one professes to love was somewhat inconsequent, and she intimated that she preferred not to receive Pons. He sent her a song, explaining his conduct.

"Ah, if you ask what urged me to depart," it begins (although, in fact, Alazais had never asked anything of the kind, much to the troubadour's annoyance)—

"'Twas not inconstancy nor fickleness;

It was a wish conceived of love's excess,

To try the test of absence on your heart.

How grieved I, how regretted, when to me

That you were touched nor word nor token proved!

But think not that you're free although unmov'd:

From you I cannot, will not severed be!"

But Alazais replied never a word. His influence over her seemed to have been entirely lost. Pons then "employed three ladies to plead his cause," and they entered so warmly into the undertaking that finally they succeeded. So Pons made another song, very joyous this time, swearing that "henceforth he will keep strictly to the path of love, without deviating a hair's-breadth."

But in the midst of this new-found happiness Alazais falls ill and dies.

Barbara was much aggrieved. I scarcely liked to read her the end: how Pons wrote a piercing lament, saying he would close his heart and rend his strings, and

"Die tuneless and alone,"

a resolve which he actually carried out. He became a member of one of the military brotherhoods of the day, and died fighting in the Third Crusade.

This story, however, sad as it is, is among the most attractive of the troubadour romances, because the characters of Pons and Alazais were, on the whole, a near approach to the chivalric standard for men and women.

"When Pons" (to quote Justin Smith once more) "rode out of the lists, bearing his lady's glove in triumph, he felt a joy quite fresh in the experience of mankind."

This is, after all, a big fact, and it disposes once and for ever of the depressing doctrine that there is nothing new under the sun. If the twelfth century produced a new and beautiful fact in human history, so can the twentieth.

CHAPTER VIII ORANGE AND MARTIGUES

"Beauty gives men the best hint of ultimate good which their experience as yet can offer."

"The Life of Reason"—George Santayana.

CHAPTER VIII

ORANGE AND MARTIGUES

Every one who has travelled in mountain regions has been puzzled by the curious fact that the more peaks his journeyings reveal to him the more there are to reveal. The number of the mountains seems to increase in geometrical proportion and the traveller has presently to learn that, in spite of all appearances, the last towering summit that moves into view will presently become the platform from which he must crane his neck to contemplate a still more towering wooer of the clouds and a still grander scene of desolation and primæval silence.

The traveller in Provence receives a similar impression in relation not to material but to historical immensities. No sooner has one spot been explored, than another mountain-peak of tradition comes into sight, luring ever farther afield.

This is one of the pains of the ardent traveller, and it forms a curious analogy with the life-journey itself, in which renunciation after renunciation has to be made, not merely of things far distant and beautiful, but of things beautiful and near, which only need the stretch of the hand to touch, but yet are farther from reach than the Pole-star itself. Among the serious renunciations that had to be made during our Provençal visit must be counted Courthéson, where one of our favourite

troubadours, Raimbaut de Vacquciras, spent so many of his early days at the Court of Guilhelm des Baux (of whom more hereafter). Then there was Ventadour—not exactly near, but still within hail—once so brilliant a centre of learning and song; and Salon, the reputed scene of Mary Magdalene's later life. Of this bright little prosperous city, famous for its oil trade, with its dripping fountain and grey donjon, we did catch an early morning glimpse en route for an inexorable train. Rocamadour, full of romantic beauty; Le Puy, strangest of rock-set cities; ill-fated Béziers, of the Albigensian wars; Dragignan, and a hundred others were one and all alluring and unattainable.

ROMAN GATEWAY AT ORANGE (ON THE LYONS ROAD). By Joseph Pennell.

A few hours between trains permitted a visit to Orange and its great theatre and triumphal arch, which redeem the place from a somewhat featureless commonplace.

LOOKING DOWN THE GRANDE RUE, MARTIGUES. By Joseph Pennell.

We had to ask our way to the theatre, unluckily of some perfidious inhabitant whose misdirection would have landed us in the suburbs, had not Fortune, in the shape of a dapper youth in the first rosy flush of a dawning moustache, come to the rescue.

In the pursuit of his father's trade as a corn-dealer, he had travelled and learnt English together with a becoming admiration for the British nation, his enlightenment being assisted by an English mother. It seemed strange to think of an Englishwoman settled down in this little French provincial town, but as our guide chattered on, unconsciously revealing the life of the place, it was clear that French provincial human nature is much the same as any other. Heartburning, gossip, jealousies, stupendous proprieties, "convenances" of the most all-shadowing and abstruse kind made up the dreary existence of the inhabitants. Wretched "jeunes filles" unable to cross a street unattended, mothers on the prowl for husbands for the "jeunes filles" (our young friend intimated delicately that he had a perilous time of it

among enterprising parents); the men intent on business and the recreations of the café and so forth—it all sounded disheartening enough, and the hopelessness of it seemed to settle on the spirit like a blight.

Our guide regarded his native town with disdain. Its narrow streets and dingy aspect he pointed out with ironical pomp.

"This, you see, is our main street. Magnificent you cannot deny!" Had he not travelled and seen better things?

But the great monuments?

The youth shrugged his shoulders.

For those who liked that sort of thing——!

ON THE GRAND CANAL, MARTIGUES. By Joseph Pennell.

From behind blinds of discreet windows inquiring heads might often be seen peering out at our quaint procession of three, and our guide would then pull himself up and step out with a brisk experienced stride, as of one who has relations with a world that is not Orange!

But those faces dimly seen behind blinds—one smiled, but they brought a shiver at the same time.

"English tourists often come to have a look at the monuments, and then I always try to act as guide. I like to talk to them—I get so tired of living here. It is terrible!"

CHURCH AT MARTIGUES. By Joseph Pennell.

Poor budding, ambitious youth!

The great Roman theatre stands apart from the rest of the buildings, a vast, blank surface of masonry forming the façade. Inside are the circular tiers of seats, and up these we clambered to the top, looking down into the silent stage and feeling that familiar, bootless longing of the traveller for a glimpse of the scene in the days of its glory.

The Roman arch is at the farther end of the town, standing apart in its majesty, a grand forlorn monument of that wonderful people.

It was hard sometimes to steer among so many possibilities of adventure. It behoved us to choose wisely since time and tide were hastening. But perhaps it was we, not time and tide, that were really hastening. These do not hasten; it is only their unhappy victims who are never ready for their coming. To the truly wise and understanding mind, doubtless, haste would be a thing unknown. Its possessor would be able to meditate serenely between trains at Clapham Junction.

BOATS, MARTIGUES. By Joseph Pennell.

But for less accomplished mortals the sense of limited time with otherwise unlimited opportunity, tends to a certain breathlessness which, however, in our case, gradually gave way before the influences of the country.

THE PORTAL OF THE CHURCH, MARTIGUES. By Joseph Pennell.

One of the places that we had to renounce, might, from all accounts, have been a sort of Finishing School for students of Serenity. This was Martigues, the little town on the Etang de Berre, where all good painters go when they die. They also wisely go there in swarms before they die. They place here, in opposition to orthodox scholarship, the site of the Garden of Eden. And judging by their records, this, if mistaken, is not surprising. The place induces on a suitable temperament a sort of sketching debauch:—Martigues from the Lagoon; Old Houses, Martigues; Churches, Martigues; Groups of Boats, Martigues; Nooks and Corners, Martigues; the Harbour, Martigues; Sailors and Fishermen, Martigues; Martigues in the Morning; Martigues at Noon; Martigues at Night; Martigues ad infinitum.

Quiet waterways among the mellowest of old houses, churches keeping tranquil guard above the ripple of the lagoon; the silence of the sunny port cheerily broken by cries of sailors and bargemen, by the drowsy life of the place; lights and shadows, colour in every tone, form in a thousand avatars; creepers clambering over

decaying walls, flowers in odd crannies; all this offers infinitely more attraction to the artist than all our Horticultural-Gardens-of-Paradise put together. So it is not to Heaven that he goes, if he can help it; he goes to Martigues.

He is never tired of it, as his numerous sketches show.

Not to have seen Martigues is a precious privilege in its way: it is a life-long safeguard against satiety; for then, whatever comes, one unfulfilled desire at least remains: to see Martigues—and sketch!

CHAPTER IX ROMANTIC LOVE

1. Marriage cannot be pleaded as an excuse for refusing to love. 2. A person who cannot keep a secret can never be a lover. 3. No one can really love two people at the same time. 4. Love never stands still; it always increases—or diminishes. 5. Favours which are yielded unwillingly are tasteless. 6. A person of the male sex cannot be considered a lover until he has passed out of boyhood. 7. If one of two lovers dies, love must be foresworn for two years by the survivor. 8. No one can love unless the soft persuasion of love itself compel him. 11. It is not becoming to love those ladies who only love with a view to marriage. 13. A love that has once been rendered common and commonplace never, as a rule, endures very long. 14. Too easy possession renders love contemptible. 15. Every lover is accustomed to grow pale at the sight of his lady-love. 16. At the sudden and unexpected prospect of his lady-love, the heart of the true lover invariably palpitates. 18. If love once begins to diminish, it quickly fades away and rarely recovers itself. 20. Every action of a lover terminates with the thought of the loved one.

The Laws of Love accepted by Courts of Love. (As given by Rowbotham.)

A SQUARE AT NIMES. By Joseph Pennell.

CHAPTER IX

ROMANTIC LOVE

Criticise and condemn as we may the conceptions of the time, the institution of chivalry accomplished a marvellous work of regeneration wherever it was able to establish itself.

One can but turn with emotion and gratitude to the land where it has blossomed into some of its most beautiful forms, where the warm blood of the South took fire and impelled to the following of noble ideals with the ardour of heroes and the steadfastness of saints.

Greek, Celtic, Phœnìcian, Iberian, Ligurian, Saracen blood flows in the veins of the people; and in looking at their faces one can understand why the troubadours sang such sweet and merry songs, and why the country to this day may be called the land

"Of joy, young-heartedness, and love...."

It was the Duke of Acquitaine, himself a troubadour, who gave us those words so descriptive of Southern France, in the gay little verse,—

"A song I'll make you worthy to recall,

With ample folly and with sense but small,

Of joy, young-heartedness, and love will I compound it all."

In truth it was a wonderful time, full of colour and passion in which there was the shadow of tragedy, but seldom the grey and dust-colour of the sordid and the mean.

For women it was literally a coming-of-age. A modern author speaks about the "advent of woman in man's world," when she "became for the first time something more than a link between two generations."

Love, as a romantic sentiment, became possible between men and women, because the woman's individuality as a human being was recognised, and with it her right to give or to withhold her love. True love and true friendship, as we moderns understand them, may almost claim to take their rise in the age of chivalry.

Fraternity of arms constituted an honoured tie among knights. They received the Sacrament together, exchanged armour, and from that time forth supported one another wherever they went, and at all hazards.

"From this day forward ever more

Neither fail, either for weal or wo,

To help other at need.

Brother be now true to me,

And I shall be as true to thee."

This brotherhood in arms, however, should perhaps be described as a revival of an ancient idea, whereas love, as it developed under the laws of chivalry, was a thing hitherto unknown to mankind. Doubtless there had been obscure precursors of the ideal, for many times must a new thought be uttered before the air vibrates with sufficient strength to awake answering movements in other minds. The first to think and feel a new world into existence—which is the ultimate mission of thinking and feeling—often leaves nothing but that new world behind him; neither name, nor fame, nor fortune. And so we shall never know in what noble hearts the true romantic love between man and woman first sprang into being.

The new mode of thought kindled generous impulses. Often fantastic, not to say ridiculous, they were always graceful and full of the flavour of romance.

"Many a knight," we are told, "would sally forth from a besieged town during a suspension of hostilities and demand whether there was any cavalier of the opposite host who, for love of his lady bright, would do any deed of arms."

"Now let us see if there be any amorous among you," was the usual conclusion of such a challenge. And out would come prancing some armoured knight from the gates of the city, and the two, with much ceremony of salutation, would fall to and hack each other to pieces with the utmost courtesy and mutual respect.

"The air was rent with names of ladies" in the big tournaments of the day. "On, valiant knights, fair eyes behold you!"

The proclamation of the beauty of his lady, as all romances of that day remind us, was one of the serious duties of the knight, and Cervantes only slightly caricatures the custom when he makes Don Quixote "station himself in the middle of a high road and refuse to let the merchants of Toledo pass unless they acknowledged there was not in the universe a more beautiful damsel than the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso."

There was also a sort of official post or title, Poursuivant d'Amour, the knight dedicating himself to love as to a religion with solemn fervour. The Duke of Lancaster, says Froissart, "possessed, as part of his inheritance in Champagne, the Castle of Beaufort, of which an English Knight called Poursuivant d'Amour was Captain." It appears that this was a title which knights used to give themselves on account of wearing the portraits or colours of their mistress and challenging each other to fight in her honour.

To be in love was a social necessity. It was hopelessly "bad form" to be otherwise.

"A knight without love is an ear of wheat without grain," says some authority of the day.

It certainly was a lovelorn time! "Love was everything," says Justin Smith, an author whose two large volumes on the troubadours testify to wide study of the subject, "and we cannot wonder that much was made of it. Its hopes and fears were the drama of that day. Sweet and passionate thoughts were the concert and the opera. Tales of successful and unsuccessful wooing were the novels.... Love, as we are to learn, was the shoot of modern culture, and the tree that now overspreads us with its boughs bloomed, even in their time, into a poetry as unsurpassed and as unsurpassable after its kind as the epics of Homer."

But this immense change in the attitude of mind towards life and towards women

naturally could not take place without producing a universal upheaval of the current morality: a thorough upsetting of the doctrines upon which the husband had hitherto founded an authority practically limitless.

IN THE CAMARGUE, FROM THE RAILWAY. By E. M. Synge.

For women obedience and morality had been synonyms. The wife was "good" in proportion as she acknowledged by word and deed her husband's "rights" over her, as over any other of his possessions. Conduct implying independence, an infringement on these "rights," was the acme of wickedness. To act as if she belonged to herself was a sort of embezzlement, and of course this was the case still more unpardonably if she made so free as to bestow her heart on some other man; then they both became involved in the sin of purloining that which belonged to another. To flirt was a sort of petty peculation. It was because she so belonged to him, as real property, that the husband thought his "honour" injured by his wife's conduct, quite irrespective of any wound to his affections. If a man fails to keep a possession, given securely into his hands by law and custom and universal sentiment, he must indeed be a sorry sort of lord and master! Such was the popular view of the case, and the coarser and more brutal the society the more violent was this feeling of wounded vanity or "honour," as it was pompously called. But suddenly—or at least without traceable gradations—this bulwark of marital sovereignty was rent as by an earthquake, and the idea began to get abroad that the woman somewhat belonged to herself; no longer entirely to her feudal or to her domestic lord. Had this new idea taken complete and undisturbed possession, it would have worked out a modern society very different from the society that now exists. But it did not obtain such mastery. It only shared the field with its predecessor. The confusion of standard was therefore extreme, for nobody paused to separate and choose between the two ideals; they were held simultaneously, nor is it only in the time of the troubadours that men and women hold beliefs about social matters that are mutually destructive.

So the old rights of property in the wife continued to hold sway even while she began dimly to feel and inwardly to claim the right to herself, with the resulting right to bestow her love where she pleased, or where she needs must. And that wrought wonderful changes.

One must approach this imaginative, passionate world, if we desire to understand it, with a spirit swift to detect differences and shades of feeling, to muster all the local conditions before the imagination; and one must banish scrupulously all ready-made maxims belonging to our own day, for these at once place us outside the epoch that we are trying to enter. It is this difficulty, this subtlety in the subject, which makes the study of that age and country so keenly interesting to all who are curious of the movements of human thought as it grows and changes under the pressure of its varying destinies.

These new ideals were now universal among kings and princes and all who had any pretensions to cultivation and good breeding. Love-affairs of which a married woman was the heroine were looked upon as essentially belonging to the chivalric order of things.

"These Courts of Love laid down rules for love," says Baring-Gould; "they allowed married women to receive the homage of lovers, and even nicely directed all the symptoms they were to exhibit.... There is the case of Dante and Beatrice, and of Wolfram von Eschenbach, one of the noblest and purest of singers, who idealised the Lady Elizabeth of Harlenstein.... It is precisely this unreal love, or playing at love-making, that is scoffed at by Cervantes in Don Quixote and the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso."

Of course, in this state of things there was much that seemed disorderly and was disorderly if the older view is to remain, in any sense, as a standard. Indeed it was, in some respects, perhaps, disorderly from any point of view, as was inevitable during so vast an upheaval of social conditions. It was a battle of good and evil, but

infinitely in advance of the previous state, when there was no battle, because evil was securely enjoying uncontested possession. From that enthroned and law-supported wrong there seemed no escape except through the "moral chaos"—if so it really was—of the troubadour era. Certainly the men and women of that time treated life very boldly and frankly, and they talked more about sentiment and the joy of life than about morality; but the atmosphere which lingers around them, as one feels it in their songs and stories, in all the delicate courtesy of their manners, the dignity and fineness of their sentiments, makes it impossible to think of them as essentially base or unlovable, whatever condemnation their departure from ancient standards may induce moralists to pronounce upon them.

Their ideals may have been false; that is a matter of individual opinion; but they lived in devotion to those ideals with an enthusiasm that has never been surpassed.

Perhaps the long repression, the second-hand vicarious existence suffered for so many ages by women, had made them almost intoxicated with this new experience, this coming of age as human beings, this entering into possession of themselves.

It was like a re-birth, and tempted to all sorts of wild adventures. Rebellion was in the air, and especially was it rife on all questions of love. As a recent writer remarks, men and women began to love each other because they should not have done so.

But love was treated very seriously as well as very fancifully. There was no aspect in which it did not play an important rôle in this extraordinary age.

It set vielles lightly tinkling and lutes twanging, but it also took possession of great hearts and minds and ruled them for a lifetime. Love was sometimes a "lord of terrible aspect," as Dante has represented him. As women developed personality and individual qualities in their new freedom, the grande passion became for the first time really possible. And their mental and spiritual development tended to promote the growth of the character of men in the same direction.

There seemed a sort of expectation running through the society of that time that a

new source of joy had been found, a force that was to redeem and beautify life.

The author of "The Women of the Renaissance" represents the men of this later age—which, however, was still inspired by the chivalric outburst—asking themselves what was the good of learning, money, labour, or even semblances of joy if their hearts were empty.

"The heart," they complain, "makes itself felt above the claims of work, above the intellect, demanding for life a recompense, a goal. We perish for lack of something to love; out of mere self-pity we ought to bestow on ourselves the alms of life, which is love. All is vanity save this vanity, for before our birth, until our death, throughout our whole existence it bears in front of us the torch of life."

Looking back from this point to the Griselda-epoch, we have travelled far indeed!

With such aspirations, such ideas in the air (whether or not they were expressed in a definite way), marriage, which carried Griselda-associations with it, was naturally looked upon as altogether outside the realm of romance or happiness.

"To mingle it with love, the absolute, great enthusiasms of heart or intellect, was to lay up for oneself disasters, or at least certain disappointment," says M. de Maulde de La Clavière, and he instances as the object of ridicule in that era a lady who speaks with a sigh of the "unaccustomed pleasure" of loving the man she married. He defines the Renaissance view of wedlock as "the modest squat suburban villa in which you eat and sleep: passion is a church spire piercing the sky...."

That being the general consensus of opinion on the subject, it is not surprising that nearly all the love-stories of that day are entirely disconnected with the idea of marriage. The holy estate itself was defined as "the suburbs of hell." Marriages were "unions of policy and position." And almost without exception they were arranged by the parents, in accordance with material considerations, the old feudal idea lingering on in this department of life and the daughter being handed over by the father to a suitable (or unsuitable) husband, without his ever dreaming of consulting

her views in the matter. She was generally too inexperienced to have any views of importance, and even had she been consulted probably would not, at that time, have been able to make a much better choice than her father made for her.

But clearly if that was the order of things, love and romance must establish their kingdom outside of marriage, and this was exactly what occurred.

"Since love is, by the nature of things, free and spontaneous, rebellion and revolution were inevitable unless womankind were to become something else than human."

The point of view becomes clearer in the light of some of the decisions and rules of the Courts of Love; for even if, as so many writers insist, these tribunals never really existed, the quoted rules and judgments must at any rate represent the ideas that swayed the society of the day.

OLD BRIDGE AT ST. GILLES IN THE CAMARGUE. By E. M. Synge.

These courts were said to be held under the presidency of some great lady of the district, assisted by a council of ladies and knights.

One of the questions submitted to the Court of the Comtesse de Champagne was: "Can true love exist between two persons who are married?"

And the Countess, aided by her councillors, pronounced as follows:—

"Therefore, having examined the said arguments by the aid of sound science, we proceed hereby to enact that love cannot extend his laws over husband and wife, since the gifts of love are voluntary, and husband and wife are the servants of duty. Also between the married can there be in our opinion no jealousy, since between them there can be no love.... This is our decision, formed with much deliberation and with the approval of many dames; and we decree that it be held firm and inviolable."

This decree proved a serious stumbling-block to one betrothed lady who had

promised a cavalier that if ever she should find herself at liberty, she would accept his devotion. "Presently she married the lover to whom she was plighted, whereupon the second knight resumed his suit, conceiving—according to the ideas of the day—that the lady was now fully at liberty. She, however, could not be persuaded against the evidence of her feelings, ... and the matter was referred to the queen, Eleanor, wife of Henry II. of England. Her award could not run counter to that of the Countess of Champagne, who has pronounced that love cannot exist between husband and wife. It is our decree, therefore, that the dame aforesaid keep faith with her cavalier."

The only means of evading this decree was for the lady to declare that henceforth she intended to abandon love altogether, but if she did that she was obliged to make up her mind to endure social ostracism, for then "she was sure to be shunned by the gay ladies and gentlemen who then formed the vast majority of the fashionable world." We are not told what the lady decided to do in this most trying dilemma.

Altogether the state of society under the sway of the Courts of Love—or of the sentiment they represent—seems like that of some strange fairy-tale. Nothing could have been more fantastic or romantic; but however ridiculous they may seem to the critical mind, there was always a strain that one can only call noble running through it all. It might be dangerous, impracticable, subversive, "immoral," if one will, but it was never paltry or base.

In their own fashion the reputed Courts of Love upheld a very high ideal. They insisted upon the absolute sacredness of a promise and of the word of honour, which a knight or a lady must keep to the death. They demanded fidelity between lovers, for that was considered "to be the essence of high-toned gallantry."

All this is our own inheritance of to-day. As regards the etiquette of love-making the Court instituted what were called the four degrees of love: "hesitating," "praying," "listening," and "drurerie." "When the lady consented to enter this last stage, she

granted the gentleman his first kiss ... after which there could be no withdrawal from the engagement."

The lady was often unwilling to give it, and there are many stories of troubadours who try to obtain it by fraud or artifice. It seems strange that, in that case, in a society with a high sense of honour, it should have possessed any binding value, but apparently it had something of the quality of the marriage ceremony, and therefore, perhaps, something of the idea of a tie which might be enforced against the will of the person concerned.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for the modern eye to see this era exactly as it was. Writers represent it as corrupt and unlovely or as romantic and noble according to their own particular bias. The former attitude is perhaps largely determined by a leaning towards the older order of thought which the advent of chivalry challenged; while the less severe view is apt to accompany sympathy with the newer doctrine, which establishes the woman as an independent being, for good or for evil, and refuses to regard her as the property in any sense whatever—whether by gift or by "contract"—of another person. As this latter ideal is in its infancy even yet, the majority of writers see little in the troubadour epoch but hopeless licence. It is to them merely an outbreak of "immortality," and neither the passionate rebellion against an old and degrading system nor the enthusiastic reaching out towards something better saves it from their severe condemnation. But we have all of us good reason to be thankful for this stage of social upheaval through which our spiritual ancestors passed, and it ill becomes us to cast reproaches at those who have brought us, in one great burst of inspiration, so much farther on our way.

CHAPTER X ARLES

"The name of Arles has raised great discussions.... Some see in it a Greek origin, Agns, others regard it as Latin, Ara lata (raised altar), because the Romans there

found an altar consecrated to Diana of the Ephesians by the Phoceans of Marseilles: ... others as Celtic Ar-lath, moist place, on account of its marshes.... It is sufficiently evident that the name Arelate has not a physiognomy either Greek or Roman; and the radical Ar which is found ... in the name of the Arekomique Volcians ... the Arnnematici, the Arandunici ... permits one to affirm that this city was contemporary with those ancient peoples, and existed in the fifth century before our era.... Placed between its river and its inland sea, Arles had in fact two ports as she had two cities: on the left bank of the Rhone was the Patrician town, with its temples, its amphitheatre, its theatre, its forum, the baths, triumphal arches, statues.... On the right bank ... was the city of business men, sailors, and the people. Larger in those days than the Patrician city, Trinquetailles is nothing to-day but the maritime suburb of the modern town. A bridge of boats connected the two towns, and Constantine substituted for it a bridge of masonry of which one can still see the remains on the quays of the Rhone."

Translation from Charles Lenthéric.

ST. TROPHIME, ARLES. By Joseph Pennell.

CHAPTER X

ARLES

A few more turns of the kaleidoscope of life, and we find ourselves sitting in a Roman amphitheatre among a crowd of spectators.

That odious descendant of the Roman games, the bullfight, does, at certain times, carry on in a far milder form the ancient tale of agony in this very arena, but the present performance given by a troup of Laplanders is of quite another character.

The people of Arles had come in considerable crowds to see them, but what interested us was the spectators, not the Laplanders. It was Sunday, and many of the women had on their famous costume: a black skirt, white muslin or tarlatan fichu, a picturesque white cap with a band of embossed black velvet round it, which hangs

gracefully at one side. The Arlésiennes are beautiful, and carry themselves perfectly.

A picturesque costume is popularly said to "make people look handsome;" as if the dress created a beauty that was not really there!

At Arles, by comparing the faces of those who wear the costume with those who have abandoned it for modern garb, one can clearly realise that beauty—which consists in relations of line and tint—is not made but revealed by its setting. One sees, too, how, on the other hand, it can, by the same means, be disguised and hidden, just as it would be easy to disguise the symmetry of some fine freehand design by tacking on to its outline a random selection of octahedrons or oblate spheroids. This, be it added, is too often the sort of process pursued by the designer of modern costume.

The beauty of the Arlésiennes is attributed to their Greek descent from the original founders of the city. Judging by appearance, one would say there was a strong touch of Saracen blood mingling with the clearer current of the classic.

The hair is generally black, the eyes dark, the features regular and often noble in character.

Arles is a place of narrow streets, of ruins, of tombs. It stands in a wilderness of vast lagoons at the mouths of the Rhone, and in ancient times it could only be reached by water, for the land was all covered with these meres to the foot of the Alpilles. In the time of the Romans and during the Middle Ages these great waters were navigated by the utriculares, or raftsmen, whose flat craft were made of extended skins.

Merchandise from Central Gaul had to come to Arles to be transshipped on its way to the East or elsewhere, viâ the Mediterranean. The raftsmen carried it over the shallow water round the city, and plied a roaring local trade as well.

At Arles all interested in architecture will be apt to linger before the very remarkable church of St. Trophime.

The interest lies in the characteristic Provençal blending of the pure Roman style

with its offshoot, the Romanesque, an architecture which forms a curious analogue to the Romance languages, formed during the same period when things Roman were falling to pieces, yet were still the only standards and models, the type of all possible achievements in human life and art.

The Romanesque is the patois of the classic architecture (with a history singularly analogous to that of the language), developing finally into the eloquent Gothic of our great cathedrals. But it was in the north, not in the south—just as in the language—that the more evolved form established itself. That leaves to the southern speech and architecture a primitive charm all their own.

Of the porch of St. Trophime the engaged pillars are classic as to their capitals, Romanesque in the half barbaric carving of their bases. The figures in the niches formed by the pillars are Roman in general type, yet with a touch of Byzantine, which may be described as the architectural Romance dialect of the East.

The interior was a surprise. The half-barbaric richness of the porch had disappeared. The choir had something of the northern Gothic, but the nave was severe, and indeed rigid in character, yet with none of the massiveness that makes the Norman version of Romanesque so fine. In another country one would have concluded that the interior was of earlier date than the highly decorated porch; but in Provence this rigid manner belongs to the second period of architecture, when the Cistercians—afraid, apparently, lest imaginative decoration might make things too pleasant and beautiful for sinful mortals—introduced a new style in which such irrelevancies were sternly banished: hence even the piers of the nave are merely square blocks of masonry. One must hope that the worshippers of St. Trophime received commensurate spiritual benefit for the deprivation thus imposed upon them.

The church gives one a sense of chill, of hardness; an atmosphere from which all the inspiration and intuition of religious feeling has been driven out, and only the

intolerance and cold-blooded pieties remain.

It is exceedingly interesting none the less, for it is so fine an example of the emotionless Cistercian style of the twelfth century—the twelfth century, strange to relate, when the troubadours were singing their loudest and best, when the great castles were overflowing with gaiety, and all the land was full of dance and song.

The cloisters belong to the earlier and richer period, the pillars being carved with real Romanesque beasts and birds of the most aggrieved and untamed character, with vigorous foliage and volutes, and every variety of ornament; yet all balanced with that perfect instinct of the mediæval carver, never afraid to let himself go, to plunge into a profusion almost riotous, while always some sane inner guidance builds up the richness into a beautiful whole, wherein the quality of reserve which seemed so recklessly broken down in the spendthrift detail reappears as by miracle to bind all into one. There is no lack of emotion here. It informs every rampant beast and indignant bird, every living curve of leaf and swirl of volute; but it is like the clamour of tumultuous music, all welded together into harmony.

In this city of the lagoons there are endless associations of Roman days and of days far earlier, as well as tangible relics of those dim ages that, at best, remain so profound a mystery even to the most learned. Of the Greek colony a few marbles remain, and a few words. The Provençal herdsmen in the mountains call their bread arto, from the Greek αρτος. The sea also is pelagre (πελαγος), and there are a few more as obviously or more indirectly derived.

It was to Arles, among other Provençal places, that St. Martha came to convert the people to Christianity. With a little company of saints, she arrived one day in the gay pagan city just when they were all celebrating the festival of Venus. And forthwith St. Trophimus—the beloved friend of St. Paul—lifted up his voice and addressed the laughing, dancing crowd, and suddenly, with a great crash, the statue of the goddess fell to the earth, and the people were converted. Encouraged by this rapid

discomfiture of one of the most powerful of the Olympians, the little band dispersed through the country—St. Eutropius to Orange, St. Saturnin to Toulouse, and St. Martha to Tarascon to reform the Tarasque, with what success we shall presently know.

Perhaps it was because the weather had lost its brilliance that Arles seemed to us a little sad. Its beautiful, poplar-bordered Aliscamps, the famous avenue of tombs, was scarcely a cheering place to loiter in at the close of a winter afternoon. It brought home too clearly the Roman idea of death: sombre, cold, grim, merciless. Sometimes, not very often, the tombs revealed regret for the dead that appeared more than conventional; sometimes one seemed to discern, breathing out of the damp-stained marble, a passion of grief that was unbearably hopeless; human love beating, beating for ever, with bleeding hands, against a hateful, unyielding doorway. One had to hurry past those tombs....

LES ALISCAMPS, ARLES. By Joseph Pennell.

This avenue is the sole remains of what was once a very large Roman cemetery, destroyed when the railway came to the city. Among the tombs was found one of Julia, daughter of Lucius Tyrannus, proudly representing in sculpture all the musical instruments on which she could play, among them an organ, said to be the earliest example known. Marble sarcophagi are ranged in rows beneath the poplars, leading the eye along the solemn glade to the church of St. Honorat, another fine example of Provençal Romanesque, with a bell tower built on lines almost purely Roman.

St. Virgilius, under whose direction it was erected, had no little trouble at the beginning of his work. The pillars of the church had arrived, and were just going to be set up, when the workmen found that they could not get them lifted, do what they would. The reason was obvious. They found sitting solidly on the columns a very small but very determined demon, and budge he would not. He sat there square and firm, resolved that the obnoxious church should never be completed if he had any

say in the matter. At last, in despair, they had to send for St. Virgilius, who was Bishop of Arles, and with holy-water and various exorcisms the obstructive demon was driven away and the columns triumphantly hoisted into their places, where one can see them to this day. It seemed to us that that demon had not altogether departed from the church. The place was gloomy, uncanny, damp, and unwholesome, but undoubtedly a fine example of its style.

St. Virgilius, no doubt on account of his saintship, was much beset by demons and false appearances—a very discouraging feature in the lives of the saints.

He was one night looking out over the lagoons, when he saw a phantom ship, and a voice called out saying that the crew was bound for Jerusalem and had come to take St. Virgilius with them. But the wary saint replied, "No, thank you; not until I know who you are!" And he made the sign of the cross, and instantly the ship became a drift of mist, and rolled away across the water.

This is said to be a version of the legend of the "Flying Dutchman."

It is not surprising that Arles should have had so many splendid Roman buildings, for not only did it become a Roman colony,[10] but it was the residence of Roman emperors, and was nicknamed the Rome of Gaul—Gallula Roma, Arelas.

The museum was rich in relics of the Imperial occupation. There is a beautiful bust of the Empress Livia among the treasures, and one exquisite little head of a boy, son of one of the Cæsars, a delicate, pathetic little face, evidently an individual, not a type.

The collection also boasts a Phœnician tomb which looks as if it were made yesterday, and some fine reliefs of dancing figures, decorated foliage, instinct with that quality of beauty, lightness, magic that the Gods have bestowed upon the art of Greece. This quality comes into strong evidence in this museum, where there are Pagan and Christian sarcophagi side by side in large numbers. Fine as are the earlier Christian sculptures (that is, on tombs before the withdrawal of protection from

Christian cemeteries),[11] they are not to be compared with the pure pagan work; and the later tombs of Christian origin are "rude and childish in design and execution."

One can spend hours wandering about the nooks and corners of the city, loitering by the river-side, where there are the wretched remains, worse than ruined, of a palace of Constantine; lingering about the silent theatre where the famous Venus of Arles was found.

Cyril, an enthusiastic deacon, had the building destroyed, knocked down all the statues and all the noble pillars, of which only two sad ones are now standing above the ruin.

One might sit for hours unmolested on some fragment of the seats once so gaily filled with fashionable citizens of the Empire, for though the ruins are surrounded by houses on three sides there is little sign of life in those quiet and ancient dwellings of the citizens of Arles. The fine tower of St. Trophime rises conspicuously behind them, a true southern tower, square and solid, with the three stories marked with flat arcading and round-topped windows: simple, characteristic, with a grave charm which is almost impossible to define, yet very obvious.

ARLES FROM THE RIVER. By Joseph Pennell.

The parapet dividing the auditorium from the stage is still standing here and there, and from this the two columns rise into the air, supporting even yet a fragment of the entablature on their ornate capitals.

Cyril, the iconoclastic deacon, had the place smashed up in indignation at the levity of the performance.

There is little levity now at any rate to trouble any deacon, however serious! One feels, looking at the desolation, and listening to the silence—for it is a silence that throbs and cries more loudly than ever the audience applauded in days gone by—one feels as if the good Cyril need hardly have troubled himself to interfere so

stormily with the doings of the people. He could not stamp out "human levity" by knocking down fine columns and statues. He might stamp out human happiness and the sense of the beautiful, perhaps, and help to make a coarser, duller race to inhabit the earth. But happily the "levity" must survive in some form or other, devastate our deacons never so wisely!

ROMAN THEATER, ARLES. By E. M. Synge.

CHAPTER XI SONG, DANCE, AND LEGEND

"At eventide it delighted him much to sit by the blazing fire of fagots on the hearth and tell us tales of the Reign of Terror, when during the Revolution he had dug a pit and had hidden there many a poor fugitive. Then my mother would sing the sweet old Provençal songs, La Bello Margountoud, L'aucen engabia....

"Ballads and stories would be told by her while I drank in with delight the wild legends of Provence."—Mistral's Account of his Parents.

CHAPTER XI

SONG, DANCE, AND LEGEND

There are so many famous things connected with Provence that one never comes to the end of them. There are dances and festivals and fires on St. John's Eve in honour of Baal (as there are, or were till quite lately, in Scotland). There are rich wines and the far-famed bouillabaisse, a dish of fish of mixed sorts, boiled with saffron, and, to feminine palates, extremely nasty!

Great was our delight to see, in passing a side-road leading to a small hostelry, a sign-board with the mystic word printed in triumphant letters. This was local colour indeed! Our enthusiasm rose to boiling-point; I doubt if even our critical friend could have chilled us at that moment.

Here was Provence and bouillabaisse; nothing disappointing; the concoction not one

whit less nauseous than one might have expected!

Dumas writes with ardour about the dish:—

"While polenta and macaroni possess all the characteristics of primitive and antediluvian simplicity, bouillabaisse is the result of the most advanced state of culinary civilisation; comprising in itself a whole epic of unexpected episodes and extraordinary incidents."

The celebrated wines of Chateauneuf-des-Papes, Sainte Baume, and others I doubt if we tasted; but all the wines seemed ambrosial to us; especially when it was "weather for singing the Peyrenolle," a very ancient song of which only the name remains in this saying of the people.

The dance of the farandole is of Greek origin and must be infinitely graceful, but alas! we only heard of it, never saw it danced. The dancers join hands to form chains, each chain led by a man or a woman, who plays a merry air on the gaboulet. These chains, following their leaders, then form into lines, passing rapidly before one another in contrary directions—like divergent currents—dancing in time to the music. And then they swing off into circles and dance round and round maypoles and walnut-trees, till the whole place is wild with merriment. On occasions of great rejoicing the people used to dance the farandole through the streets, all joining in the whirling circles, rich and poor. It was like a wind of joy flying through the city!

The people of Provence have also some Saracen dances, bequeathed to them by that marauding people when they lived in the Mountains of the Moors, in their rock-set fortresses: Li Mouresco and lis Ouliveto, which was danced after the olive harvest.

This pervasive characteristic of dance and song for which Provence is so famous, doubtless springs from the fact that this people have never ceased to be pagans.

The clergy of the Middle Ages in vain tried to suppress this element. There are strange stories of the mingling of ancient customs and diversions with Christian ceremonies: dancing and songs, the antique chorus, and love-poems sung or recited

in the very churches; ecclesiastical discipline being far less stringent in the south than in the north of France, where classic influences had been weaker. Religion was associated in the minds of the Provençals with gaiety and festivals; and the clergy, in order to attract and retain the people, had found it necessary to recognise this pagan spirit which took its origin in far-off generations when the Greeks founded Marseilles and its numerous off-shoots; when for five and a half centuries the Romans ruled and civilised the country. In the ninth and tenth centuries, moreover, the clergy and the people of the south were more or less closely assimilated, and this touch of paganism in the priesthood made possible what at first sight challenges belief.

At Limoges, for instance, during the feast of St. Martial, the people used to substitute for the words of the Latin liturgy some original couplets in the Romance tongue: "St. Martial, pray for us, and we will dance for you," and they furthermore broke out into a dance in the church, without the faintest sense of incongruity; for to these people worship, song, and rhythmic movement were parts of one and the same impulse.

And—if one comes to that—on what ground have they been divorced?

The feast of Flora was celebrated in Provence till the sixteenth century, when it was suppressed; the "mimes" and actors of antiquity were familiar figures of the Middle Ages; among them a class of women jongleurs who went about from city to city; and the wild feast of the Lupercal is said to have had its mediæval representative in this essentially pagan land.

This was the epoch when Latin had about ceased to be a living tongue, and from its corpse, so to speak, had arisen a multitude of dialects all over the Roman world, among them the Romance or Provençal, the Langue d'Oc, in which poems and legends were now written. Authors at this time were nearly always monks, but they treated their subjects with much freedom, as, for instance, in the Vision of St.

Paul,[12] who descends to the Infernal Regions to visit the "cantons of hell" and to see the luckless sinners in their misery, each tormented appropriately according to the nature of their transgression. The poem was evidently a crude forerunner of the Divine Comedy.

From this popular literature the troubadour poetry of the next centuries sprang, without, however, extinguishing its predecessors, which continued to exist side by side with the new forms of art.

That character makes destiny is very clearly evidenced in Provençal history. This rich, eventful, romantic story is just what a people renowned for bonté d'esprit, grace, good looks, poetry, eloquence, sentiment, passion, must inevitably weave for themselves in the course of ages. From the time when paleolithic man was making rude stone implements and living in caves or holes in the earth, this country has been busily forming and developing the human body and soul, perhaps in a more clear and visible sequence of progress that can easily be traced elsewhere.

The variety and persistence of ancient legends and customs serves to indicate the road of evolution from stage to stage with picturesque vividness. The prehistoric is not far off in this land, where Time loses its illusory quality and seems to assume the character that all philosophers attribute to it when they speak of the Eternal Now.

The mountains contiguous to the mountains of the Moors, the beautiful Esterelles, so familiar to visitors on the Riviera, have a legend of a fairy Estelle, or Esterella, who used to be worshipped there and to receive sacrifices. The woodcutters dread the apparition. Her smile is of such unearthly beauty that any man who sees her is so fascinated that he is for ever drawn by a resistless longing to find her again, and some "have spent years leaping from crag to crag, while others have wandered away to lead the life of a hermit in forest shades." Is this a myth typifying the search after the Ideal and the Beautiful?

The Incourdoules have their Golden Goat which haunts the most inaccessible

fastnesses, living in a cavern full of precious stones and treasure.[13]

One day a mysterious man appeared and began to build a cabanoun, or hut, in a lonely spot. He wore a sheepskin, red turban, and blue sash; and when a woodcutter spoke to him he laughed mockingly and cried:—

"Taragnigna, Taragnigna!

Fai attension a la mouissara.

Vau a la vigna,

Vau a la vigna—

Vai-ti-pia!

Vai-ti-pia!

Taragnigna mia!"

("Cobweb! cobweb!

Mark that spy!

I am going to the vineyard.

I am going to the vineyard.

We are in danger—we are lost!

Cobweb mine!")

Whereupon an enormous black spider came swinging from the branch of a pine, with menacing looks. The woodcutter said it was as large as a tesa-negra (blackhead or linnet). He flees in horror, but can't resist returning on the morrow to the mysterious cabanoun. He feels a shivering feeling creep over him as he approaches, and is again greeted by a burst of laughter. "Ha, ha, ha, mon vieux, toccan li cique sardino ensen" ("Let us touch the five sardines together, neighbour," i.e., shake hands—common Provençal expression).

"Taragnigna! Taragnigna!

Fai attension a moun Vesin!"

and the great spider fixed his eyes on Sieur Guizol, the woodcutter, and ran nimbly down its silken cord. Then the strange host comes down from among the rafters and begins to talk. Finally, he tells his guest that he has come to seek the Cabro d'Or, and breaks out again in a wild song—"Taragnigna, you and I are going to make our fortunes."

"Barba Garibo, e giorno, leve vo!

Porte de zenzibo,

Dame do a tre mério.

Un ome come vo

Ch' ha vist tante cause

E ben giust che se repause

Che vos par d'aisso?

Barba Garibo! Barba Garibo!"

("Uncle Garibo! it is day, arouse thyself!

Bring dry raisins,

Two or three small new potatoes—

A man like you,

Who so many things hast seen,

It is most just he should repose himself.

What think you of it? What think you of it?

Uncle Garibo! Uncle Garibo!")

And the spider seemed to dance in a wild ecstasy, vibrating on his line with immense impetus, quite close to Sieur Guizol's face.

Then Guizol asks if his host really believes in the Golden Goat, and the man

addresses the spider indignantly.

"Ha! dost thou hear him Taragnigna? He doubts that the Cabro d'Or lives here! But he won't doubt when he gets some of his gold!"

And then he goes on to say that after that he will marry Guizol's daughter, Rosette, and they will all go down to the woodcutter's home, and the spider shall dance Li Mouresco every night.

"And thou shall give us lis Ouliveto," he adds, addressing the formidable insect; "for the Sieur does not know perhaps that I am a cornamousaire."

He draws out a bagpipe and commences to play.

"What, brave ome! art thou going to dance? Now let me see if you have forgotten the farandole," and the musician lilted up a wild fantastic tune, "and Sieur Guizol's feet began to keep time to the music, and anon faster and faster as the player played, faster and faster poor Guizol danced, while the spider swung about as though in rapture."

Thus the poor woodcutter is drawn under the will of the recluse and his spider, and night after night, against his better judgment, against his wish, he goes to meet the sorcerer at the hole in the mountain where the Golden Goat guards his treasure.

Guizol is set to work to excavate, the other watching and holding aloft two pine-torches. Fortunately for Guizol, Gastoun, the lover of Rosette, had followed him one night, wondering uneasily at his regular absences from home. Suddenly the gold-seeker leaps up, seeing a flag of stone.

"The treasure!" he yells. There is not a moment to lose, for if they do not get the gold before the goat awakes, the chance is over.

"Oh, thou dear little bletta oulivié" (olive rod used for gold finding), "thou didst not deceive me after all," the man shouts, pouncing on a vase and other buried objects. They begin to find the gold, when the sorcerer suddenly takes an iron bar and

knocks down his companion and thrusts him into the hole crying, "Gold, gold, all mine now!"

But Gastoun rushes in and the two engage in a death-wrestle in the pitch darkness.

"Lo cabro d'or, lo dian!" screams the man and rushes away past his foe, who is dressed in a goat-skin; and so finally the story ends happily with the rescue of the stunned Guizol and the betrothal of Gastoun and Rosette.

When Gastoun afterwards visited the cabanoun of the recluse, he found it all burnt and a blackened skull lying among the stones. "A rustling sound was heard and a huge black spider ran hastily across the stones and climbed on the dead man's skull," fixing its eyes on the intruder. Then it shot out its line and wafted itself to the few half-burnt rafters, "and there it swung round and round in a perfect gavotte." And for many a day after, as it was rumoured in the mountains, there were strange sounds at nightfall from the ruined cabanoun, and the peasants said they heard the drone and cry of the cornemuse and saw a skeleton seated on a stone playing a horrible dance.

This story—founded on a legend that is said to exist in some form or other all over the world—affords a quick picture of the place and the people; but it is further remarkable as a story which seems founded on some case of mesmeric power, probably by no means uncommon among these mountaineers, a Celtic people, it is said, and perhaps for that reason especially sensitive to this mysterious force.

There is a version of the legend at Nice in which the treasure-chamber is under the bed of the Paglion. On a round table a life-sized gold goat and kid are watched over by an exemplary demon who takes only an hour's sleep out of the twenty-four. If a bold adventurer can then creep in and blow the golden trumpet that the demon is so ill-advised as to keep handy for the purpose at his side, that imprudent spirit is forced to remain fixed to the chair, while a swarm of little goblins come trooping in to offer their services in carrying the treasure to any spot that the seeker may decide.

The entrance to this treasure-chamber is the house of a magician between the Tina

dei Pagani (the Pagan's Wine-vat, or Roman amphitheatre) and the temple of Apollo, at Cimiez. The district is somewhat haunted by demons and the sort of society that they frequent. The Witches' Rock, rising high beyond Mont Chauve in inaccessible crags, was dear to the uncanny crew, and it was here they danced their "unearthly reels."

On the Rocca di Dom at Avignon witches and wizards (masc and masco) used to assemble in the far-off days when there were only a few windmills built upon the rock.

The story of the Hunchback of the Rocca di Dom is told of other places also, but it seems to suit this spot better than any. Duncan Craig gives a picturesque version of it.

The hunchback wandered up one night when the mistral was thundering over the hill, setting the sails of the windmills tearing madly round. And the moonlight was shining on the rock, calm through all the tumult. The man can have had no tendency to insomnia, for he fell fast asleep in the uproar, and when he woke it was to sounds of barbaric music and the clashing of cymbals. And presently La Rocca was alive with a crowd of faces, high-crowned conical hats, black satins and silks; and to the great scandalisation of the watcher, grave and respected citizens of Avignon arm-in-arm with the witches. And they were all dancing as hard as they could dance, and the dust raised by the mistral whirled with them, and the windmill sails tore round scrooping and creaking. New arrivals would come on the scene, and these would receive strange salutations.

"Bon Vèspre, Cousin Chin!" ("Good evening, cousin dog.") "Bono sero, Cousin Cat!" "Bono niue, Coumpaire Loup!" ("Good-night, gossip Wolf.") "Coume vai, Misè Limace?" ("How are you, Mistress Snail?") "Pas maw, pas maw, Cousin Jano."

And so they danced to their Saracenic music, and presently they began to sing together a curious doggerel:—

"Dilun, Dimars e Demecre tres! Dilun, Dimars e Demecre tres!" ("Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, three.") And they sang it over and over and over again.

At last this seems to have got upon the poor man's nerves, for suddenly he starts up and shouts—

"Dijou, Divendre, e Dissate, sieis." ("Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, six.")

"Oh, lou brave gibous!" shriek the witches in chorus. "The dear hunchback has come up here to complete our verse for us; Zou, we will make a man of him."

And they come towards him in a whirling circle, dancing round and round him till he is dazed and dazzled and seems to lose consciousness, when suddenly he finds himself breathless on the rock alone and—straight as a pine!

Another hunchback, hearing of this strange cure, went up to La Rocca on a night of storm, all ready to finish the witches' rhyme for them. This time it was:—

"Dilun, Dimars, e Demecre tres,

Dijou, Divendre, e Dissate sieis."

"E Dimenche, set," cried the hunchback, with enthusiasm. Whereupon there was an awful howl and a great shudder that convulsed all the wicked crew.

"Who dares to speak of the Holy Day in these our revels?" a voice asked.

"Es lou gibous, lou marrit gibous! Zou, la gibo, la gibo. Gibo davans, gibo darrië!"

And the luckless man found that, so far from being cured, he was now doubly deformed—the old hump on the back and a new one on the chest—through the malicious sorcery of the witches of La Rocca.

Provence is full of proverbs and quaint sayings, many of them very like our own country saws about the weather and so forth.

"Ne per Magio, ne per Magiàn,

Non te leva o pelicàn."

("Neither for May, nor for warmest May,

Your winter coat should you take away.")

"Se Febraro non febregia

Mars marsegia."

("If February be not cold

March will pierce the young and old.")

"Non est tout or che relus," is our old friend, "All is not gold that glitters."

There is a Nizard proverb very neatly put. "Experience keeps a school: and it is the only one where thoughtless men will learn."

Another saying expresses an all too common fate in a few words: "A dou mau de la cabro de Moussu Sequin, que se bategue touto la niue 'me lou loup, e piei lou matin, lou loup la manje."

("He had the bad fortune of Monsieur Sequin's goat, which fought all night with the wolf, and then the wolf eat him in the morning.")

There are many madrigals and songs of all sorts, all of them characteristic; most of them inexpressibly charming. Perhaps the best known is Magali, a quaint and tender expression of undying love which death itself cannot daunt. Magali persistently refuses and flees from the love of her adorer, who declares he will follow her even to the grave.

The following few quatrains taken here and there, will give the character of the poem:—

"Less than the sound of wind that murmurs

Care I for thee or heed thy lay;

I'll be an eel, and in the ocean

Through the blue waters glide away."

"O Magali, if thou dost turn
Eel in the ocean,
Then 'tis a fisher I will be
And fish for thee."
"If in the sea thy net thou castest
And in its toils I fall a prey,
I'll be a bird, and to the forest
On my light pinions fly away."
"O Magali, if thou dost turn
Fowl in the forest,
Then 'tis a fowler I will be
And capture thee."
"Vain is thy passion, vain thy pursuit,
Never a moment shall I stay,
But in some oak's rough bark I'll guise me,
And in the dark woods hide away."
"O Magali, if thou dost turn
Oak in the forest,
Then 'tis the ivy I will be,
And cling to thee."
"Should'st thou once pass yon convent's portals,
Naught shalt thou find but lifeless clay;
Round me the white-veiled sisters weeping,
As in the grave my corpse they lay."

"O Magali, when thou, alas!

Art dead and silent,

I'll be the earth that buries thee:

Then mine thou'lt be."

"Now I believe no mocking mean'st thou;

Faithful thy vows; my heart they move,

Take from mine arm this crystal bangle,

Wear it in token of my love."

"O Magali, see how the stars

That bright were shining

Now thou art come, O Magali,

Turn pale and flee."[14]

It is most singular what an effect of song there is everywhere in this country. The rivers seem to sing as they flow; the tall yellow reeds sing as the wind stirs them; the olives have a little whispered canzo of their own, and the mistral—even he roars a sort of rough baritone in the general concert. No wonder the troubadours were born in this most lyrical of lands.

They had songs for every possible occasion: the morning song or aubade, the serena or evening song, the canzo or love-song, the tenso for argumentative moods, the descort when reproaching a cruel lady, the complicated sestina for moments of unbridled literary energy, the sirvente for general expression of views, the planh or complaint, for laments, as, for example, when Folquet of Marseilles (whose acquaintance we are to make presently) writes of the death of Count Barral, Viscount of Marseilles.[15]

"Like one who is so sad that he has lost the sense of sorrow, I feel no pain or sadness; all is buried in forgetfulness. For my loss is so overpowering that my heart

cannot conceive it, nor can any man understand its greatness."

In the following translation of some extracts from a tenso, the troubadours Bernart de Ventadour and Peirol discuss relations of personal feeling and artistic creation:

Peirol. Little worth is the song that does not come from the heart, and as love has left me, I have left song and dalliance.

Bernart. Peirol, you commit great folly, if you leave off those for such a reason; if I had harboured wrath in my heart, I should have been dead a year ago, for I also can find no love nor mercy. But for all that I do not abandon singing, for there is no need of my losing two things.

And so they go on sharpening their wits in gay debate.

The Ballada is the merriest and most joyous of all these songs. It is a dance-song of the people dating from Greek times. It is sung and danced by one person only, and seems to be a sort of outburst of individual joy and delight in life. Its secret is said to lie in the "rhythm and graceful waving motion, in conjunction with the musical accent"; the effect, says Hueffer, "must have been of surpassing charm."

"A l'entrada del tems clar, eya

Per joya recommençar, eya,

E per jelos irritar, eya,

Vol la regina mostrar

Q'el' est si amoroza,

Alavi, alavia, jelos

Laissaz nos, laissaz nos

Ballar entre nos, entre nos."

("At the beginning of the bright season, eya,

In order to begin again joy, eya,

And to irritate the jealous, eya,

The queen resolves to show how amorous she is,

Away, away, ye jealous,

Let us, let us dance by ourselves, by ourselves.")

CHAPTER XII TARASCON

"Amo de longo renadivo,

Amo jouiouso e fièro a vivo,

Qu'endibes dins lou brut dóu Rose e dóu Rousau!

Amo di séuvo armouniouso

E di calanco souleiouso,

De la patrio amo piouso,

T'apelle! encarno-te dins mi vers prouvençau!"

"Calendau"—Mistral.

("Soul of my country ever new,

Joyous and fiery, gallant, true,

Who laughest in the waves of the Rhone,

Upstirred by Rousau on his throne,

Soul of the pine's wood harmony,

And of each sun-creek of the sea;

Soul of my Fatherland's dear shrine,

Inspire Provençal verses mine.")

Translation by Duncan Craig.

CHAPTER XII

TARASCON

"You seem to have found a very interesting book," said Barbara, with an amused smile, to which I had grown accustomed.

"You have been poring over it for half an hour. I suppose it's poetry," Barbara went on, with philosophical but not at all disdainful aloofness from that particular form of human aberration.

"No—o; not conventionally speaking, poetry."

In truth it was the local time-table.

But it was poetry after all. Consider the list of names: Avignon, Tarascon, Beaucaire, Arles, Nimes, Montpellier, Béziers, Carcassonne, Albi, Aigues Mortes, Carpentras, Cabestaing, Uzès, Vaucluse, L'Isle sur Sorgue, Aix-en-Provence—all printed irreverently in heartless columns, as if they were not worth mentioning except for their relation to time and tide.

"Now which of all these desecrated shrines of history shall we go to?"

Barbara said they were one and all Greek to her at present, and she would be happy with any of them.

"Suppose we just drift along this line—this bejewelled line—and let things happen to the south-east, with only a few tooth-brushes in a hand-bag?"

Barbara was perfectly willing, but said she must take a night-gown and a comb as well.

It was a glorious morning when the train puffed out of the station at Avignon and took a sharp swerve in order to give us a fine last view of that "little city of colossal aspect," as Victor Hugo calls it. Always that dominating palace on the height stretching long and massive across the hillside. The high mountains to the south-east stood entrancingly blue, Mont Ventoux looking as heavenly and innocent as if the bare thought of harbouring—much more of deliberately producing a mistral were a

baseness of which she was utterly incapable. She would hesitate at so much as a stiff breeze! Yet we had caught her in the act but yesterday and had left behind in our boxes damning proof of her guilt in the remnants of two once quite respectable hats which her protégé had playfully divided into segments as we crossed the street to post our letters.

TARASCON FROM BEAUCAIRE, SHOWING KING RENÉ'S CASTLE. By E. M. Synge.

"Let us go to Tarascon!"

Barbara jumped at it, and we centred our hopes and imaginings on that most Provençal of Provençal cities as the train puffed along on its leisurely way.

The towers of Chateau Renard in the middle distance have a romantic, mysterious effect, standing as they do on a rocky little hill just far enough away to look strangely mysterious, with the soft bloom of the spaces and the peaked ranges behind it. The station of Barbentane is on the line, but we did not succeed in making out the village on the hill-top.

Ardouin-Dumazet writes:—

"Les cultures enveloppent jusqu'au Rhone le petit massif sur lequel se dresse la haute Tour de Barbentane."

This gives one at once the character of the country. Further on we come to La Montagnette de Tarascon, which "contrasts its bare slopes with the opulent plain. It is like an island rising out of verdure—the white calcined rock takes in an amusing fashion, the airs of a chain of rocky mountains. The Montagnette is a miniature of the Alpilles, those miniature Alps."

The Alpilles—strange little knobbly mountains—grow into greater prominence as we move eastward and the outline shows itself more than ever eccentric and altogether out of fashion, as one imagines fashion among mountains.

They have a style of their own, a marked personality that is very fascinating. They were yet to explore, with their memories of the campaign of Marius, their Courts of Love, their rock-hewn city of Les Baux, their Trou d'Enfer, their haunts of the famous witch Tavèn and her demon-companies. We had half a mind to divert from our route at once and take the little local train up into the heart of the range, but not liking to think ourselves lacking in decision of character, we nailed our colours to the mast, and resolved to see Tarascon first.

The famous town lies charmingly on the river-side; a mass of roofs and towers, with its castle of King René—that most delightful and lively of monarchs; a real drawing-master castle, absurdly picturesque, with two vast round machicolated towers (very troublesome to shade), and a frowning entrance between them. (Surely all drawing-masters have taken this castle as their model since time began!) On the landward side is a dry moat and a stretch of grass and weeds (the weeds worked in with a sharp professional touch in the foreground). Just across the Rhone the vast bridge, which Tartarin thought too long and slender, leads to the town and high up on the hill, proud and desolate, the rival castle of Beaucaire.

"Embarras de Beaucaire!"

Ardouin-Dumazet says that in his childhood his family had a neighbour, a good woman, whose exclamation on the smallest obstacle was invariably "Embarras de Beaucaire!" And that, he adds, "gave us a grand idea of the encumbered state of this famous town."

"Si vous aviez vu Beaucaire pendant la foire!"

As we looked across that stupendous bridge, the phrase brought with it the picture of a mass of booths along the quay, shipping and flags and merchandise; and crowds in holiday costumes of every colour, for people flocked from all countries to buy and sell at the great fair "celebrated even beyond the Syrian deserts."

"Lougres difformes,

Galéaces énormes,

Vaisseaux de toutes formes...."

Dumazet records a conversation he had with one old man who remembered the great fair in his childhood.

"Then one should see Beaucaire!"

He described the coming of hundreds of ships, carrying each a whole stable full of horses for towing up the river on the return journey; and how the great canal brought boats from Aigues Mortes and Albi, and the sea brought Turks, Algerians, Greeks, Italians, Spaniards, with silk, pearls, figs, and a thousand objects of merchandise. Then the good people of Beaucaire were inundated with heretics and pagans. When there were disputes between the merchants, a tribunal on the spot settled the matter. All was arranged in departments: silks, wools, cottons, whole streets of booths devoted to jewellery, spices, coffee, and so forth. In the evening the company cooked their dinners between stones on the shores of the river; "and one shouted and one laughed, and the physicians and the acrobats and the bear-tamers called to the crowd with loud cries amid the noise of cymbals and tambourines. Fine ladies and gentlemen came from long distances to see all that!"

We heave a sigh of regret at the passing away of so many bright and cheering things, such as fairs and picturesque shipping, and turn to wander, as the fancy takes us, about the pleasant streets of Tarascon, visiting the tomb of St. Martha, but, through misdirection, missing the Tarasque. However, we knew all about his very singular personal appearance from descriptions and drawings. Tarascon is now probably more associated with Tartarin in our minds than with St. Martha, but it is a beautiful legend of the gentle saint who by sheer force of lovingness was able to change the ravaging Tarasque—a creature certainly born with no hereditary turn for polite usages—into a pleasant, regenerate animal of gentlemanly manners. Along the bright ways of the city, as the legend goes, the procession moved: a crowd of excited

people, a beautiful woman with a light playing round her head, leading by a silken cord the reformed monster who ambles after her as quietly as if he were a pet-lamb: this huge hybrid of a creature, with the body of an alligator, the legs of a grand-piano, the head of a dragon, and a "floreat tail" of heraldic design which he flourishes affably in response to the plaudits of the multitude.

And never again did he ravage the country round Tarascon or carry off so much as a single babe, after St. Martha had pointed out to him, with her usual sweet reasonableness, how wrong-headed and how essentially immoral such conduct had been.

It is disappointing to be told by an innovating savant that this sweet lady was not St. Martha at all, but merely the Christianised form of the ancient Phœnician goddess Martis, the patroness of sailors, who had for her symbols a ship and a dragon. What is one to be allowed to believe?

The Phœnicians, one has to admit, plied a busy trade along these coasts. Their language has left traces in the Provençal dialects, and images have been found at Marseilles of Melkarth and Melita, or Hercules and Venus, known in the Bible as Baal and Ashtaroth. There has even been discovered a tariff for sacrifices in the temple of Baal, giving a list of dues legally established for the payments of the priests.

(Barbara was utterly confounded to find these distinctly Biblical deities figuring so far from home.)

The tariff is a long affair, and goes into all possible details. But the following extract maybe worth quoting:—

"For an entire ox, the ordinary sacrifice, the priests are to receive 10 shekels. At the sacrifice, in addition, 300 shekels of flesh," and so on.

But it does not follow, from all this, that St. Martha did not subdue the Tarasque. Moreover, Tarasques are being subdued every day by Marthas not by any means

arrived at saintship. The old legend, be its origin Christian, Phœnician, Celtic or classic, reads almost like a parable by which to convey the old truth that love and kindness have power to subdue evil which force has failed to overcome.

St. Martha's tomb and shrine are in the church dedicated to her at Tarascon, and, until lately, there were yearly processions through the city, in which the gigantic creature was paraded in triumph, the legs of the man inside being ingeniously "dissimulated by a band of stuff."

"... les porteurs dansent et cabriolent de façon à faire agiter le queue et a renverser les curieux trop voisins. (Pour queue une poutre droite.)"

The Tarasque is furious on the second Sunday after Pentecost. But later, on the day of St. Martha, he passes, gentle as a lamb, led by a young girl. The man inside, with his "dissimulated legs," curvets and gambols amiably. And the people sing the "Lagagdigadeu," a song invented, it is said, by King René himself, inspired perhaps by the tumult of the fête passing his castle down by the Rhone. Or just the swish of the waters as they sweep past the walls of the donjon might easily set fancies ringing in a head like King René's, who saw things as they are, with the song and the radiance in them.

And the people went following the procession, shouting:—

"Lagagdigadeu!

La Tarasco!

Lagagdigadeu

La Tarasco!

De Casteu!

Laissas la passa,

La vieio masco!

Laissas la passa—

Che vai dansa...."

And the Tarasque wags his tail (a straight beam, be it remembered) and overturns some of the crowd. And the people are delighted with the prowess of their beast. If one is injured they cry:

"A qua ben fe, la tarascoa rou un bré" ("Well done, the tarasque has broken his arm").

And the clumsy procession moves away and the crowds sing and shout: "Voulen mai nostro tarasco" ("We wish again for our tarasque"). And so they let off any amount of superfluous energy.

THE CHÂTEAU OF KING RENÉ, TARASCON. By Joseph Pennell.

It is a subject for reflection among sociologists whether the dying out of pageants and dancing, festivals of harvest and seed-time—all the natural expressions of human joy—does not constitute a serious danger to the modern state. For either that joy will find some less healthy kind of expression or it will be killed altogether; and in that case the race, as a race, must be killed also, as a flower deprived of the sunshine and the airs of heaven. It is not joy, but the lack of it that drives a nation mad!

So much for Puritanism!

No one can be in the South, above all in Provence, knowing of its ancient festivals, its music, its farandoles and Saracenic dances, and fail to be startled into new realisation of this element that has passed out of our life, the menace that lies in the pervading dullness, that benumbed worship of sorrow, of "work" and "duty" without understanding and without freshness, that absence of fantasy and outcry that binds the modern world in a terrible and unnatural silence. Of what avail is it that the people are law-abiding at the cost of the very spring and essence of being? There is a Nemesis that follows this sort of virtue: and it visits the virtues of the fathers upon the children for many a hapless generation. There is a curious example of this in the

experience of the Society of Friends who took upon themselves to banish colour and music from their lives, for righteousness' sake, and have now succeeded—according to the testimony of one of their number—in also destroying all response to those artistic appeals, so that whole realms of being are shut off from the children of a race that was afraid to accept their complete inheritance as human beings. It is to be hoped that the heart too has been atrophied, for it is difficult to imagine a hotter hell than that must be for a man or woman capable of the full tide of emotional life and yet unable to find expression for it in heaven or earth!

For the vast majority of mankind there are now no recurrent pleasures worthy of the name, no balance to the dead weight of mere toil and ennui, no taste of that mysterious magnetism that dwells in throngs bent on the same object, inspired by the same joyous idea. With the world of to-day has come a dulling of the aspect of things, a loss of élan and fire; a perilous deprivation of the primitive form of artistic outpouring. And it is more than doubtful whether mankind can exist without it. Is there indeed any object in trying that dangerous experiment?

Why are the majority of moralists, who are so much concerned for the "good of humanity," so terrified at the sight of humanity a little happy and spontaneous?

It is at Tarascon, for some unknown Provençal reason, that the famous Arles sausages are made. We wondered if the accomplished city also provided Arles with its beautiful women.

There is some difficulty in persuading oneself of the great antiquity of the cheerful, sleepy little town. It looks indeed by no means new, but the wear and tear seems rather that of the life of to-day than of centuries ago. Yet Strabo (says Paul Mariéton) mentions ταραςκον as much frequented in his time. Moreover, at Beaucaire, just across the Rhone, there is a quarter called Rouanesse, which is said to be a corruption of Rhodanusia, an ancient Greek colony.

For some reason or other we happened, in our wanderings, to return and return again

to the place till at last all strangeness seemed to depart from it. It was beginning to have for us more or less the aspect that it probably had for the natives, allowing, of course, always for the effect upon them of never having seen much besides the sunny main street and broad square, with their hotels and homely houses, and the plane-trees whose thin shade is grateful even on a November morning. To see a place too much is never to see it at all.

We grew familiar even with the faces of the people as they came and went along the ample pavement which sets back the houses pleasantly far from the road.

In the middle of this spreading, easy-going, desultory main street a row of carriages for hire stand waiting under a few small trees for the chance traveller who descends to see the sights of Tarascon between trains.

"Voulez-vous une voiture, Mesdames, pour voir la ville? l'Église de Ste. Marthe, le Château du Roi René, la tarasque, et Beaucaire; tout dans une heure et quart, ou vingt minutes sans Beaucaire."

We made this classic round on our first visit, including Beaucaire, and a wonderful circlet of picturesque mediævalism it is; but afterwards we preferred to find our own way; to wander through the great stone gate on the left and glance or saunter down dozens of alluring byways, where one would come upon fine old doors, carved lintels, canopies, shrines at the street corners, flowers on the window-sills, the quick perspective of street line dark against the sky, and everywhere the sharp lights and shadows of the south.

Sometimes, indeed, we would take a drive if only to please the good-natured "Tartarins" who drove the carriages. Their black eyes and bronzed skin were very impressive at first, but when the effect of these had begun to wear off, we realised that close resemblance to the tenor of an opera did not involve anything dramatic in type of character. They were quiet, industrious, polite fellows, earning their meagre living by a somewhat precarious industry. But of that presently.

Our particular Tartarin was somewhat shocked that we had not yet seen the tarasque, so there was nothing for it but to set forth in quest of the monster.

There is in the museum at Avignon a strange, uncanny beast carved in stone which is called the tarasque, but the effigy that is, or used to be, carried round the town at Tarascon is quite a young and giddy creature, built of painted wood, and passes its existence during the intervals of public function in a sort of large stable which is kept under lock and key.

We were driven solemnly through the narrow streets, till at length the fly drew up and we alighted at a stately portal, where, after a few moments of waiting, the custodian appeared with his keys, and then back the doors scrooped on their hinges.

Laughter was out of keeping with the occasion; our poor cocher would have been cut to the heart, but it was hard work to behave decorously. Out of an old-Dutch-master gloom of background loomed forth a grotesquely terrible monster, whose proper sphere was certainly the pantomime. Enormous red-rimmed eyes stared ferociously at the intruders from a round, cat-like face rayed with bristling white whiskers. There was also a touch of hippopotamus in the cast of countenance, only it lacked the sweeter expression of that more philosophic beast. The creature had evidently had a new coat of paint—black with red facings—for the huge body was beautifully glossy.

"La voilà, la tarasque!" said our coachman, with pardonable pride.

We hesitated in our comments. Barbara, rather from lack of familiarity with the nuances of the language than from any want of frankness, murmured something about "très jolie"; and Tartarin said, "En effet, Madame, mais on devait la voir quand on fait le tour de la ville au jour de fête, mais c'est épatant!"

"Je le crois bien," I murmured appreciatively.

Tartarin suggested that we might like to see the rest of the animal before leaving, and so we made the round (he extended far into the depths of his gloomy dwelling),

admiring the pose and the noble proportions of the creature—rather like an old-fashioned locomotive—and the formidable nature of the tail. Then we felt that without indiscretion we might depart. As we drove off we caught a last glimpse of that unspeakably ridiculous beast who stood glaring at nothing in the darkness, silent and steadily ferocious to the last. Then the great doors were swung together and the pride of Tarascon was hidden from our view.

One could but laugh, and yet that absurd effigy was the representative of the beginnings of our history as a race!

The Christian version of the story is of yesterday: the arrival of the saints on the shores of pagan Gaul and the conversion of Tarascon to the new faith by St. Martha. Some trace the legend to Phœnician sources, as has been already mentioned; more frequently the animal is regarded as a Celtic deity or demon, and there are stories of Hercules and a giant named Taras or Tauriskos: the classic form of the tradition. In any case it belongs to the Twilight of the Gods, and if one could really trace the family tree of that mongrel monster to its roots one would possibly acquire a good deal of knowledge that would startle archæologists.

It was not till late in the fifteenth century, however, that the fête of the tarasque was instituted by King René, that most artistic of monarchs, who loved to see his people gay and happy; so it was somewhat later than the real troubadour days that our cat-hippopotamus began to enjoy a sort of established position; which shows that no one need despair of appreciation if only he will wait long enough.

We visited more than once the shrine of the gentle conqueror of the tarasque: standing—it was startling to remember—on the very spot where Clovis, King of the Franks, once stood, when newly converted to Christianity by his saintly wife Clothilde. The shrine is in a quiet, half-subterranean chapel in the church of her name. The tomb is under a low vault and the marble figure of the saint rests on the big stone slab with joined hands and a look of deep peace on her beautiful face.

Certainly it is the face of a woman who might win over ravaging monsters to sweetness and light. Above the tomb is the inscription:

Solicita non turbima.

Broad steps flecked with colour from the stained-glass window opposite lead down to the dim little crypt where she sleeps, and one hanging lamp burns in the twilight and the silence which seems too deep and too far below the surface of the life of the moment to be disturbed by the irrelevant steps and voices of visitors, or by the troops of little girls who come under the care of a nun to visit the shrine.

The regions down by the Castle of King René are delightful to loiter in on a warm day. Of vast size and solidity, this fourteenth-century fortress is full of the atmosphere of romance. The southern wall plunges sheer into the Rhone; at right angles to this river front stretches the mass of the building; tower and barbican and battlement in splendid array, the dry moat and the road running alongside.

What observant traveller passing at the foot of some ancient tower has not noticed the magical aspect of its line of luminous contact with the fields of the air?

ENTRANCE TO KING RENÉ'S CASTLE, TARASCON By E. M. Synge.

The immense block of masonry from its roots in the soil to its battlements in the sky stands clear against the mysterious spaces, and presently it seems to stir and lean forward, as if it might fall or drift away in emulation of some free-born cloud that swims over its head. It is delightful to loiter in the road by the moat just below the hillock that rises to the river-bank and opposite the last of the towers, which stands at the angle of the castle between land and water. At this spot nothing can be seen of hill and river, only the tower and sky. They meet at the magic line—inexorable stone and quivering ether; substance enthralled and infinity in motion!

Floods of light from the steady tumult of the waters are reflected upon the cream-white walls and fill the whole atmosphere. It seems to tremble against the tower as one watches. And one knows that more obviously than usual one stands at

the gate of the Eternal Mystery.

At the top of the hillock the river bursts into view, incredibly broad, hurrying, joyous, with Beaucaire on its opposite shore watched over by the ruined keep on the height: the scene of that most charming of old French romances, "Aucassin and Nicolette."

Just before the eye, a little below King René's Castle, is the famous bridge; it might be the bridge between this world and the next, between Good and Evil, between Heaven and Hell, so long it is. The great whisper of the tide is audible now to any one who elects to pause here in the sunshine and listen. There is a little hidden corner at the angle between the castle and a curtain of wall that meets it into which the water sweeping along the castle side is flung and repulsed with a great back-surge, meeting, as it returns, the edges of the main current and so falling into an immense conflict, fascinating to watch with its hundred whirlpools and hollows, swellings and eddies, and all the babbling and complaining of torrents detained in their ever-pressing errand. One could spend hours on the spot, and in adventurous moods might yield to the temptation of walking along the broad ledge of the curtain-wall till one stood just above the dizzy spot where the waters swing together and hurl themselves back with anger and trembling into the great stream.

"Mais radieux

Et ivre de votre lumière du Rhone,

Haussez les verres à la cause vaincue."

Truly the spot in which to drink to lost causes!

CHAPTER XIII THE PONT DU GARD

"Qui donc disait qu'il n'y a ni fraicheur ni ombre en Provence! Il semble y avoir là-bas dans le tortueux lointain de la rivière, un infini de rêverie, un paradis

melancolique.... Je contemple la noble structure du Pont Géant, ces arcades silencieuses qui semblent dévorer de l'azur."

Paul Mariéton.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PONT DU GARD

Barbara had heard of the approaching arrival of some cherished relations in Provence, and as blood is the thickest of all substances—impenetrable by the X or any other rays—it was arranged that she should meet them at an appointed rendezvous and stay with them till the common fluid that flowed in their veins had been satisfied. Then she was to return to continue our joint adventures.

So one fine day I found myself alone at Tarascon. It is supposed to be necessary to have some idea of what one is going to do with oneself in a place before electing to go there, but this I believe to be a superstition. It is only necessary to present oneself and destiny will do the rest.

Yet I had seen everything of note in Tarascon, and Tartarin was evidently concerned about me, for even he could suggest nothing further. We were discussing possibilities in a desultory manner when one of his professional brothers passed at a rattling pace with a fare evidently just returned from doing Tarascon in the twenty minutes—"sans Beaucaire."

The inmate of the fly was pale and lank, with colourless hair. I gave a start—my critical Englishman of the Pont du Gard! The hat went off, and I caught, as the carriage rolled by, the simple words, "Wretched hole; not a decent——" but the movement of the fly bereft me of the end of the sentence.

"How far is it to the Pont du Gard?" I asked, with the swiftness of inspiration.

Tartarin's face brightened.

"Est-ce que Madame désire d'y aller?"

"Certainement."

Tartarin rubbed his hands. We could start after the déjeuner and be back at the Hôtel de la Couronne in the late afternoon. It was about eighteen kilometres; a fine long job for Tartarin, who usually had to take his chance with the many other drivers for quite a short round of the town. The Pont du Gard being more usually visited from Nimes, the expedition was a windfall for our friend.

So we set off. The carriage would not open, and as the day was warm with the sun in spite of a cold wind, it was annoying to be shut into a stuffy little box which hid from view half the long stretches of country, and allowed one no time to dwell upon the features of the farms and villages, for one could look neither back nor forward. But there were, as a matter of fact, but few villages, only farms. Mas is the Provençal for a farm, as any reader of Mistral will soon learn, for the poet is never tired of dwelling on the simple and, it would seem, exceptionally happy life that is passed in these homesteads; the owner a sort of benevolent patriarch directing the labours of sowing, sheep-shearing, the vintage, the olive gathering, the treading of the corn, and the harvest. It is Mistral's own father whom he describes so often with so much affection and reverence:—

THE PONT DU GARD. By E. M. Synge.

"When the old man came to die he said, 'Frederi que tems fai?' ('Frederick, what kind of weather is it?') I replied, 'Plou, moun paire.' 'Ah! ben, se plou fai ben tems per li semenco,' and rendered up his soul to God.[16] You won't wonder," added the poet, at my writing in Mireille this verse—

"'Coume au mas, coume au tems de

Moun Paire, ai! ai! ai!'"

("As at a farm in the time of my father, Alas, alas, alas!")

The carriage soon swallowed the eighteen kilometres of level road, the country changing in character as we neared the banks of the Gard. Here began the great cliffs

which had inspired the Romans with the truly Imperial idea of carrying water to Nimes across the river from height to height, for with all their engineering skill this great people did not know that water will rise to its own level.

The magnificent bridge came suddenly into view, startling in its forty-nine metres of solid grandeur. Three tiers of arches lifted themselves one above the other; the lowest series short and solid, the second more slender and taller, rising in its haughty Roman way to carry the third and most towering of all, at whose summit in the sky used to run the water which supplied the people of Nimes when they were Roman citizens. It was there on hot summer days that they revelled in their splendid baths (fed by the great aqueduct) which may still be seen in the public gardens, with cool open marble courts some eight or ten feet below the level of the soil, where stone Tritons and Neptunes kept watch over the waters that flowed refreshingly among the white columns, and lay green and still in little murmuring grottoes well sheltered from the sun. It was then, too, that these luxurious citizens used to assemble in their thousands to see beasts and men fight for dear life in the great amphitheatre; and then that some Roman built the curious Tour Magne that puzzles the learned and dominates the town to this day. The Pont du Gard must have presented precisely the same aspect to those old Romans as it does to us, for scarcely a stone has been disturbed in all these centuries.

THE ROMAN TOUR MAGNE, NIMES, FROM THE FOUNTAIN GARDEN. By Joseph Pennell.

It is not surprising that its magnificent design should have been attributed in the middle ages to the devil.

The story is that the architect, overwhelmed with the difficulty of the task and the number of times the river had carried away the uncompleted arches, was almost thinking of abandoning it altogether, when the enterprising enemy of mankind approached with the offer to construct the bridge in such a way as never bridge had

been constructed before, for the trifling consideration of the first soul that should cross it after its completion.

The architect went home to his wife in mingled elation and despair.

The couple had evidently not had traffic with the devil for nothing, for they hit upon the contemptibly mean device of thrusting the penalty of their evil compact upon helpless and innocent shoulders. The wife suggested that they should set free a hare at one end of the bridge and let it run across to the devourer of souls, who was to wait at the other end with an open sack to catch his prey. And the trick succeeded. When the poor hare arrived at the fatal end of the bridge the devil, recognising in a fury how he had been duped, flung the animal against the wall, where it is said its impress on the stone can be seen to this day.[17]

The task of the tourist is to cross the river on the topmost tier of arches, through the disused aqueduct, and I set forth to accomplish this apparently break-neck feat. It is in reality quite easy. One has but to walk over the bridge that runs along the lowest tier of arches and then scramble up the rough hill on the opposite side of the river. The arches seen thus in sharp perspective are sublime, and they seem never-ending.

On the hillside grow many sweet-smelling aromatic plants, and they tempt one to linger that one may bruise the leaves and so enjoy the fresh wholesomeness of the perfume. Below, at a dizzy distance, runs the Gard, the shores rich with woods over which now is a sort of mysterious bloom that seems in perfect keeping with the unseen Enchanted Castle filled with exquisite works of art from all the quarters of the globe, that hides somewhere among the foliage a little lower down the stream.

Ascending to the level of the aqueduct one sees traces of its route over the hill on the way to Nimes. To reach it one must mount a short stair, and then one finds oneself in an immensely long tunnel, about seven or eight feet high, roofed in with stone slabs, which, however, are lacking here and there, so that the passage is dimly lighted. Along this ruined watercourse I crossed the Gard. It was like walking

through a catacomb open at intervals to the sky. Here and there through chinks between the slabs, or in places where they had been broken away, one could catch glimpses of beautiful reaches of the river.

One emerges at the end of the tunnel on to a rough hillside, covered with shrubs, brambles, shaggy trees, and masses of ivy, a sort of Salvator Rosa landscape under the clouded heavens; for the day had changed and a mantle of grey spread itself over the majestic scene.

Scrambling down by chance steep pathways among the shrubs—losing my way more than once by following tracks that led to the edge of some miniature precipice—I found myself wondering, in the foolish, insistent way that one does wonder about trivial things, whether our tourist friend had managed to feel as disappointed as he had expected he would be with the Pont du Gard.

It looked absolutely sublime as one retreated from it on the homeward way; its towering arches rearing themselves tier above tier, like some dauntless human life lived steadily for a great purpose. And the storms of centuries have not been able to touch its splendour, though for ever they assail it—rain and sun, rain and sun, as the Provençal children sing—

"Plou, plou, souléio

Sus lou pont de Marseio."

CHAPTER XIV A HUMAN DOCUMENT

"How many a rustic Milton has passed by

Stifling the speechless longing of his heart,

In unremitting drudgery and care.

How many a vulgar Cato has compelled

His energies, no longer tameless then

To mould a pin or fabricate a nail.

How many a Newton to whose passive ken

These mighty spheres that gem infinity

Were only specks of tinsel fixed in heaven

To light the midnights of his native town."

Shelley, "Queen Mab."

CHAPTER XIV

A HUMAN DOCUMENT

The inside of the fly being stuffy and the view impeded from that position, I decided to make the return journey from the Pont du Gard on the box. Tartarin was too philosophic and too polite to show any surprise at this new form of Britannic madness, so we set off, and the good cocher proved a most entertaining companion.

He had read a great deal in one way and another, and had developed quite a philosophy of his own, Epicurean in the true, not the popular sense of the word, strange as it may appear. Hard experience had wrung it out of him as wine from the wine-press. He was born at Tarascon, and had one sister who had also lived in the city of St. Martha since her birth. The two did not live together; no, she was a little—enfin, she had her ways of living and he had his. He liked his liberty, and she—well, she did not like it: his liberty, bien entendu. She could not support that he should have a key of the house; she would always sit up for him if he was out in the evenings, and it was gênant. Not that Tartarin cared to stay out late, he was quiet in his tastes. "Je ne fais pas la noce moi," he explained; "c'est vide tout ça; néomoins il faut que je suis maître de moi-même; quoique je ne le suis pas," he added with a philosophic shrug and a good-natured "Ain!" to his horse. He lodged "chez Bottin" in the main street with a number of his colleagues. They were hired to drive the carriages, and if they did not get many fares the patron reproached them for laziness.

Most of the drivers were eager to make a good haul, for if they were very unsuccessful the employer might discharge them. Tartarin's attitude was characteristic. He made his effort; set forth the attractions of Tarascon and the Castle of Beaucaire, and calmly awaited the result. If the visitors took the carriage he was pleased; if one after another passed him, "Eh! bien, tant pis"; he hoped for better luck next time. And resolutely he abstained from adding to the little turn of ill-fortune the pain of regret.

After all, he had "le bon soleil." When it was cold—and it can be cold in the Midi—he needed all his philosophy: to wait and wait for visitors who never came, to pass hours and days in the bitter wind, and to have time to think about life and what it must always be for him! Yes, there were moments, "Mais que voulez-vous? C'est la vie." One thing he was sure of: la vie was always more or less like that même pour les riches (Oh! deep-visioned Tartarin!).

He had not always lived at Tarascon. When he was a boy he had been full of ambition. He would make his fortune and have a merry time of it. He had wandered far and wide in his own country, seeking fortune and experience. And he had found experience but not fortune. Among other adventures, he joined a band of athletes and used to perform in the streets of Paris, in tights, with two other youths and a girl in spangles. She was the daughter of the employer, his first love, "c'est à dire le premier amour sérieux. Ah! comme elle était belle!" But he had no luck; she loved another, "un animal de joueur sur le mandolin." And she would not look at Tartarin when the gay rival was present.

The rejected one wandered farther afield for fresh adventures; engaged himself with a travelling theatrical company, first in the capacity of scene-shifter, but later he was offered a temporary post as walking-gentleman, and probably he would have gone far in the profession but for another amorous complication. The leading-lady had pleased his fancy and appeared to reciprocate his sentiments. But one day, in the

side-scenes, he discovered her in a non-professional love episode with the permanent villain, and after a painful interview, during which he and the villain came to blows, Tartarin resolved to leave the perfidious one and the troupe, and throw up such chances as might there offer themselves. Dispirited and disillusioned, he returned to his native town, where he engaged himself to Bottin and earned his little crust of bread in peace, if not too gaily. He had given up all idea of marriage, not because he was indifferent to les femmes, "au contraire," but he did not care to ask a woman to share so poor a life. "Je suis mieux seul." As it was, he had not to reproach himself for bringing another into the struggle of life.

"Et quelque fois on va au marché et on achette des enfants," he added fantastically, "et alors, que voulez-vous?" After that the deluge, he seemed to imply.

"Je gagne 40 francs," he said, "avec le logement."

"Par semaine?"

"Et mon Dieu non: si c'etait par semaine!" He raised his eyes to heaven as if he had a vision of beatitude. "Non, par mois."

That and a few tips given him by his clients was all he had to live upon.

But that did not trouble him, in itself. His fear was of losing his health and not being able to work. But he put away black thoughts, and turned his mind to the good that he possessed. After all, he had his health and his livelihood, so where was the profit of thinking of a possible time when he might lose both? Would that help him? He had suffered when he was young and full of ambition; mon Dieu, he had always desired something he did not possess, and if after great efforts he acquired what he wanted, always the desire ceased and there was some new thing that made him restless.

"A quoi bon se tourmenter toujours de cette façon?"

And so he came to see that all his happiness, if ever he was to enjoy any, was stored in his own consciousness, and that nothing from without would avail him, though it

were riches and honours without end.

"Néomoins," he added, with a naïve little gesture, "néomoins, if chance were to make him the possessor of a little fortune, he would buy a little house—toute petite, with a garden; he would have one servant whom he would treat very well, and he would have a little trap and horse which he would drive himself. And then he would envy no man!"

After all then a desire still lingered.

"Ah ça ne me fait pas de mal!" he said with a shrug, "ç'a m'amuse." "I am not unhappy in knowing it can never come. Voilà la différence!"

Poor Tartarin! And yet in truth was he to be pitied or envied? He must have seemed somewhat strange to his comrades. They would get excited and troubled over all sorts of trivial things, and they would offend one another and flare up into quarrels. Not so Tartarin. He would quietly evade points of difference, laugh off some threatening dispute, make peace between hot-headed combatants. Such things seemed to him needless, foolish. "A quoi bon?" as he asked. "Ça ne vaut pas la peine, mon Dieu!"

As we were nearing our destination his confidences grew more rapid. After all a man who had thought and felt about things to this extent must have badly needed a means of expression at times.

One is so apt to imagine that the lives one touches thus casually are all more or less what one calls "normal." But when the veil is lifted by some accident, it is not often the purely normal that one finds below it. When Tartarin mentioned that he and his sister were born at Tarascon, I had vaguely pictured an ordinary well-conducted French family. But I found my mistake. The man spoke hesitatingly of his childhood. He had the Frenchman's conventional and inconsequent respect for his mother—inconsequent considering the unceremonious manner in which she has previously been treated, as a woman. In this case the conduct of the mother had been

painfully out of order. The Frenchman reverences his mother surprisingly indeed, but on strict condition that she carries out her rôle in absolute conformity with expected sentiments. La mère is la mère, neither more nor less, an esteemed functionary rather than a private individual. Is this to be doubted in the country under whose laws the mother is unhesitatingly sacrificed in the case of having to choose between her life and the child's?

So poor Tartarin's state of mind must have been most complex, for his mother had shown a spirit anything but official. She could not stand uninterrupted family life, it appears, and used to go off at intervals in a sort of exasperation, for a week or a month of solitude. Tartarin spoke of it with bated breath, not severely, but sadly, for was she not la mère? She appears to have shown singularly small appreciation of the creditable fact. What she had, at moments, permitted herself to remark about les enfants et la famille generally, her good son refrained from quoting, but I gathered that it was something truly appalling! Of course this led to quarrels; the neighbours were scandalised, and incited the husband to take strong measures, and that was the end.

"If you had but let me go now and then I would not have left you," she cried, as she fled from the house never to return. And thus Tartarin and his sister had been deprived in their early years of la tendresse d'une mère. He spoke of it with a sort of self-pity, evidently engendered by the comments of indignant neighbours and by the sentiments of a maiden-aunt who joyfully seized the happy opportunity to fill the place thus left vacant. The brother and sister had therefore enjoyed all the tendresse that they could have desired, and evidently it was as like the ordinary tendresse d'une mere as one egg is like another. For there was nothing in the way of alternate embracings and irrelevant punishments that had been lacking in the system of education of that admirable aunt. She had worshipped the children; so altogether it was difficult to see what the pair had missed. They had certainly gained the prestige of their misfortune, for all Tarascon had petted and pitied them.

"And where do I come in?" the aunt might have inquired, but she never did. On the contrary, she started the chorus and shed the signal-tear, so that little Tartarin and Antoinette evidently had a splendid time of it.

And was the truant mother still living? Yes, she had a little property, a little house at Arles where she passed her days. And now and then Tartarin and his sister went to see her. The mother was glad to welcome them, and, as far as I could gather, she was fond of Tartarin, not exactly as a son, but as a good fellow whose bonhomie and urbane philosophy appealed to her. It was a curious story, and a most unexpected one in this out of the way city of the south.

The drive had taken about a couple of hours, time well spent, apart from the charm of the country we had passed through, for a human life, in its emotions as well as in its events, had been unrolled before me.

And strangely pathetic it was; the life of this good-hearted, disillusioned, unembittered philosopher, who, with a sort of sad cheerfulness, waited in fair weather and foul under the plane-trees in the main street, trying to tempt the tourist to take the round of the sights—preferably the whole round, but if that piece of good-luck failed him, then "sans Beaucaire."

Yes, sometimes his heart was a little heavy; he was more or less dependent on his employer, he was solitary though he had many good comrades among the people of his native town. But he was spared anxiety in that his risks were his own and his alone; but he had no one to live for, no one to care for. A wife, as he had before declared, he would not have; la misère à deux was not the route to happiness; and in his case la famille had not proved comforting. Often when he went back to Bottin's after the day's work, he felt a sinking of the heart, for, after all, was it a life, this? But "enfin, que voulez-vous?" He was better off than many a poor devil, and so he said to himself: "Raphael" (for that was poor Tartarin's real name), "Raphael, mon vieux, tu es donc un imbécile."

And that usually restored him to a more satisfactory frame of mind; though there were times when even this rousing adjuration lost its efficacy. At these moments the gloom would last the night and pursue him when he went to his work next morning, and he would feel as if he could endure the empty monotony no longer.

Then suddenly—a ray of sunshine, the flight of a bird, and all the dark thoughts would melt away!

I almost started as Tartarin said these words. As a philosopher I already knew him, but here was an artist!

We parted with many expressions of good-will, I promising to send him a copy of Maeterlinck's "La Sagesse et la Destinée," for I thought he might gain comfort and enjoyment from a philosophy which had many points in common with his own. Perhaps the Belgian poet would help him a step or two further on his road, and teach him to know the value of the wisdom he had already won.

In acknowledgment, he sent me an illustrated post-card of the Pont du Gard, with a charming little inscription expressing his gratitude for my having thus remembered "le pauvre cocher."

And this good-hearted philosopher will hereafter always be to me the real Tartarin de Tarascon.

CHAPTER XV BEAUCAIRE AND ITS LOVE-STORY

"The central love-poetry of Provence, the poetry of the Tenson and the Aubade, of Bernard de Ventadour and Pierre Vidal, is poetry for the few, for the elect and peculiar people of the kingdom of sentiment. But below this intenser poetry there was probably a wide range of literature ... reaching ... an audience which the concentrated passion of those higher lyrics left untouched ... the only representative of its species, M. Fauriel thought he detected in the story of Aucassin and Nicolette, written in the French of the latter half of the thirteenth century ... and there were

reasons which made him divine for it a still more ancient ancestry, traces in it of an Arabian origin...."

Walter Pater.

CHAPTER XV

BEAUCAIRE AND ITS LOVE-STORY

Beaucaire, it may be remembered, has a hill-set castle opposite King René's at Tarascon. The two stand frowning at one another across the river, unforgetful of their old feuds.

The town was the property of the Counts of Toulouse, before the Albigensian wars snuffed out that great family, and it had its share of suffering in those desperate persecutions. The Pope gave all their domains to his accomplice, Simon de Montfort, because Raimon VI. of Toulouse—one of the noblest figures of the Middle Ages—had dared to oppose the massacre of the helpless Albigenses.

VIEW FROM VISIGOTH TOWER, BEAUCAIRE. By E. M. Synge.

At last the young Count raises a revolt against de Montfort while the latter is at Beaucaire. It is a relief to hear of his being seriously opposed after all the atrocities that he has committed in this exquisite land, all the savage destruction of beautiful things and thoughts of which he is guilty. He is, indeed, almost as terrible a scourge as his coadjutor, the Puritan of the north; they are spiritual twins: the soldier who persecutes with fire and sword, and the equally pitiless and bigoted saint who persecutes with the fire and sword of the spirit, rejoicing, he too, when the gladness and the passion of life lie bleeding beneath his feet. Between them, in their different spheres, they have lain low how much of beauty and of happiness!

The persecution of the Albigenses broke up the whole delicate edifice of what one may call the troubadour civilisation and plunged the country once more into chaos.

The luckless Count of Toulouse found himself obliged to lay siege to his own castle

of Beaucaire, where de Montfort was installed with a powerful garrison.

It is a dream of peace and beauty now, as we approach it up a hill-side through pine-trees and irises, a wonderful sight surely in the season of blossoming.

An old Provençal poem gives an account of the siege: a sharp battering-ram injured the wall, but the besieged ingeniously made loops of cord attached to a beam, and noosed the head of the too-lively ram and held it imprisoned and harmless. Then, after the fashion of the day, they let down sulphur and boiling pitch upon the enemy by means of a chain, the materials being wrapped in sackcloth. Finally de Montfort—perhaps for the first time in his life—is defeated, after a fierce struggle, for the Powers of Darkness had deserted their faithful servant, who shortly afterwards ended his atrocious career at the siege of Toulouse, which had revolted against him.

After passing through the grove of pines and irises, we emerge upon a sunlit plateau high above the town, and the ruins of the castle are before us.

These and a fine little Romanesque chapel in which St. Louis said Mass before starting for the Crusades, give character to the scene—a beautiful background to the famous old story of Aucassin and Nicolette.

"The adventures of the lovers," says Pater, "seem to be chosen for the happy occasion they afford of keeping the eye of the fancy, perhaps the outward eye, fixed on pleasant objects, a garden, a ruined tower, the little hut of flowers which Nicolette constructs in the forest.... All through it one feels the influence of that faint air of overwrought delicacy, almost of wantonness, which was so strong a characteristic of the poetry of the Troubadours. The Troubadours themselves were often men of great rank; they wrote for an exclusive audience, people of much leisure and great refinement.... There is a languid Eastern deliciousness in the very scenery of the story, the full-blown roses, the chamber painted in some mysterious manner where Nicolette is imprisoned, the cool brown marble, the almost nameless

colours, the odour of plucked grass and flowers. Nicolette herself well becomes this scenery, and is the best illustration of the quality I mean—the beautiful, weird, foreign girl, whom the shepherds take for a fay...."

We sit down at the foot of the walls to rest. Above us stands the curious three-cornered tower built by the Visigoths during their rule in the South of France in late days of the Empire. The object was to oppose only the angle of the building to the enemy's assault, while the garrison could attack from the sides as usual.

Was this the tower in which Aucassin was imprisoned by his father, the Count of Beaucaire, to prevent his marrying the little Saracen maid Nicolette? Was it here that she watched and waited on one moonlit night, long ago, hearing Aucassin lamenting in his captivity? One likes to think of the good sentinel ostentatiously humming a warning song, when he heard the town-guards advancing to kill the devoted Nicolette, by order of the Count.

VISIGOTH TOWER, CASTLE OF BEAUCAIRE. By E. M. Synge.

I had copied out some of the songs and fragments of the story from Andrew Lang's translation, in order to have the pleasure of reading them on the spot.

Barbara was much amused at Aucassin's interview with the Captain of the City of Beaucaire who had imprisoned Nicolette in his house, by the Count's command.

Poor Aucassin is very disconsolate, and in his distress he makes some very free remarks about Heaven and hell, pointing out that in Heaven the company is intolerably dull, whereas all the jolly good fellows and pleasant ladies are to be found—elsewhere.

"With these I would gladly go," he says, "let me but have with me my sweetest lady."

But nobody will allow that; for the way of the world is to be immensely active about other people's business. So the Count and all the rest of Aucassin's nearest and dearest bestir themselves to separate him and Nicolette.

"Aucassin did so depart

Much in dole and heavy of heart

For his love so bright and dear,

None might bring him any cheer....

Nicolette, how fair art thou,

Sweet thy foot-fall, sweet thine eyes,

Sweet the mirth of thy replies,

Sweet thy laughter, sweet thy face,

Sweet thy lips and sweet thy brow,

And the touch of thine embrace...."

Nicolette's escape from prison was much appreciated by Barbara.

"Nicolette lay one night on her bed, and saw the moon shine clear through a window, yea, and heard the nightingale sing in the garden, so she minded her of Aucassin her lover, whom she loved so well."

Then it goes on to tell how she knotted linen and sheets together and let herself down from her window.

"Her locks were yellow and curled, her eyes blue and smiling, her face neatly fashioned.... She came to the postern gate, and unbarred it, and went out through the streets of Beaucaire, keeping always on the shadowy side, for the moon was shining right clear, and so wandered she till she came to the tower where her lover lay."

"Just here," said Barbara, looking up.

"The tower was flanked with buttresses—" the account continues.

"It isn't!" cried Barbara in disappointment.

"Architecture is so often inaccurate," I suggest, soothingly.

"And she cowered under one of them, wrapped in her mantle. Then thrust she her

head through a crevice of the tower that was old and worn, and so heard she Aucassin wailing within...."

And then she tells him all that has happened, and not being able to reach her hand to him, she casts her curls into the dungeon, and—

"Aucassin doth clasp them there,

Kissed the curls that were so fair...."

It is a love scene almost more charming than that of Romeo and Juliet, for it seems more genuine. Aucassin does not say such elaborate things, but there is a glow and fervour about his utterances that commends itself to us as ringing beautifully true.

They argue about which of them loves the most, until at last the town-guard comes along, "with swords drawn beneath their cloaks, for the Count Garin had charged them that if they could take Nicolette they should slay her."

But luckily the sentinel on the towers sees them coming, and decides, as we have seen, to befriend Nicolette, "for if they slay her, then were Aucassin, my damoiseau, dead, and that were great pity."

So the sentinel considerately sings a song in which he gives a broad hint of what is menacing, and Nicolette shrinks under the shadow of a pillar till the men have passed. Finally she jumps down into the fosse and, hurt and bruised as she is, climbs the castle wall and goes out into the forest, where she builds "a little hut of flowers as a token to Aucassin that she had passed that way." Later, Aucassin finds her there after many wanderings, and they are happy for a little while.

BEAUCAIRE FROM TARASCON. By Joseph Pennell.

And so, through adventures and sorrows, the story goes till the lovers are hopelessly parted—pirates, tempests, Saracens are banded against them, and Nicolette seems lost for ever.

The final scene is once more in this old castle, after many years, when Count Garin

is dead and Aucassin rules in his stead. Then comes a minstrel—a woman—to the castle, with a "vielle." Aucassin, we may suppose, was taking a walk along the ramparts. And suddenly he hears a voice singing to the vielle in the castle court below. He listens and the song makes him weep; and he asks for more songs. And the singer sings again, about strange adventures; and the story is that of Nicolette! And finally, the minstrel runs away to Aucassin's mother in the castle and throws off her disguise. The Countess is overjoyed, for she has been in despair at her son's incurable grief; and she dresses Nicolette in splendid raiment and leads her back to the bewildered Aucassin. And then there is a meeting such as happens rarely in human story. Deep sorrow has been gnawing in Aucassin's heart, and he had never married, in spite of much urging by his friends. And suddenly he knows that the day of his tribulation is over, and the deepest joy he can ever feel has come to him after weary waiting. And once more, with a rapture learnt of long sorrow and heartache, he folds Nicolette in his arms.

And soon afterwards their marriage feast is prepared with great pomp and ceremony, and Beaucaire has a splendid time of it with tournaments and jousts and dancing. And in the good old fashion, Aucassin and Nicolette are not only married—which any fools can be—but they are happy ever after!

CHAPTER XVI CARCASSONNE, THE ALBIGENSES AND PIERRE VIDAL

"Oh! garden that is blooming in the fields of Montolian,

Ye are crimsoned with the blood of the slain."

From MS. poem on the Albigensian Crusades found by M. Fauriel in the "Bibliothèque du Roi."

CHAPTER XVI

CARCASSONNE, THE ALBIGENSES AND PIERRE VIDAL

With the siege of Beaucaire fresh in our minds, Simon de Montfort and Count Raimon VI. of Toulouse became enrolled among the names that jumped to the eyes wherever they occurred. We pursued any trail that led to further particulars of these two men who satisfied the human instinct to worship, on the one hand, and to whole-heartedly abominate on the other.

There was no call at any time to moderate one's detestation of de Montfort on account of some untimely incident betraying him in amiable sidelights. He was never discovered playing at ninepins with the children of his captive foe, or chivalrously endowing with a competence for life the widow of the wretch whom he had sent to die in his deepest dungeons. Never was he caught in unguarded moments of virtue; never did he tarnish the full gloss of his villainy by any little inconsistency of honour or compunction. He went on adding contempt to our hatred by a splendid and unremitting variety of treachery and baseness. At his worst, he was a fiend incarnate; and a better moment he never had.

ROMAN FOUNTAIN AT NIMES. By Joseph Pennell.

Thus for the purposes of melodrama he was invaluable. He gave one's emotions no trouble. He was a beautifully consistent, unmitigated ruffian, and it was a pleasure to undisturbedly loathe him.

Count Raimon of Toulouse and Viscount of Béziers made a very good companion-opposite to this satisfactory scoundrel.

The two seemed to fill the position in our affections of a handsome pair of ornaments on a well-regulated mantelpiece—related by the sharpness of their contrast: Summer and Winter, Vice and Virtue, or the little meteorological man and woman who appear at the house-door, one in and one out (never both at the same time), to indicate fair or foul weather—perhaps also as a sly comment on domestic felicity!

Count Raimon and his companion interested us more especially when we entered Languedoc, the Count's own territory and the principal scene of the Albigensian wars. Beaucaire, as we had seen, which also belonged to Count Raimon, had fallen into the hands of the arch-villain, but there his wonderful luck at last deserted him.

The Pope had set his mind on consolidating the power of the Church and on annexing the lands of the few reigning nobles who protected the Albigenses. Of these Count Raimon of Toulouse was the most determined. He is one of the most striking examples of religious toleration, almost the only one, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Without any leanings towards the doctrines of the heretics, he yet stood by them from first to last, trying by every means in his power to avert the fury of the Pope and the Crusaders. He tried diplomacy, he tried conciliation, but without avail. He held firm in his refusal to hand over any subjects in his dominions, whatsoever their faith, to the fury of the Inquisition. Fortune was against him, with Innocent the Third on the throne, St. Dominic, the powerful originator of the terrible tribunal on the persecuting side, and Simon de Montfort as its military leader.

The Pope had actually recalled the Crusaders from the Holy Land to turn their arms against their own kindred. Heretics at home, he held, were more dangerous than infidels abroad. The war-intoxicated Defenders of the Faith needed no incitement. Their ruthless savagery has cast a shadow over the land to this day. This shadow hangs heavily over the scene of the worst atrocities of the war, and it was remarkable how the radiance so thrillingly pervasive in Provence failed to follow us into the richer country of Languedoc.

Count Raimon's persistent defence of his Albigensian subjects kept the war centred more or less within his dominions, of which Toulouse was the capital.

Here, in Languedoc, it was, above all, that the gracious life which we had learnt to associate with the troubadours was blotted out and quenched in a very sea of blood and suffering.

It is saddening, too, to think that one of those very singers in his later days became infected with the spirit of the Church, and ended as one of the most ferocious of the persecutors.

This renegade was Folquet of Marseilles, who loved Azalais, the wife of Count Barral of Marseilles. He was of a tenacious, zealous, gloomy temperament—not at all of the true troubadour spirit—and this characteristic afterwards shows itself in his ardour against the heretics.

"Too late," he laments, "I have discovered love's falsehood: I am like one who swears never to gamble again after he has lost his whole fortune." Azalais dies, and Folquet enters the monastery of Citeaux. And then he becomes Abbot of Toulouse in the heart of the Albigensian troubles. From that time forth he devotes himself to persecution.

ENTRANCE TOWERS, CARCASSONNE. By E. M. Synge.

The taking of the hill-set city of Béziers, where a brilliant Court used to be held, is one of the most terrible incidents in this twenty years' war.

"Kill! kill!" shouted the leaders; "Kill! kill!" the cry was echoed through the blazing city, and sixty thousand souls are said to have perished on that awful day.

Folquet, the ex-troubadour, had been told that heretics and faithful were being indiscriminately massacred.

"Slay them," he cried; "God will know his own."

There is also a similar story about de Montfort, to whom two heretics were brought: one firm in the faith, the other open to conviction.

"Burn them both," shouted de Montfort. "If this fellow means what he says the fire will expiate his sins; and if he lies he will suffer for his imposture."

We saw the city of Béziers from the windows of the train: a picturesque mass of houses climbing up a steep hill to cluster round the fine fortress-cathedral—another

characteristic example of the architecture of Southern France.

Our train puffed along the valley of the Aude to the famous walled city of Carcassonne, the next scene of this savage drama.

It was here that Count Raimon—or the Viscount of Béziers, as he was also called—had established himself when the news came of the fall of Béziers. A bad day that must have been for the Count and his garrison! His brother-in-law, King Pedro of Arragon, had come to help him in this almost hopeless cause, and he went at once to mediate with the Crusaders, pleading Raimon's own unimpeachable orthodoxy.

But it was of no use. The Defenders of the Faith were panting for plunder and massacre. They said the Count and twelve knights might depart in peace, but the town must be given up and every other soul in it.

"That shall be when an ass flies to heaven," replied the Count, and prepared for defence.

It was almost with a sense that we were to be present at one of the most terrible moments in mediæval history that we watched the flying landscape for a first sight of Carcassonne on its height.

Who could ever forget that first impression of it, as the train slowed up to the station of the lower town in the valley and a strange vision came into the sky of a double-walled mediæval city with a forest of towers rising tall and pointed through the mists and mystery of a far-away romance?

This was a return to the Middle Ages indeed!

The hotel omnibus trundled us—amid a vibrating heap of rugs, handbags, umbrellas—through the ancient streets of the lower town, which the natives spoke of as "modern" to distinguish it from "la Cité," which was far more ancient, seeing that it possessed more than one tower belonging to the misty times of the Visigothic kingdom, whose capital was at Toulouse.

As we drove, the turn of the road placed us at different angles with the City of Dreams; and it stood the test.

No sign of fading away, or of dwindling into anything less than its astonishing self.

At the hotel we were received by a most elegant landlady in widow's garb. If it had not been for her pressing us to have our lunch before we started, I feel sure that we should have been off and up to the cité without a moment's delay. However, we first made acquaintance with this lady's wonderful cuisine in the old, low-pitched salle-à-manger, where only a few Frenchmen of the commercial type were taking their luncheon. We were neither of us much given to what we called "fussing over our food," but it was impossible for the most benighted of women to fail to notice the delicate art which distinguished every detail of the repast. What we had I cannot remember, but it was a succession of masterpieces. Such modulation of flavours, such opposing of salt and sweet, acid and flat, creamy and piquant; such coquetry in the salad dressing, such sentiment in the sauces! It was wonderful, as all true art is.

Altogether Carcassonne was a place of artistic achievement.

The city, as we wended our way towards it, grew more and more dazzling to the sense of reality. That progress through the lower town, across the Aude, was like walking straight into the background of a mediæval painting—and who has not longed for that excursion? There was not a sight or a sound to mar the perfection of the place. Doubtless in the old days there would have been more stir as one approached the great double-towered gateway and crossed the bridge over what was once a moat. And there would have been sentries, and perhaps the flash of armour caught between the crenellations of the lower outer walls. Otherwise precisely the same sights and sounds met our senses as met those of the wayfarers of the thirteenth century.

Immediately within the inner walls there is a street of smallish houses. But soon we diverge from this and are admitted by the custodian—a most singular person, by the

way—through a side door and up a steep staircase to the ramparts.

And here on emerging, one holds one's breath. Towers, towers, and more towers; towers with high conical roofs in fantastic medley; round towers, square towers, tall, emaciated towers springing above the mass of building; towers with crenellated parapets showing rounded contours to the enemy and flat sides to the town; Visigoth towers recalling the momentous days when barbarian races began to swarm and settle in the fertile provinces of Roman Gaul.

Wonderful was that walk round the walls passing through the long procession of the towers. It was a veritable city of towers, moving like living figures as we moved, appearing in new groups between the houses, opening into vistas, falling back and reappearing.

It seemed as if those silent sentinels were trying to keep us always in view, stealing out cautiously from behind the buildings, crossing, falling back, making way for one another, with a sort of secret movement round the whole circle of their orbit.

There were great flights of steps corbelled out on the inner side of the ramparts, apparently to provide a means of descending to the city, and also of reaching certain points of the fortifications. There were gateways, barbicans, turrets, and a marvellous everchanging series of architectural groupings; walls, bulwarks, battlements.

Below were the outer walls, within which was a spacious grassy enclosure where the men-at-arms used to keep guard.

Citywards, there was the castle, and the cathedral. And at the foot of the ramparts, backing into them, were the little gardens of the citizens of Carcassonne. Boughs would sway against the masonry—Merovingian some of these splendid blocks of stone!—while the bright, quiet sun of a November afternoon poured with broad, equal glow into the silent city.

And far away on the horizon, miles and miles beyond the sweeping plains of

Languedoc, the faint white peaks of the Pyrenees!

Our guide was the most singular of men. Whether he had a patriotic hatred of the English I cannot tell, but he did his best to ignore our presence altogether.

Having reeled off his stock information—(not to us, but to the universe generally)—he would retire and lean gloomily over the battlements as if he were taking a stroll on his own account and were contemplating life from the pessimist standpoint. Perhaps he was resisting an inclination to dispose of us mediævally in one of the oubliettes.

Sometimes he would gaze down into the gardens below as if he were watching some one at whose folly he was thoroughly disgusted. Yet not a soul was to be seen. An attempt at geniality on our part was met in the most freezing manner. There was something really extraordinary about the man, and I incline to think he was either a patriot sustaining his country's honour by this simple means, or a person suffering from melancholy madness of a very aggravated type.

Even if he unlocked a door for us he studied the far distance till we had passed through. Then he re-locked the door and hurried on in front as if dreading we should ask him stupid questions. It may be he was horribly bored by this eternal round of the bulwarks with foolish tourists.

The longer we lingered on the ramparts of Carcassonne the more incredible it appeared that the town could ever be taken by the means of assault available in the thirteenth century. Yet taken we sadly knew that it was, and by Simon de Montfort!

That was virtually the end of the house of Toulouse and of the cause of the Albigenses.

The lower outer walls were as solid as they could be. Then between the outer and inner walls were stationed sentries and men-at-arms. But supposing these dangers to be overcome, and the foe to aspire to pass through the high inner walls, from whose battlements hundreds of arrows might be flying and boiling pitch be pouring,

perhaps the assailant would rush up some cunning, wall-embedded staircase which seemed to promise access to the city or the ramparts. But instead of that it would turn out, after many windings and confused branchings, to be merely a blind passage fashioned thus on purpose to mislead an enemy and prevent his surprising the town. Moreover, even if the impossible were achieved and those vast walls scaled, there was still the castle or inner fortress, where the inhabitants could all collect in time of emergency and bid defiance to every foe except hunger and thirst.

THE RAMPARTS, CARCASSONNE. By E. M. Synge.

Probably Count Raimon and his garrison expected to be able to hold out against de Montfort in spite of the invariable success of the latter. One can imagine with what ardour the preparations were made for the defence: every watch-tower and turret, every outlook and barbican haunted by anxious faces scanning the country.

And then the attack! The first assault was led by the prelates solemnly chanting the "Veni Creator," and the God of the Christians was called upon to fight on the side of slayers and torturers, of murderers of unarmed citizens and women and children. It was de Montfort who boasted: "Neither age nor sex have we spared; we have slain all!"

This first onslaught was repulsed, and perhaps if it had not been for a failure in the water supply, the beautiful city and its noble cause might have prevailed.

How they must have prayed for rain in that wondrous colour-flooded cathedral, when day after day the cruel, cloudless heavens smiled down ironically upon the dusty streets and glaring walls!

At last a parley was arranged between the Count and the besiegers. They gave him a pledge of safe conduct, and he went out to the camp. In the service of Heaven and the Church, the Crusaders considered ordinary honour and good faith superfluous—the usual plea of a good motive for villainous deeds—and they traitorously seized him, and when the city fell they threw him into a dungeon in his

own citadel at Carcassonne—with all the beautiful precepts of chivalry ringing in their ears—a piece of work after de Montfort's own heart.

It is better not to dwell on the sack of the city: a sack of the thirteenth century conducted by de Montfort.

"For thou hast delivered them to the vilest of mortal men," the Comte de Foix had exclaimed to the Pope, speaking of the Albigenses at the Council of the Lateran, "to Simon de Montfort."

Count Raimon died in prison, nobody knows by what means. We were shown the noisome little hole in which the noble and tolerant spirit saw the last of this sad and cruel and beautiful world.

In virtue of the poet's faculty of imaginative sympathy Pierre Cardinal, the famous troubadour, had the insight to understand the nobility of this man born centuries too soon.

"As water in the fountain, so chivalry has its source in him. Against the basest of men, nay, against the whole world he stands." So writes the poet of the hero. It was a sorry age in which to be born before one's time!

Happily there are other and brighter memories to associate with Carcassonne. The troubadour of far renown, Pierre Vidal, must have often passed in and out at the great gateway: that delightful, foolish, brilliant personage; courtly, naif, and infinitely charming, yet pathetically unsuccessful, for all his genius—perhaps partly because of it. He was born at Toulouse, and so belonged to this country, then ruled by Raimon V., but his fate was chiefly active at the court of Marseilles where he fell in love with Azalais de Rocca Martina, wife of Count Barral, a lady who is described as possessing "charms of the sort that intoxicate; an emotional power, a magnetism, a luxurious will that swept all resistance away." He called her "Vierna," and wrote his canzos to her under that name.

One of his biographers says of him: "He was one of the most foolish men who ever

lived, for he believed everything to be just as it pleased him, and as he would have it." It is a moot point whether this may not be rather wisdom than folly, for believing things to be as one desires them often goes a long way towards fulfilling that tacit prophecy.

Alas, things were not exactly as Vidal wished, in spite of his pleasant believings, but he had rosy hours and sang enchanting songs and gave much joy with his gifts and his charm. "Vierna," however, did not at all appreciate him. She gave him a ring and a little perfunctory graciousness, as she was bound to do to sustain her character as a courteous lady; but she appears to have wearied of his songs and his devotion. At last her husband tried to reconcile her to the troubadour, and to induce her to treat him more kindly. Vidal lost heart after a time, and concluded he was a fool.

"But beauty makes the sanest man go mad," he sang or said, and though he had many love-affairs and fancies, they seem to have been of slight seriousness compared with his passion for Azalais. In his erratic life, he haunted the neighbourhood of Carcassonne and Toulouse; visited Albi—whence the luckless Albigenses took their name—and Saissac and Cabaret near Carcassonne. In Provence he had an unpleasant adventure at St. Gilles, where the husband of a lady to whom he addressed love-songs and of whose love he had boasted, became enraged and bored the poet's too eloquent tongue.

In these strange times, the exquisite chivalric civilisation being but newly formed—like a sheet of ice on a dark pool—had very thin places. Vidal's friend Ugo del Baux bore him off—perhaps to his wonderful eyrie in the Alpilles—and nursed him till he was well again.

Vidal's wanderings were far and wide in Languedoc and Provence. We even hear of him singing in the little grey hill-top village of Beuil in the mountains to the north of Nice.

Near Carcassonne lived a famous beauty, Loba de Pegnautier. She inhabited the

fortified town of Cabaret, and there knights and troubadours flocked to visit her, among them Pierre Vidal.

The story goes that in order to please her he adopted the crest or emblem of a Wolf in compliment to her name, Loba; and, dressed in a wolf-skin, ran out into the field and had himself hunted by the shepherds with their dogs. But Loba only made fun of him, and it appears that the shepherds hunted him rather too seriously, and altogether the foolish poet came off unhappily in this fantastic scheme of love-making.

He is said to have joined Richard Cœur de Lion in his Crusade, to have visited Spain and Italy, notably the Court of Montferrat, and everywhere to have pursued his troubadour's calling and the will-of-the-wisp of a satisfying love.

He once tried boldness with Azalais and ventured on stealing a kiss one morning while she was sleeping. But he lived to rue the day. She fell into a passion of anger and refused to accept any apology. However, he murmured ancient saws about women and hoped on. Count Barral laughed at his wife for taking the wild poet's doings so seriously. She was not to be appeased, and finally Vidal went off to Cyprus and characteristically married a Princess who claimed the title of Empress of the Eastern Empire. And the two set up an Imperial Court and ordered an expensive throne, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves until Vidal had spent all his money. Presumably the Princess died, or they parted, and then Barral insisted on Vidal's returning to Provence; and he met him joyously at Les Baux, and brought him home to Marseilles where Azalais welcomed him with a freely given kiss as a token of forgiveness. And poor Vidal breaks out into a veritable spring-song of joy and thankfulness. But the Countess tired of him very soon, and never had the least idea of returning his passion.

So he starts again on his wanderings, and goes all over the world with one patron and friend after another, and so ends his strange, brilliant, joyous, troubled,

unsatisfied life.

With all his natural susceptibility and need of affection he seems never to have overcome his love for the beautiful Azalais, nor, with all his charm, does he appear to have been able to inspire a serious attachment in any of the innumerable ladies to whom he warbled his graceful canzos. He never seems to have thoroughly grown up, and probably no woman capable of passionate attachment could have bestowed the full flood of it on a nature so immature.

What exactly the quality or qualities may be that bestow the power of inspiring a grande passion is one of the unfathomed mysteries of the heart. Vidal possessed every attribute that could charm—or so one would suppose—yet ladies only laughed at him affectionately, petted him, and gave their hearts elsewhere.

He is one of the most attractive and pathetic of the troubadours, and gives the impression of a sort of erratic genius. His naïveté is astonishing and charming, in spite of his outrageous habit of boasting of his successes in love and war.

One can easily picture the richly-dressed figure issuing from the great gates of Carcassonne on his beautiful horse—his horse was surely a noble one—followed by his accompanist and his servant, who carried his vielle; and we saw him in our mind's eye riding through the country on his way to Cabaret to pay homage to Loba de Pegnautier—and so he fades into the far away.

Alas, those beautiful towers and walls were destined to be battered and broken by de Montfort and his Crusaders, as we have seen. And it was not long after the taking of the city that the cause of the Albigenses was finally lost on the field of Muret, in this district. De Montfort was killed a little later by a stone at the siege of Toulouse, and a yell of joy and execration went up from the whole Midi which he had tortured so hideously.

We saw his tomb in the cathedral at Carcassonne—and wondered! Our feelings of hatred died away in the glory of that cathedral.

When we entered, we found ourselves suddenly bathed in waves of colour.

The entire east end of the building was a splendid expanse of stained glass stretching from floor to roof, and from wall to wall: the whole breadth of the cathedral, divided only by a few slender mullions. The transmuted glow of the afternoon sun was flooding the church, kindling the tints of the glass to the liquid glory of gems; and it was perfectly, radiantly still.

After all, it is unspeakable pity rather than hatred that madmen like de Montfort ought to inspire; for frenzied cruelty such as his implied a misery and darkness of spirit beyond the power of human speech to express, and surely, sooner or later, an awful expiation.

"But what opinion was it that the Albigenses held which made the Pope and the Crusaders treat them so ferociously?" cried Barbara, bewildered at the accounts of their cruelty and of de Montfort's specially hateful savageries. Well might she ask!

For one thing, the Albigenses would have it that three nails were used at the Crucifixion; whereas all true believers know that there were four——

Barbara stared.

I had chapter and verse for it. A learned controversialist had denounced the Three Nail view as unworthy of Catholics and Christians.

"And for that they killed and racked and tortured——"

In truth it was for that among other errors of doctrine. It is difficult to find out what the Albigenses really believed, for they were so calumniated. Baring-Gould contends that they had revived the ancient paganism of the country.

They believed in two forces, a good and an evil: the nine-lived Manichæan heresy.

But that belief is represented in our good old friend the Devil, who, indeed, is probably a remnant of Pagan ideas. They rejected the Trinity, refused to worship saints, and discouraged marriage. They seemed very much like any other

enthusiastic sect that breaks off from the main body of believers, and is ready to die for Three Nails instead of the orthodox Four. Will the history of religious persecution never cure people of their Three-Nail controversies?

CHAPTER XVII MAGUELONNE

"Aigues Mortes is a dead town!

Maguelonne is the ghost of one."

CHAPTER XVII

MAGUELONNE

Maguelonne—the dwelling on the Pool.

The name has an aroma of romance, and a sort of tender melancholy which penetrates to the imagination before one knows whether it is a city or a mountain or some gloomy castle in an old fairy tale.

Once it was a splendid city spreading along the shores of the lagoon; now there remains but a solitary church, one of the characteristic fortress-churches of the Midi, a bare, primitive-looking building, closely protected on three sides by a grove of dark trees, in the centre of a little island formed by the sea and the lagoons which run, like an enamelled chain, all along these mournful coasts.

One can reach the island by boat across the lagoons from the little cardboard town of Palavas where the people of Montpellier go in summer for sea-bathing. In very calm weather it is possible to approach the isle by sea. The church is a most singular piece of early Christian architecture, without a window in the white, thick walls; and above, one sees the curved machicolations, as in a fortress, whence boiling lead and oil could be poured down on the heads of Saracen assailants, those terrible enemies of whom the ancient church builders stood in such dread.

Of the original Mother Church of St. Peter there has survived only the principal

nave, "flanked before the destruction of the city with several towers."

It has "curved machicolations going from one buttress to the next," and is considered one of the most complete types of the fortified churches of the Middle Ages, "which are ranged in a line along the coast."

The church of Maguelonne has fine Romanesque windows, and arches of full half-circle, and resembles a fortress almost more than a church.

The inside is very dark and solemn, stirring in the grave simplicity of its style. True Provençal Romanesque in its structure of vast arches and apses; the Roman idea but little modified except in the capitals of the columns where the classic flow and grace yields to the naïveté of early Christian sentiment. Indeed, that sentiment very seriously pervades the whole building. There is none of the sumptuous triumphant spirit of a grand classic edifice, although the general lines are the same in both cases. A careful draughtsman, conscientiously rendering the church of Maguelonne, might produce a portrait correct and unrecognisable, as many portraits are; the bare lines without the meaning behind them, the matter without the spirit; and a portrait of that sort might be indistinguishable from that of some great Roman interior—palace, bath, hall of justice. The painted hall of the Villa Madama on the hillside above the Milvian bridge near Rome is constructed on the same broad scheme of arch and apse, and above, on vault and spandril, garlanded, arabesqued, a riot of rosy gods and goddesses—the exquisite work of Giulio Romano—voluptuous, expansive, rich in beauty and power. Maguelonne with its classic structure—a style which had been developed during centuries for stronger and stronger expression of Pagan magnificence—nevertheless breathes forth the sentiment of poverty and asceticism, the spirit that drove men and women into the wilderness, that set them writhing under the consciousness of sin, or exalted them to the state of emotion wherein the pains of martyrdom were transfigured into ecstasy. Truly a thing of potency the human spirit! How, by the same general means, it can express emotions at once so

strong and so completely opposed is one of the great mysteries of art.

MAGUELONNE FROM THE LAGOON. By E. M. Synge.

Maguelonne is the last relic of the splendid city of that name which stood on the opposite shores of the lagoon, its towers mirrored in the blue water. The island was first the site of a Greek settlement, then of a Roman town—once attacked by Womba, King of the Visigoths; finally the Saracens built a city there which Charles Martel destroyed when he changed for good and all the fortunes of Europe by the great victories which turned back those marauding people just at the critical moment when they were on the point of becoming masters of Christendom. For many years it was the site of a famous monastic establishment which has earned a reputation for a mild and beneficent and altogether admirable administration of great wealth and greater power.

Maguelonne is famous for its charming old story of "Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne," known in most European countries among the people, and sold at fairs and markets for a few pence. It was written by a deacon of Maguelonne, Bernard of the Three Ways, about whom one desires in vain to know more. The story is of lovers parted, wandering; exchanging rings which are carried off by ravens and finally turn up miraculously inside a tunny fish caught on the coast, and so lead to the meeting and reunion of the despairing Pierre and Maguelonne.

CHURCH OF MAGUELONNE. By E. M. Synge.

There are a few small buildings near the church, in one of which live the woman and her family who look after it. They do not trouble the visitor with gratuitous information, but hand him the key and leave him severely alone, unless, indeed, he is adventurous and elects to go on the roof. Then a boy unlocks the staircase door that gives access to that windy spot, and amuses himself by sliding down the stone slabs of the roof while the visitor turns to admire the view of sea, mountains and lagoons spread forth in a brilliant circle round him. The remarkable and

characteristic roof, however, is what he comes officially to see. It is formed of thick, overlapping slabs of stone laid at a gentle slope, and is considered a marvel of architectural skill.

How the problem of weight distribution is solved is, indeed, difficult to understand. The builders of these early churches perhaps knew some of the secrets of the Roman architects who at Nimes, in the Temple of the Nymphs, have erected a seemingly miraculous ceiling composed of heavy square stones which are guilty of the misdemeanour of existing in their places "without visible means of support." The feat is accounted for, though it is scarcely made clear, by the fact that on their upper surfaces the stones are cut so that they are thicker and heavier on one side than on the other, and thus the weight is thrown obliquely from stone to stone across the roof, instead of downwards, a method involving elaborate mathematical calculations and perfection of workmanship.

The twentieth century has no monopoly of ingenuity after all!

Maguelonne makes a beautiful, sad picture as one leaves it to pass down to the sea. The blank walls with their arched machicolated abutments—recalling the fortifications of the Papal Palace—look bare and acquainted with adversity in the blinding sunshine. On the side of the lagoons the protecting pines crowd round the building like a sacred grove; and through their branches the sea-wind makes a low, ominous music.

CHAPTER XVIII THE SPIRIT OF THE WILDERNESS

"Sa desolation grandiose ... immense et caillouteuse comme une steppe d'Orient."

Paul Mariéton.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SPIRIT OF THE WILDERNESS

Fanfarigoule in the Crau[18] is the haunt of the ghouls.

Let any one wander alone in that extraordinary desert, and if he have not nerves of steel or a cast-iron imagination he will understand how it earns that reputation. As for disputing the existence of those ancient beings, to what reasonable mind would it occur—especially at the hour of sunset?

Immense silent world of stones—stones rounded by centuries of rolling and wearing at the mercy of the Alpine torrents—a long range of far-away mountains with Mont Ventoux as their highest point, an atmosphere thrilled with the sunlight, with that strange purity that speaks of absolute solitude—such is La Crau.

If one is disposed to imagine that Provence is a land all brilliancy and gaiety, as first impressions would perhaps suggest, a sight of the Crau and the Camargue is enough to correct the error.

When any place has gathered through long centuries a certain kind of reputation, there will always be found particular potent influences that hang about the spot. And sometimes these influences are very mysterious and hard to account for.

This is the case with the Crau. The reflections of heat, and light from the immense body of stones may produce peculiar conditions of atmosphere and ether and so affect that delicately responsive instrument the human brain.

In any case, in its power of stirring and impressing it is a place apart.

A strange story is told by Baring-Gould of his experience when a child, of crossing the baking plain with his father, on a hot summer's day. He was on the box watching the post horses. As he looked, he "saw a number of little men with peaked caps running about the horses and clambering up them." His father sent him inside the carriage out of the hot sun, but for some time, he says, "I continued to see these dwarfs among the pebbles of the Crau, jumping over the tufts of grass, or careering along the road by the carriage side, making faces at me."

However, one must not attribute a monopoly of the power of evolving such visions

to the Field of Pebbles, for the author goes on to relate how in after years, one of his boys, while picking gooseberries, "saw a little man of his own height with a peaked cap, red jacket, and green breeches."

Moreover, strange to say, the same thing happened to his wife when a girl of thirteen, so that one cannot account for the marvel by heredity, that convenient explanation of mysteries. Sun on the head, the author supposes, must have caused all these experiences.

"But why," he adds, "should the sun on the head superinduce a vision of Kobolds? Is it because other people have suffered from the sun that the fables of little men, brownies, pixies, gnomes, fairies, is to be found everywhere? Or—is it possible that there is such a little creature only visible to man when he is subject to certain influences?"

ON THE VERGE OF LA CRAU. By E. M. Synge.

We first approached this forsaken region in the train, when the sun was beginning to get low, and wonderful tragic lights were showing along the western horizon. The olives and the pleasant farmsteads had been left behind, and we found ourselves rushing on through the evening glow into a limitless desolation. And suddenly there flashed past close to the train a tall, dark shadow and a little station, and then another shadow and another, till presently the shadow grew continuous except for recurrent flashes of light, pulsing steadily as the train raced on; and we found that the line was bordered on one side with an immense wall of cypresses, and between their trunks one caught glimpses of the white wilderness beyond. For miles this sombre rampart runs on and on beside the line protecting it from the mistral which sweeps with terrible violence across these huge spaces. The stones are described by many writers as gigantic, but they look not more than about a foot in diameter in this southern part of the plain, and in the neighbourhood of St. Martin-en-Crau they appear rather smaller and of extraordinary uniformity of size and shape.

But not only is the eye amazed by this tremendous extent of water-worn stones (there are really two other lesser Craus beside the Crau d'Arles): the imagination is startled by the extraordinary depth of this strange deposit, an average of from ten to fifteen metres; that is at the lowest estimate over thirty feet, and at the highest forty-five feet.

Imagine that depth of vast pebbles being poured down from the Alps over miles and miles of plains! No wonder the ancient tribes called in the aid of their gods in trying to account for the stupendous catastrophe.

Among the distant mountains—many miles away—in the strange landscape of the Luberon range lies Varigoule, the scene of the Provençal Sabat. Valmasque, the Witch's Vale, was the home of the persecuted Vaudois. Witches, wizards, dracs (or water spirits), and a hundred other uncanny creatures have been associated by the people for unnumbered centuries with these gloomier scenes: rivers springing out of unknown sources, black cliffs, fantastic pinnacles whose names belong to forgotten tongues: Ligurian, Gallic, Phœnician, one knows not what, bestowed one knows not when; perhaps when Hercules fought the Ligurians on the Crau and his father Jupiter came to his aid with a shower of enormous stones.

Æschylus makes Prometheus direct the footsteps of Hercules to the Crau, where he tells him he will encounter the native Ligurians and be helpless in their hands for want of a single stone, which the country cannot supply. In this dilemma he will touch the pity of Jupiter who will cover the sky with clouds and send down a hail of stones with which Hercules can drive back the Ligurian hosts.[19]

The ancient Ligurian race of which one hears so much, occupied the country from the Pyrenees to the Arno in the seventh or eighth century b.c., and were not subdued till the reign of Augustus, who raised the well-known monument at La Turbie, near Monaco, to celebrate his victory. As one of their great tribes, the Salyans, had for their cities Marseilles, Tarascon, Arles, Glanum (St. Remy), it is not improbable that

the natives of this district, now growing so familiar, were the descendants of the Ligurians or Ligyens, "ce peuple harmonieux," as they have been called. They are thought to be of Asiatic origin, and are described as a small, dark-haired people, open to all the arts, particularly music, and "sensitive to all the delicacies of life." They gave a high place to their women, who had the rôle of arbitress in all large affairs and who have left behind them many traditions of their "heroism and largeness of soul." Perhaps it is to this "harmonious people" that France and Italy owe their brilliant artistic history.

If one may not regard the ordinary man and woman of the towns of Provence as the direct representatives of this primitive people, they have surely left living records in the peasants of the remoter nooks and corners of Southern France.

In Languedoc, Provence, indeed everywhere in the great regions of the Ligurians, notably on the hills of the Riviera, one comes upon a curious brown-skinned, flat-featured type, not "plain," as a modern face may be plain from failure in harmonious development, but merely roughly fashioned. It is a type not without a harsh comeliness, a wholesome success in its own archaic fashion.

The faces seem scarcely European. There is in them a singular look of antiquity; something unfinished, half animal (in the sense of unreflecting), with steady, open gaze, not intent but unswerving, revealing very little that we understand by "human nature." One seems to be looking at human nature in the making.

These people live in little vales by a mountain stream, in nooks in the hills; fauns or satyrs one might fancy them in the twilight—cultivating a few olives and keeping a few cocks and hens and perhaps a cow, and so living as their ancestors must have lived for centuries while the great tides of life and history were flowing and flowing past them.

Perhaps this was the dusky race that the Greeks and Romans actually took for satyrs, or divinities of the woods, for the term "work like a satyr" is the Provençal

equivalent for "work like a nigger," and it is thought likely, by some authorities, that the term thus became embedded in the popular traditions.

There is a strange corroboration of the idea that in this rough-hewn type we may really see the ancient inhabitants of Gaul, the predecessors of the Gauls themselves, for near Aix was discovered among the remains of a prehistoric village some primitive stone carving attributed to Ligurian workmanship, and the features there so crudely wrought are practically identical in type with those of the true gens du pays.

Any one who visits the little grey towns that cap so many mountain peaks of the Maritime Alps, will encounter examples of this prehistoric face.

Without any reasonable doubt such people fought for their lives and homes—probably caves and huts of mud and reeds in the fastnesses of the hills—many and many a time, and the tradition of their combat with Hercules is probably the echo of some monster battle between Greeks and Ligurians on the plain of the Crau.

Why any one should desire to visit the Crau puzzles the gaiety-loving Provençal not a little, and that a traveller should for that purpose deliberately make a railway journey to a little, windy, solitary station beyond Arles, where but few trains stop—that argued a form of madness probably considered as peculiar to Britons.

At Arles unhesitating informants had insisted that from St. Martin-en-Crau one could easily reach the Field of Pebbles, and on arrival there I asked the porter in which direction it lay. He stared, and referred me to the stationmaster, a majestic creature in blue and buttons.

"La Crau? les cailloux?" Ah! no, there was no one who could give me any information about them here. "But at Miramas——"

Miramas! But that was miles along the line!

Monsieur le Chef de Gare looked at me pityingly. True, but he understood I was inquiring about the stones of La Crau.

So I was——!

"Eh bien, il y a des entrepreneurs a Miramas——"

Then I understood. He thought I wanted to enter into negotiations for buying stones for building or other purposes.

When at last he took in the situation he shook his head and shrugged his shoulders as a French official shrugs when he regards your case as at once foolish and hopeless.

To arrive en pleine Crau one must go at least five kilometres. It did seem hopeless indeed, for even if disposed for the lonely walk, there would not have been time to go and return in time to catch the only reasonable train back to Arles. I had made many efforts already to accomplish this project, and all had failed through inaccurate directions of this nature. Naturally there were no excursion trains to the Crau. Still I could not resign myself to failure. Was there no trap, no inn where I could hire something to drive in? I didn't care what it was.

This grand indifference seemed to strike an answering spark. Well, there was a little mas (farm) over the way. The farmer had an old dog-cart that he drove in; perhaps I might make an arrangement with him.

Monsieur le Chef de Gare pointed to a barn opposite where I found an old cart, the farmer, several labourers, and a lot of dogs.

They all looked on during the interview, which ended by the farmer's agreeing to drive me where I wanted to go—après tout c'était mon affaire. So off we started, the farmer himself driving and two of the dogs following joyously.

Very exhilarating was our somewhat jolty progress across the large level sunny district. It seemed more hushed than any inhabited district I had ever visited; as if it felt the presence of the great desert a few miles off. There were none of the little events of the country; no cattle looking over walls, no children along the roadside, no coming and going about the farmsteads, of which there were very few and those few singularly small and lifeless. The trundle of the wheels and the sound of the

horse's hoofs on the road outlined themselves upon a blank sheet of silence. It seemed unnatural; the more so as there was everywhere such golden brightness.

The only scene of activity that we passed, soon after leaving the farm, was a group of men cutting down some ancient olive trees, and the farmer called out to them something in Provençal, to which there were some shouted replies, and all caps went off in a friendly way to le patron.

He was a quiet, worthy sort of man, very little different from an English farmer of the same condition. He was not unwilling to answer questions, but it was curious how he contrived to reply without conveying the slightest information, a peculiarity, be it remarked, of the type that is called "worthy."

If one asked, for instance, whether the land was owned by the peasantry themselves in the district, or whether it was in the hands of wealthy proprietors, he would flick the point off a branch of bramble in the hedge, and say with a shrug, implying that the inquiry was somewhat trivial: "Oui, il y en a."

It was useless to press the matter further, for that merely produced a still more effective barrier against the inquiring mind.

It is a fact, however, that in many districts of the South of France (contrary to the usual belief) the land is by no means always held by the peasants.

Again and again, in reply to inquiries, I have been informed that this or that stretch of country belonged to Monsieur or le Baron So and So, who was "enormement riche."

Questions about ancient customs were almost always futile. No promptings could produce a description or even a clear admission that such things existed. The true native is most damping to archæological enthusiasm.

The one thing he warms up about is the new village pump, or the hideous crucifix in cast iron which the municipality has just erected on some ancient stone pedestal where for centuries the discarded, moss-stained, prayer-assailed image used to stand,

in all its pathetic significance.

My friend seemed to know little or nothing about his own surroundings, or perhaps he knew them so well and so exclusively that he could not see that there was anything to tell about them. Besides, he could not tell it; that was the way le bon Dieu had made him.

Whenever we came to a very stony bit of land—and there was plenty of it—he at once pointed it out. He took it that my hobby was stones, and very insatiable in that respect he must have thought me, for nothing would satisfy my cravings in that direction short of the unnumbered millions of the Crau!

He seemed a kind-hearted man, and fond of his dogs. The illness of one poor beast through apparently incurable eczema much concerned him. He had often been urged to destroy the dog, but he never could bring himself to put an end to "un aimi fidèle." The animal looked up and wagged his tail, as if understanding he was being talked about.

My offer to write down the name of a remedy (Jeye's fluid) that had effected a cure in a similar case I knew called forth something approaching animation in my conductor for the first time.

Almost the only man-made object in the whole journey was a dynamite factory with white glass retorts full of the explosive, actually ranged in long rows by the public roadside. It seemed a fitting industry for this forlorn district.

Last winter snow had fallen on the retorts and broken them in, and the dynamite had exploded. But still they rested by the roadside!

Suppose there came along a shying horse or an unmanageable motor? The farmer shrugged his shoulders.

"That would be a bad business!"

In this much-managed Republic that was how they managed things!

As we drew near our journey's end, the vegetation grew sparser till there were only shrubs of diminishing size, growing in harder and harder soil. Then the cart left the road—this strange "morose route"—and we began to drive over grass: a rough sort of waste land with many pebbles; and before us was a great light such as greets the traveller coming in sight of the sea. It was the Crau!

"Nous y sommes," said the farmer, pulling up his horse to allow me to get down, "nous sommes maintenant en pleine Crau."

I knew now for certain where the silence came from that had brooded over the country all the way!

He thinks he knows what silence is who has lived in some remote spot in the heart of the English country, who has stood, on some breezeless evening, by the shores of an inland lake, or alone on far-away moorlands when the birds have gone to their rest and the night is coming up over the sky.

But that is not silence!

In the woodlands there is the tremor of a leaf, not perhaps quite heard, but not unknown to the finer consciousness; by the lake-side the water noiselessly stirs against the bank; on the moors the creatures are breathing in their holes and hiding places, the tiny bells of the heather ring an inaudible chime——

But on the Crau——

To say that there is not a sound is meaningless. There are strata upon strata of silence, deep as the deep sea; one hesitates on the verge, half dreading to advance.

Here at last is a realm untouched by human passion. It belongs utterly to the kingdom of physical "Nature," Nature in her heaviest mood, without the smallest thrill of manifested life or emotion.

To understand this to the full one must tramp over its hard stones and feel its lonely breath in one's face.

Turning one's steps humanwards again, one hastens with the eagerness of an exile to claim as dear friend and brother the first, humblest creature, animal or human, for sheer sympathy of the living with the living, for sheer relief after the meeting face to face the cold white Spirit of the Wilderness.

CHAPTER XIX ROSES OF PROVENCE

"Ai vist la roso adematin

Tout bello e fresco espandido...."

"I have seen the morning rose expanded all beautiful and fresh...."

Roumanille.

"Sweet month of May,

So fresh, so gay,

Hast come again?

Nature awakes,

Soon morning breaks

In hawthorn glen,

The birds' refrain

Thrills forth its strain."

From the Provençal of Aubanel.

BASE OF MONUMENT OF MARIUS, ST. REMY. By Joseph Pennell.

CHAPTER XIX

ROSES OF PROVENCE

What is the mysterious force in life that always makes it impossible to linger in any place where conditions are entirely congenial? We can stay so easily and with so much general approval in odious spots, among exasperating companions. But let a

charm attach to any scene or circumstance and straightway every factor of one's destiny flies into violent collision with every other factor, so that immediate flight becomes necessary, to the farthest limits of the railway system.

Only "le violence de notre étoile," or at any rate of Barbara's "étoile," could drive us from these bright regions; but then her star was very violent. Our country clamoured for us. It would have seemed flattering had we not known that it sprang chiefly from the desire that consumes the majority of people to act as sheep-dog towards wandering members of the community; an instinctive feeling that if they are "away" it is high time that they should come back again.

Barbara announced that she must go in about a week or ten days; and all that remained for us to do was to make the most of her remaining time.

Our strange little mountains, the Alpilles, still held our fancy. Why not go to the little town at their foot, St. Remy, with its industry of seed culture? We had read of its Roman monuments and of the cordon of flowers which surround it in the blooming season.

"C'est le chevalier du guet,

Compagne de la majorlaine,

C'est le chevalier du guet,

Gai, gai, dessus le quai,"

runs the local rhyme.[20]

It must be beautiful here in May when the vines are yellow-green to the tips of their young fingers. But greater beauty than now, at this late time, is scarcely possible to believe in.

The plain is gold and brown, with splashes of crimson where the sun shines through some eccentric spray of vine-leaves passionately red beyond its fellows.

St. Remy is the ancient Glanum of the Romans, and has memories not scholastic of

Cæsar's Gallic Wars. Along the passes of the Alpilles, Marius moved with his army at that stirring moment which was to decide whether the hordes of the Cimbri and the Teutons were to overrun all Italy and take possession of the Eternal City itself. So near a thing it was that the barbarians insolently asked the Roman soldiers if they had any messages for their wives and sweethearts in Rome, as they would soon be there.

Everything hung on the strategy of the Roman general, and it is only on the scene of that great contest that one realises what a desperate and universal moment it was.

Had the campaign of Marius ended otherwise than it did—had he yielded an hour too soon to the impatience of his soldiers to begin the fight—the whole course of history would have been different in all probability, and perhaps not one of us would have been born!

The railway from Tarascon to our little City of Gardens brings one into the very heart of the country. The carriages are so small—two-storied though they are—that one feels as if one were taking a drive in a donkey-cart or station fly, and more than once we were almost impelled to call out to our driver to stop and let us gather wild-flowers by the wayside. And the wayside is so absurdly near. There is none of the dignified aloofness of the ordinary train journey.

ROMAN ARCH, ST. REMY. By Joseph Pennell.

The same general features of the country are, of course, as before, but now we are intimately among its details: the vines, the low olive-bushes, the farmsteads, the cypresses, the patches of cultivation, the plantations of yellow canes rustling and swaying. And ever we are nearing the Alpilles. The train stops dutifully at a dozen little stations, where no one gets in or out. They are scarcely more than sentry-boxes; sometimes a mere frame filled in with the stalks of the reeds. Were it not that the mistral can blow through them, it seems impossible that these trivialities could withstand his lightest breath.

St. Remy, once the country seat of the Counts of Provence, has no walls of stone, but four-square leafy ramparts of plane-trees. From the door of the Hôtel de Provence one may turn to the right or left and blindly follow the avenues round the little town till one returns to one's starting-point, where probably a brown-eyed youth will still be grinding coffee beside the footpath. There are almost no sounds in St. Remy, for there are no vehicles except the hotel omnibus which trundles to and from the station, marking the lapse of time.

The visitors all, or nearly all, come with the same intent: to negotiate with the growers of seeds, and, at the proper season, they arrive in great numbers from every part of the world, including America the ever-enterprising.

Pinks and carnations and lilies, and purple acres of pansies with their texture of velvet; flowers and flowers in multitudes, blooming and budding and blushing—this is the sweet merchandise of St. Remy en Provence.

The hotel has the homely, spacious character of old-established inns in country towns. One feels a sense of comfort as one enters, and the courteous greeting of the landlord and his wife confirms one's satisfaction. The long, dark-papered salle-à-manger has a broad streak of sunshine across the polished floor from an open window which gives on to the regions at the back of the hotel. The waiter hastens to shut this, but desists with a shrug and a smile at our remonstrance. If we like to sit in draughts and endanger our lives, after all it is our own affair. He feels with Madame de Sévigné, "Mais ce sont des Anglais!"

The window allows one to pass out into a nondescript territory where boots are cleaned, firewood is stacked, and the omnibus is regularly put to bed and tucked in after its day's work.

To the left, a magnificent plane-tree spreads golden foliage far and wide, brimming up to our bedroom windows just overhead. And a little further from the house, on this side of a sombre row of cypresses, with an ethereal view to the left of palest

mountain peaks—a Provençal rose garden!

"But gather, gather, Mesdames," invites our kind host, "gather as many as you will." He smiles at our amazed delight, and waves a hospitable hand towards the masses of blossom, radiantly fresh and fair.

Roses of Provence!

The sun draws out the fragrance and shines through the petals till they gleam like gemmed enamel. We linger entranced.

In the narrow path we are elbow high in roses. And everything seems to stand still and wait in the hot sun. Nothing moves on. There is only a tiny floating back and forwards of a thread of cobweb between rose and rose; and very slowly now and again a broad swathe of plane-foliage heaves up and down on a little swell of air which the tree has all to itself in the shade-dappled precincts that it rules.

Looking across the roses from this spot we can see the rich tapestry of blossom against the cypresses, tall, grave warders of the Garden of Pleasure.

And still nothing moves forward. The flies come out and make drowsy, foolish noises in the warmth. But they return upon their paths and make buzzing circuits. A particular spasmodic burnished insect that darts suddenly to a distance and then remains thunderstruck before the heart of a flower, keeps on doing the same ridiculous thing all round the garden, and only adds to the impression of changelessness. It is as if the world had really come to a pause, and time and trouble had ceased their eternal pulse-beat.

And we gather our roses—while we may.

"Mais Mesdames, vous n'avez choisi que les roses les plus communes; tenez Mesdames." And Monsieur the landlord plunges into the bushes and cuts bloom after bloom of the most exquisite sorts: red and yellow and creamy white, till his generous hand can grasp no more. He stands smiling discreetly while we bury our faces in the flowers, and hold them at arm's length to admire them the more.

"Elles vous rendent heureuses, les roses, Mesdames," he says, with a little smile and a bow; "alors vous rendez heureuses les roses—et votre serviteur."

We try to make a co-operative bow (bowing was not Barbara's strong point), and to indicate as well as we can that only in this delightful country had we ever met with such lovely roses or such kind people.

The first part of the day was occupied in wandering over the open country that surrounds this placid little town of the Romans. The plain is wide—immense in its spaces, marked with the inevitable walls of cypresses and dotted with shrubs and farms as far as the eye can follow.

The strange, almost grotesque outline of the Alpilles closes in this view to the South, and between these mountains and the town there are endless rough tracks and paths among the hollows and risings of the land, quaint cuttings in the soil which lead the eye to the blue of the hills.

LA CROIX DE VERTU, ST. REMY. By E. M. Synge.

Here and there would be a small dwelling, here and there a field enclosed for pasture, but this was rare. The greater part was wild, rough country, owing little to the care of man.

In one of the highest spots of this singular district stands a curious stone cross, called by the people La Croix de Vertu, why it is impossible to discover. It is a monolith supporting a small iron cross, which is doubtless of much later date than its support.

It is approached from four sides and occupies the highest ground at which the four paths meet.

A strange, little lonely mysterious monument, whereby, doubtless, hangs many an ancient tale!

We spent the rest of the day in visiting the Roman remains—two well-preserved relics of Imperial days—a triumphal arch and a tall monument which is said to have

been built to celebrate the great victory of Marius over the Teutons.

They stand lonely and singularly unspoiled, at the foot of the Alpilles, and before them stretches a wide plain over which the light is growing soft and warm, the few shadows of olives and low bushes beginning to lengthen.

And we sit down on the dry grass near the monuments and are silent.

The agitated figures on the bas-relief of the triumphal edifice stand out well in the glowing light. They are fighting and struggling in some unknown contest which they take, poor things, so very seriously, and which really matters so very little after all! The broad, long lines of the landscape speak eloquently of the folly of that old death-struggle. It is strange to think of those stone warriors fighting on century after century as the seasons go by, always there and always fighting when the sun touches them in the morning, when the white moon peers over the jagged outline of the little mountains just behind, and finds them at it still! Do they not even rest when there is neither sun nor moon but only a great wide darkness over the land and the mountains are blotted out?

It seems as if there were a waking up rather than a resting as the night approaches.

We linger till the air is dim and mysterious, and the exquisite wreath of leaves on the archi-vault of the triumphal arch begins to get blurred, clean-cut and fresh though it is. But something seems to creep up out of the earth, to swarm round out of the mountains till there might be seen or felt a shadowy throng—inchoate presences that stream through the arch and crowd round the foot of the unresting monument.

Barbara judiciously looks at her watch. And we rise and walk slowly back to our hotel along the white road, silent, and perhaps rather sad.

CHAPTER XX AN INN PARLOUR

"O princesso di Baus! Ugueto,

Sibilo, Blanco-Flour, Bausseto,

Que trounavais amount sus li roucas aurin,

Cors subre-bèu, amo galoio,

Dounant l'amour, largant la joio

E la lumiero, li mount-joio

De Mount-Pavoun, de Crau li trescamp azurin

Encaro vuei dins soun mirage

Se representon voste oumbrage....

Li ferigoulo meme an counserva l'óudour

De vòsti piado; e m'es vejaire

Que vese encaro,—galejaire,

Gentiéu, courriòu e guerrejaire,—

Que vese à vòsti pèd canta li troubadour."

"O princesses des Baux! Huguette,—Sibylle, Blanchefleur, Baussette—vous qui là-haut pour trône aviez les rochers d'or,—corps exquis en beauté, âmes allègres,—donnant l'amour, versant la joie,—et la lumière, les monticules—de Mont-Pahon, les landes azurées de la Crau,

"Dans leur mirage d'aujourd'hui—reproduisent encore votre image....—Les thyms eux-mêmes ont conservé l'odeur—de vos traces; et il me semble—que je vois encore, guillerets,—courtois, coureurs et guerroyeurs,—que je vois à vos pieds chanter les troubadours."

Mistral.

CHAPTER XX

AN INN PARLOUR

After dinner—which by the way was of extraordinary excellence—we were invited

to the parlour of mine host, and felt like travellers in some old romance on the eve of antique adventures. Nothing antique, however, happened, except, indeed, the odd gathering of the family and the guests of the hotel, and the talk that went circling cheerfully round the fire in the little dull-tinted room. The dulness of colouring was the result of long use; everything having faded into harmony and grown together through long and affectionate association.

Besides Madame and a pretty niece who was staying with her, there were two youths employed in the seed industry, who lived in the town and came in every evening for their dinner. They were on terms of friendly intimacy with the host and hostess who evidently regarded their office in other lights than that of mere commercial enterprise. They looked upon their guests as under their charge, and their desire was to minister to their comfort and pleasure in every possible way. Monsieur and one of the youths played draughts, Madame sewed and chatted, and Mademoiselle, the niece, made herself generally agreeable. Between the two youths was a mild rivalry for her smiles. We, as strangers, were treated with special courtesy.

Madame and her husband did the honours of their homely salon most gracefully. The conversation turned on the Monuments of St. Remy, its objects of interest which strangers come to see, and its excursions: Les Baux above all, on the other side of the Alpilles.

"Une ville très ancienne, sculptée dans les rochers, toute élevée au dessus de la vallée—mais une cité vraiment remarquable, Mesdames. Vous devez certainment y aller."

And we decided at once to do so, arranging to have a trap to take us across the mountains on the following morning.

Meanwhile we gathered further information about St. Remy itself. There is La Maison de la Reine Jeanne, in which the family of the famous Mistral has lived for

generations. In the foundations were discovered the bones of an elephant and various weapons, all supposed to be relics of Hannibal's passage through the country at the foot of the Alpilles.

The famous poet, however, does not live in this historical home at St. Remy, but at Maillane, a little village of the plain about seven kilometres distant. The house, to which many a pious pilgrimage has been made, is square and white and stands in a little shady garden with a high wall and iron gate facing the village street. Thanks to the poet and his colleagues the ancient costume still lingers at Maillane and at St. Remy, and on Sundays the women go to church in the soft, white fichu and picturesque head-dress that one has learnt to associate with the women of Arles. The Provençal type is characteristic; dark eyes and hair, olive skin, and a singularly fine carriage of the figure and head.

GROVE AT ST. REMY. By E. M. Synge.

Mistral and his fellow Félibres have much to do with the survival of art and old customs. One of this little band of modern troubadours lives still, as we learn, in the house of his family at St. Remy, and Mistral (as we have seen) is not far away across the plain, faithful always to the land that he loves so deeply and labours so hard to preserve in its ancient beauty, ancient faiths and ancient language. I had afterwards the privilege of visiting Mistral at Maillane and M. Girard and his wife at St. Remy, and of hearing them speak with intense enthusiasm and affection of the Provence that is passing away. M. Girard's angry melancholy at the erasure of all character and individuality from lands and peoples was pathetic and impressive.

He exhibited his fine collection of ancient furniture, crockery, pewter, and a thousand beautiful relics: among them a splendid example of the "Crêche," that quaint Provençal institution with which the children are made happy every Christmas. It is a modelled representation of the coming of the Magi, but on this root idea the artists of Provence have grafted many additions. The Virgin, beautifully

sculptured and coloured, sits in a hilly landscape and holds a sort of grand reception: Magi and other distinguished visitors surround her, while shepherds, merchants, publicans and sinners, varied by ornate donkey-drivers and goatherds, are perched on hill-tops among companionable windmills about their own size; and peasants are lavishly distributed in very green meadows in the vicinity; all congregated to offer homage to the Madonna and the haloed Babe. The crêche is reverently veiled with a curtain on ordinary days, and its owner drew this aside and lighted the candles to illumine the treasured heirloom which has delighted so many generations ... and not alone of children.

Our hostess of the Hôtel de Provence was learned about the seed industry of St. Remy, and explained how ruthlessly every bloom is nipped off and prevented from seeding if it does not answer truly to its type. That was how the splendid flowers were achieved: viz., by a persistent interference with the ordinary course of nature—a fact which gives food for thought. Besides flowers, St. Remy has some fine vegetables to boast of. I had often noticed strange, unknown, gourd-like things, bright red or yellow, in the shop windows. The cornichon serpent, "ce légume extravagant," as somebody calls it, is said to measure nearly two metres! But that immoderate object we never saw.

We were out betimes next morning, in the rose-garden which was glistening with dew. The Garden of Pleasure truly, guarded by the mournful cypresses! That seemed full of significance: the Roses of Pleasure sheltered by those dark trees of Experience and Grief.

Burns sings that "pleasures are like poppies"; and so perhaps they are, but there are some that are more like roses—Roses of Provence!

They are the sort of pleasures of which that strange pot-pourri that we call happiness is made. For surely there is such a thing as happiness, though the science of it is as hard to learn as any other; perhaps harder than them all. Maybe it is necessary for us

unteachable mortals to have torn our way—bruised and bleeding—through that black line of cypresses before we come in sight of it.

If happiness is a will-o'-the-wisp, is it so because of the eternal nature of things, or because, as Carlyle frankly insists, men are mostly fools? Would not every desired object assume an elusive character if as soon as we came in touch with it, we flew off on the hunt for something else? On this principle we must go through life unpossessed of our own fortunes, strangers and pilgrims in our own kingdom. Barbara and I agreed that we would not forget to gather the roses in our Provençal garden for the illusive sake of other roses further afield.

In this little mediæval pleasure city it seemed natural to speculate about the life of the Middle Ages, and we wondered if part of the sad secret of those times lay in that inveterate habit of the human mind to look for the Earthly Paradise round the next corner. For then, possibly, there was only a sage here and there who had learnt the folly of it through long and footsore wanderings in the desert which stretches unremittingly between the traveller and his mirage Eden. The restless barbarous manners of the age must have made the truth harder to understand than it need be to us who have many centuries of growing experience behind us, both as a hereditary influence and as an object-lesson in the conduct of life.

Incessant war and struggle, with no great results, but only further struggle, further war as the fruit of the lifelong contest: such was the mediæval life, and no one saw its absurdity. Not a trace of the old Greek spirit remained; not a vestige of the philosophies of the East, except perhaps in the cloister, and even here, at its best, the religion partook of the objective character of the general life, and placed the site of "heaven" for the saint, as the sinner placed his happiness,—round the next corner.

In those mad, picturesque, mediæval days St. Remy used to be the country retreat of the Counts of Provence. They here retired from the excitements of their capital at Aix, the learned little city a few leagues to the northeast, beyond the Alpilles. We

afterwards visited Aix, and found another larger town of plane-avenues, more dignified, more important, but almost as silent and forgotten as St. Remy itself. One could not but wonder what the Counts had found of country joys at St. Remy that they could not have commanded at the old city of Sextius with its shady ways and gardens.

ROMAN MONUMENTS, ST. REMY. By E. M. Synge.

But, in fact, the human mind seeks not merely a change from excitement to repose; it demands a change of scene and a change of thought-atmosphere for its own sake.

During the whole of our stay at St. Remy we lived in an atmosphere of roses. We could not gather enough of them to please our host; and we used to have great bunches in our rooms placed on the window-sill, so that the sunlight filtered through their petals; and over them we could see the garden of their birth and the pale mountains beyond. Our very dreams were of roses and rose-gardens!

One evening, inspired by their loveliness, I arranged a wreath of them in Barbara's hair, added a creamy shawl flowing to her feet, and stood back to admire the result. It was something to be proud of! Our dull, discreet régime of ladylike nonentities had disappeared, and there was the poetry, the unapologetic grace of the classic world.

Barbara rose to try to see herself in the minute mirror.

She gasped in dismay.

"No, no! you dare to take it off! There are some more roses to come yet." (The victim made a comic face of resignation.) "I want profusion."

"You do!" said Barbara, sitting down to laugh. "Am I to wear this costume when we go to Les Baux to-morrow?" she asked.

"It depends on the weather."

But, alas! as soon as active opposition was withdrawn, Barbara removed the

improvised costume, took the roses out of her hair and the vision of the ancient world faded away. When we went down to dinner we both of us had on our sombre prison garments.

And though Barbara laughed, I knew that the world was a sadder and a drearier place because of it!

CHAPTER XXI LES BAUX

"C'est le Moyen-age tragique,—l'acropole de la Provence féodale."

Paul Mariéton.

CHAPTER XXI

LES BAUX

In all Provence, perhaps in all Europe, there is no more astonishing relic of mediæval life than that "crater of a feudal volcano" Les Baux,[21] a veritable eagle's nest of a city in one of the wildest and highest points of the Alpilles. It is a morning's drive from St. Remy across the little range to its steep southern side.

We plunge straight into their heart and begin to mount by gradual windings through little valleys, arid and lonely. Dwarf oak, lavender and rosemary make their only covering. But for their grey vesture one might imagine oneself in some valley of the moon, wandering dream-bound in a dead world. The limestone vales have something of the character of the lunar landscape: a look of death succeeding violent and frenzied life, which gives to the airless, riverless valleys of our satellite their unbearable desolation. It might have been fancy, but it seemed that in the Alpilles there was not a living thing; neither beast nor bird nor insect.

As we ascended, the landscape grew stranger and more tragic. The walls of rock closed in upon us, then fell back, breaking up into chasms, crags, pinnacles. The lavender and aromatic plants no longer climbed the sides of the defiles; they

carpeted the ground and sent a sharp fragrance into the air. The passes would widen again more liberally into battlemented gorges from which great solitary boulders and peninsulas rose out of the sea of lavender. Here and there this fragrant sea seemed to have splashed up against the rock-face, for little grey bushes would cling for dear life to some cleft or cranny far up the heights; sometimes on the very summit. As one follows the road it seems as if the heavily overhanging crags must come crashing down on one's head. What prevents it, I fail to this day to understand.

QUARRY IN VALLEY BELOW LES BAUX. By E. M. Synge.

The whole place gives the impression of having been fashioned in some gloomy dream.

Every turn brings new and monstrous forms into view; the fantastic handiwork of earth's inner fires, patient modellings of the sun and wind. One thinks of the busy coming and going along these "footprints of the earthquake" in troubadour days, when knights and nobles flocked to the famous little court of the Alpilles, and the fame of the beautiful Passe Rose (Cecilia des Baux) brought troops of admirers from the ends of the earth—kings, princes, jongleurs, troubadours. Many a figure well known to history—the exiled Dante among them—has passed along these gorges. The Princes of Les Baux owned seventy-nine bourgs and had a finger in half the intrigues of Europe; a barbaric race, probably descendants of the ancient Ligurians, with wild mountain blood in their veins.

Further on, the valleys widen, and we see large oblong holes hollowed out of the creamy limestone, sometimes at regular intervals, producing an effect of arcades in the rock. Still further on we come upon majestic Assyrian-like portals, narrowing to the top in true archaic fashion and giving ingress to dark vestibules exciting to the fancy. They might well have been the entry to some subterranean Aladdin's palace whose gardens and miraculous orchards grow emeralds and diamonds as cherries grow in Kent. It was quite surprising to find that these grandiose excavations were

the work of mere modern quarrymen still engaged in the prehistoric industry. Fine groups of horses and big carts and labourers before the Assyrian entrances had an effect curiously ancient and majestic. There was a time when the men of the Stone Age cut just such galleries and holes far up in the rocks at Les Baux and dwelt there like a flock of jackdaws, high above the hazard of attack.

It is asserted by the learned that the city, in fact, dates from the Stone Age, being inhabited by generation after generation of wild peoples, till gradually the dwellings were adapted to less uncivilised needs and added to by further sculpturing and excavation and by masonry whose material was hewn from the surrounding limestone.

In the city is a small museum containing many Stone Age implements.

It is indeed a place of strange memories.

In one of the tombs of the principal church was discovered the perfectly preserved body of a young woman with a mass of golden hair. The body crumbled to dust almost immediately, but the innkeeper took possession of the beautiful tresses, and called his inn in its honour, à la Chevelure d'Or.

Poor golden hair, it has set many a poet singing and vielle twanging in its day!

We have been wending our way steadily upward across a region that grows wider and more sweeping in its contours. The road rounds a corner. Suddenly we feel the wind in our faces and a blaze of light.

There is an exclamation, and then silence.

The carriage has stopped on the highest point of the pass just where the road has been cut through the low rock, and the driver points with his whip across a vast grey cauldron of a valley to a sort of shelving plateau high up on the shoulder of the opposite cliffs.

"Voilà Les Baux!"

The stupendous scene is spread out before us, wild and silent. The wind from the Crau to the south continues to blow through the cut in the rock; the sun glares down full upon the mysterious rock-city and lays bare the desolation of the valley.

Behind us a few sounds rise from the quarries, but there is otherwise that perfect silence of high places which seems to brood and wait, eternally patient.

This is the spot which is said to have furnished Dante with the scenery of his infernal regions, and the mind at once accepts the tradition, so gloomily grand, so instinct with motionless despair is the scene.

Beyond measure extraordinary the aspect of that cluster of roofs and walls scarcely to be distinguished from the crags and escarpments out of which they grow—"window and vault and hall" fashioned in the living rock. Truly, as Madame our hostess had said, "une ville remarquable"!

The eye slowly learns to recognise the masonry among the natural architecture, to separate the fantastic limestone surfaces from broken dwellings and fallen towers.

The city, once containing about eight thousand inhabitants, is now reduced to about a dozen or so, and these all live at the entrance to the town on the ascending road from the valley by which the traveller from the mountains must approach this grim little court of mediæval princes. The road is comparatively new, for it cuts through some of the great houses, and high up above us as we pass, we see the columns and frieze of a fine stone mantelpiece overhanging the road, evidently belonging to some seigneurial dwelling. Perhaps it was here that the lady of the golden hair passed her tumultuous life—it could scarcely have been peaceful at that time, in that place—with that hair!

A few silent inhabitants watch us as we go by. A cat peers suspiciously over a wall of which the roof has fallen in; a mongrel hunts for garbage in a rubbish heap in a windowless mansion.

Before the Chevelure d'Or[22] there is a little group of men. Here the trap is put up

and we set forth on foot up the steep main street of this "mediæval Pompeii."

The whole place is built on the shelving shoulder of the cliff; a sloping ledge whence one might expect the town to slip down at any moment into the cauldron-valley; just as from time to time great fragments of rock have evidently rolled down to eternal oblivion.

The impression of universal greyness strengthens as we move upwards through the silent streets: grey walls, grey tiles, grey paving stones and grey escarpments above, on whose highest summit stands the rock-excavated castle, now apparently inaccessible except to adventurous birds—or, perhaps, the ghosts of the Princes of Les Baux who for their crimes are unable to rest in their graves.

We clamber up and down the ruinous higher part of the town, among those pathetic rectangles of masonry open to the sky where human life throbbed so eagerly a little while ago; we mount some perilous-looking steps on the cliff-side, in hopes of reaching the castle, but find ourselves emerging in mid-air upon the edge of the plateau overlooking from an appalling height the windy spaces of the Crau.

The mountains run sheer to the plain. It is exciting to stand on that great altitude which commands the stony desert towards Arles and the mouths of the Rhone. It has something of the character of the scene from the Appian Way looking towards Ostia and the mouths of the Tiber. The approach to Les Baux from Arles is in some respects more impressive than the route from St. Remy, for then the whole immense height of the cliffs is visible from the level of the plain. On one of the little heights that rise here and there on this plain stands the windmill of Daudet, which gives the title to his famous Lettres de Mon Moulin.

If we stand on the highest point of the city, the eye can run along the line of the Alpilles. Another little wave of hills sweeps forward on to the plain precisely as the smaller ocean waves go curling in on the shore, followed by the foaming line of breakers. The Alpilles seem, indeed, to be breaking on the shore of the Crau like the

billows of a great sea.

A pathway perilously near the edge of the cliff fails to help us to approach that strange castle from which we are still separated by many feet of sheer rock.

DAUDET'S WINDMILL. By Joseph Pennell.

As we stand looking across the chasm at the stronghold, its position seems to invest it with additional mystery and a solitude almost horrible.

An evil shadow hangs about it, and yet there is but little of the building touched by visible shades at this magnificent moment of a Provençal day. A shadow that no sunshine can dispel surely haunts the fortress of Les Baux. For a second, in the hot glare, fancy plays one a trick, and there seems to be floating from the summit the blood-red banner which the princes used to unfurl on days of combat, when the air rang with the strange battle-cry of the house: "Au hazard Balthazar!"

They claimed descent from Balthazar, one of the Magi who visited the new-born Christ in the manger, and a six-rayed star was the device of the family.

Their association with Christianity was certainly not of a very intimate kind. They were a blind, blood-stained race, believing in violence and retaliation as the one and only means of grace in this world and troubling themselves, till the moment of death, very little about the next. They generally reaped as they had sown; feared, hated, and often dying deaths as terrible as those which they had inflicted on their victims.

It is thought probable that the Princes of Les Baux were descended from the Visigoths who settled in Arles in the fifth century. There is a vast and ancient work by "Le Sieur de Bouche, Docteur en Theologie," printed at Aix-en-Provence in the 17th century. In the section treating of the Visigothic Kingdoms the author gives an account of their King Euric and the events in Provence of the year 475.

"L'on croit communement," he says, "que c'est en ce temps que le chateau de la Ville de Baux en Provence a esté bâty et qu'il a tiré son nom de quelque illustre et grand

Seigneur Visigoth et Prince de la Maison Royale, laquelle était de la famille des Batthes...."

From the fifth to the fifteenth century the line can be traced. At the end of that era Charles III. of France died, and then the barony of Les Baux with the whole county of Provence, was united to the crown of France. Louis XIII. gave it to the Grimaldi who came in state each year from Monaco, to take up their abode here; but they finally had to give it back to the crown.

LES BAUX FROM THE ROAD TO ARLES. By E. M. Synge.

It was surprising to find the remains of a hospital on the plateau above the city, with the niches visible for the beds of the patients; so surprising, indeed, that one is almost tempted to set learned authority at defiance. Perhaps, however, with all the brawls and tournaments of those amazing times, some such place was really necessary for repairing damaged knights.

As one looks downwards from this altitude, the city presents a strange aspect indeed. The grey buildings are flung together among the boulders, a tumultuous mass of human and natural handiwork. Truly

"The wind of ruin has passed this way."

Under the castle rock are the remains of a magnificent banqueting-hall, with caissoned vaulting like that of the Basilica of Constantine at Rome.

The Romans had been even at Les Baux, and it was they who built the walls which still here and there cling giddily to the sheer edge of the rock. But they had many successors. A Saracen tower stands shoulder to shoulder with Christian churches, and everywhere are signs of the great feudal era, with its religious enthusiasm, its din and its warfare.

Besides the Princes, who were Counts of Orange as well as Seigneurs of this little kingdom in the sky, there were powerful families in Les Baux.

The house of the Porcelets, one of the greatest, not only of the city, but of Provence, was nicknamed by King René, Grandeur des Porcelets. The Princes he called Inconstánce des Baux.

Out of the stern soil blossomed many a beautiful and accomplished lady, famed in troubadour song.

Berengaria des Baux was celebrated by the luckless Guilhelm de Cabestaing. Ranebaude inspired the world-famous Sordel; the charms of Cecilia, the beautiful Passe Rose, as we know, kept half the troubadours of France busy with vielle and lute; and there were Étienette, Clairette, and a host of others whose true history one would give much to know.

WINDOW IN RUINED HOUSE OF A SEIGNEUR OF LES BAUX. By E. M. Synge.

But the scene of their lives is at once eloquent and reticent. Their homes are stonily silent, and not even a wild bird makes its nest in the tempting crannies of the great mantelpieces where the flames must so often have leaped and roared.

It is the mistral that roars now on winter nights in the grass-grown chimneys.

CHAPTER XXII RAIMBAUT DE VACQUEIRAS AND GUILHELM DES BAUX

"De la solitaire demeure

Une ombre lourde d'heure en heure,

Se détache sur le gazon,

Et cet ombre, couchée et morte

Est la seule chose qui sorte

Tout le jour de cette maison."

Alphonse Karr.

CHAPTER XXII

RAIMBAUT DE VACQUEIRAS AND GUILHELM DES BAUX

There is a particular stately house off the main street that suggested itself as the house of the golden-haired lady of Les Baux. Her burial place pointed to her having belonged to a family of importance. She was probably the wife of some tempestuous seigneur, and her life, cut short so early, had doubtless been one of storm and peril.

We were filled with an immense desire to know more of her, and as we piled conjecture on conjecture, she gradually assumed a definite form and personality, and we felt towards her a sort of baffled sympathy.

We called her Alazais, for that name had pursued us since we began to interest ourselves in the annals of Provençal chivalry.

She was graceful, delicately fashioned, with a certain reserved strength in the courtesy of her manner, and her eyes—Barbara and I were disposed to part company about her eyes, one leaning to blue, the other to brown; so we split the difference, and Alazais received large pathetic eyes of hazel.

We sit down on the parched hill-side by a heap of stones, and let the genius of the place work its spells. And busily it begins to weave as the afternoon light throws its glamour over the grey of rock and ruin, while a little wind comes up from the Crau and plays across the grass.

Raimbaut de Vacqueiras—Guilhelm des Baux—the mere names of these two strong personalities seem almost to summon them to their old haunts. Fancy kindles with this glowing sun and this tremendous scene; the forlorn city begins to stir and breathe, and then suddenly—some distant sounds from below seem strangely like the clatter of horses' hoofs—a twelfth-century cavalcade on its way to the castle!

And there are voices. They come up faintly through the sunshine, the voices of

phantom riders who are hastening up the steep incline.

If at this precise moment Guilhelm des Baux and his troubadour friend with their followers are not where they seem to be, that is a mere incident of Time, and what is Time? An unreality, a mode of human thought. And so the insistent sense of the gay procession is not entirely a dream!

Certainly it is insistent! The clatter stops half way at the little Place in front of the church of St. Vincent, and there some of the company appear to go up the hill to the fortress.

One instinctively listens. Are they exchanging parting words or jests with one of their number who stays behind? Perhaps Alazais herself is leaving or entering her prison of a home and the gallant troubadour has knelt to kiss her hand. It would be all in the day's work of those times.

Possibly Raimbaut de Vacqueiras was seriously in love with her. One may be allowed the supposition.

We half shrink from it, however, when it comes to the point, for it would have meant so tragic a story.

If it was not one of the Princes of Les Baux who served up the heart of her troubadour-lover, Guilhelm de Cabestaing,[23] as a dish to his wife, it was quite in their most approved manner.

The luckless wife having, all unconscious, tasted of the dish, her lord informed her what it was and asked her how she liked it.

"I like it so well," she replied, "that henceforth I will taste no other," and she flung herself headlong from the castle window.

The horror of the tale lingers in the thoughts even as they turn to other things: to the figure of the lady herself leaning over the parapet of the little platform that hangs over the valley; to the scene in the castle after the tournament when the gay

company has gathered in the hall, and there is singing and playing of the vielle and verse-making and dance; to the love-songs of Raimbaut, thrilling and sweet above those of other troubadours. He was but too fitted to attract: handsome, courtly, quick-witted, warm-hearted, a warrior poet, a knight and a singer.

Our poor heroine had no chance! One can see her in the splendid barbaric hall, among the throng. White was her bliaut, or robe, finely embroidered in gold, and her long mantle was fastened to the shoulder with a clasp of sardonyx.

It was not merely the beautiful dress, but the noble manner of wearing it that counted in those strange little courts of the Middle Ages. If the life was wild and terrible, at least it had an exquisite and gracious side.

One can picture Raimbaut, too, as he hastens to greet Alazais; one can see her smile of welcome, grave and gracious, half ceremonious, half encouraging.

And then the scene grows clearer and more realistic, for we come upon a piece of solid history.

Between Raimbaut and his famous patron, Guilhelm des Baux, many little disagreements had disturbed of late the long friendship. Raimbaut, accustomed to ride and fight and make verses by his friend's side, had perhaps presumed upon the intimacy, and once he went so far as to rally the Prince upon a recent incident that had amused the district.

His Highness had been casually ravaging the estates of his neighbour, Count Aimar de Valence, and one day when he was on the Rhone in a small boat, some fishermen caught him and he had to pay a large ransom to Count Aimar, and be ridiculed into the bargain by Gui di Cavaillon, whose tenso on the subject was taken up and sung by all Provence. For notwithstanding the new sentiment obligatory on all noble and knightly persons, the men and women of the twelfth century had by no means escaped from the base clutches of the ancient régime whence they sprang, and to them the misadventure and mortification of a neighbour seemed exquisitely funny.

Even Raimbaut's sense of humour had not advanced beyond that primitive stage.

His jests made the Prince very angry, and a quarrel arose between the two which overthrew once and for all their affectionate relations.

Then Raimbaut knew that the end had come to this era of his life, and that he must go forth to seek his fortunes anew.

And Alazais, in whose honour he had made such innumerable verses? He must leave her too—love and friendship had come to naught at one blow.

How beautiful she had looked in her white robes—perhaps there had been something in her glance that had made him forget consequences—everything—except—what folly it was!

Quick, pen and paper! A canson had darted into his head. Farewell to joy and Alazais! Such a tribute was only expected and fitting whatever might be his real sentiments.

Raimbaut had got well into the third stanza, and the lady's hair had been compared to six different resplendent objects, when he was summoned to take part in the events of the evening.

"Holy Mary!" cries the poet, "can a man not be left in peace while he writes a canson to his lady?"

He goes muttering imprecations on idle folk who cannot even pursue their idling without the help of busy people.

Les Baux is among the places to which is attributed one of the most famous of the Courts of Love, and to this tribunal one may imagine the troubadour wending his way through the crowds who are parading the streets, singing and dancing the mouresca, their ancient Saracenic dance, drifted westward from the mountains of the Moors.

Raimbaut is greeted with reproaches for his tardy arrival. The business of the Court

is in full swing: gracious ladies and courtly knights are judging compositions according to the rules of minstrelsy, discussing nice points of honour and conduct, burning questions concerning the purity and preservation of the language, the rights and duties of the love-lorn.

"Is it better to have wisdom or to be irresistible with the ladies?" is one of the recorded subjects.

"Who loves the more, he that is broken by his lady's coldness, or he that is stimulated thereby to distinguish himself the more?"

"Which is harder to bear, debt or love-sickness?"[24]

The jury look in vain to Raimbaut for his usual brilliant judgments. Alazais, we may imagine, had guessed the cause of his silence.

And she knows her own fate as she sits there, beautiful and calm; perhaps accepting it as the will of heaven; perhaps struggling desperately against the thought that the troubadour would go forth into the world and quickly fill the place of love in his heart—perhaps with another love!

"Come, Raimbaut, what is your opinion?" cries one of the young men, "You were not wont to be so moody."

It had to be explained to him that they were discussing the pains and penalties of love, and whether after all it did not offer too much grief and longing and too little reward to make it worth the while of a reasonable being; the proposition of a truly bold spirit in a mediæval Court of Love!

Raimbaut's reply is recorded in the history of his life: "A man forges cold iron who thinks he can make a gain without a loss."

Perhaps he looked back to the scene of his boyhood, the little town of Vacqueiras across the mountains, and recognised how he had enlarged his world by coming here and how he had so lost things dear to him, never to be regained.

And now there was to be another gain—and another loss.

One seems to see him in close debate with himself as to what he should do. From the little house at Vacqueiras he used to gaze on the grey towers of Les Baux on the heights and dream of it as a goal beyond which no sane hopes could wander.

Now, from the farthest point of the windy tableland above the Crau he can see, or almost see, more than one famous city where he would be welcome. Aix, the stately little home of learning with its hot springs dear to the Romans, had still to wait for two centuries for its good genius, King René, and suggested few possibilities to the troubadour.

To the south lay Arles and Marseilles. Count Barral of Marseilles would make a merry and an easy-going patron; but there was an obstacle in that direction.... Just a little this side of Arles, in the extreme corner of the Camargue, he catches sight of a faint outline which he knows to be the church of Our Lady of the Marsh, Ste. Maria de la Mar, "Les Saintes Maries," as it is now called throughout Provence, and down on his knees goes the warrior poet and says a prayer to the Blessed Three, begging that they may be favourable to him in the decisive step he is about to take, and that they will direct his choice.

And now he has to wrench himself from the present scenes and to make his many farewells, one among them hard indeed to face.

Yet perhaps it was best he should go. There had been gruesome tragedies at Les Baux——!

The day of departure could not be long delayed; the Prince was relentless.

Just one glimpse of a beautiful, haunting face as Raimbaut rides past the sombre palace where the lady of his heart lives a life which a woman of to-day would deem that of a condemned prisoner.

She stands at the open door among a lively group who have collected to see him pass, as indeed all the people of Les Baux are waiting to bid their beloved champion

and singer God-speed.

He uncovers his head, and Alazais acknowledges his salute with the rest. And suddenly Raimbaut's heart gives a leap, for he knows what he did not know before! But the cavalcade goes on down the street, and he rides on to his fate.

Long, pensive shadows of the ruins are stealthily gaining upon the golden light on the grass when we begin to descend to the lower town. The main street, down which Raimbaut de Vacqueiras seems to have passed but a moment ago, is horribly silent, and the city spreads its desolation upwards to the sinister castle—where no blood-red banner is now flying.

We go on to the platform in front of the church of St. Vincent, and stand looking over the parapet. The gloomy vale below is filled with the mysteries of twilight.

From this point one could watch those who go and come to the city from the side of the mountains, for they must emerge from or pass through the Gate of the Rocks on whose threshold we ourselves had our first sight of Les Baux that afternoon. Even as we look we can discern a small speck against the limestone—exactly so must the figure of Raimbaut have appeared to any eye that watched him from this balcony of rock. Did not Alazais so watch? And did he not turn and take one last long look at the city he was leaving? Presently, as she gazes (as we now gaze), there is no longer a black speck against the white; the valley is empty—and a faint breath of wind comes down it like a sigh.

And presently the sun begins to approach the edge of the cauldron, and the taller buildings take on a tint of vivid rose colour. How that golden hair must have flamed up into glory if its owner watched there on such an evening!

LES BAUX FROM THE ROAD TO ST. REMY, SHOWING PLATFORM IN FRONT OF CHURCH OF ST. VINCENT. By E. M. Synge.

We had visited her place of burial in the church behind us; a sad, silent spot that might have supplied a text for many a solemn sermon.

Mouldering walls and an empty grave. But they breathed forth no solemnities to us, or at least no gloomy ones. Rather they whispered of the mystery and power of life and passion; of things potent, creative, immortal.

Nor could we believe that the vivid consciousness of self and soul in that being to whom we sent our thoughts could be less enduring than the mere echo of her words and deeds in a universe where not a breath in the air or a tremor of the ether can ever be truly lost.

It was impossible not to speculate further regarding the real self of the woman as distinct from the self which reflected the world of the twelfth century. What that world expected of her we know, and so we know a very large part of the reality, for the emotions of most of us are the product of this eternal outside suggestion.

But there is sometimes—perhaps always—deep down in the being, a hidden spot that acknowledges no such dictation; and here would spring up yearnings and criticisms, revolts and despairs, while the wife of the feudal seigneur punctually and uncomplainingly fulfilled the demands of her position.

Did she ever, even for a moment, see the grim reality of that position, or was it hidden from her eyes by tradition, habit, by the little palliatives and privileges which her power as a woman and a beautiful woman, would win for her at this auspicious moment of new-born homage for her sex?

It is not at all unlikely that some inkling of the strange situation would drift across the consciousness now and again, for it is just at the moment when a burden grows a little less overwhelming that the bearer begins to cry out against its oppression. Before then he has no breath with which to cry!

Personal trouble and the sting of unhappy love might have stirred momentary feelings that would link our heroine of the golden hair with her sisters of future generations. It is unthinkable that such feelings were never in the hearts of women, in some form or other, in the days of their darkest captivity.

Perhaps, as she watched the troubadour riding forth into the world, she rebelled against her task of eternal waiting and submitting; against the all-extensive claims made upon her as part and parcel of her husband's estate and dignity: for her position in this respect was made clear enough when he threateningly commended to her vigilance the duty of safeguarding his name and the "honour" of his house on pain of punishment such as only a mediæval seigneur could devise.

Called to account for every act and word, admonished like a child—and often in the tone used to the hounds after a bad day's sport—not the most secret emotion of her heart legitimately her own—body and soul the property of her lord and his all-important family: her life was one long reminder of the humiliating facts. Was she tired of being warder of her own prison? Even the hounds were not that! Was she sick of this strange stewardship of herself as the property of another? Must she remain for ever shut away from ambitions, passions, hopes? Was she never to know what love and loyalty as between free human souls meant? Was she never—fool, fool that she was——?

Some interruption occurred here, and Alazais ceased to soliloquise.

Barbara said that there was really no need to address as "fool, fool" the entirely sensible-looking nun who emerged from the church of St. Vincent, with her Mass-book in her hand.

The apparition of a creature of flesh and blood in this strange place was almost startling, and it brought back considerations of time and place and other delusive modes of human thought. There was dinner to be considered—delusive but necessary as delusions are;—in short, the hour of departure had struck.

We turned slowly, reluctantly from the parapet, thinking of Raimbaut de Vacqueiras as he rode away to his new destiny, his wanderings from court to court, his ardent love-affairs at Montferrat, his joys and great sorrows, till at last wearied with misunderstandings, disappointments, and saddened with the restless trouble of his

life, he joined the Crusades and died fighting against the Saracens.

The home of Alazais looked more shadowy and mournful than ever as we passed it on our downward way.

"De la solitaire demeure

Une ombre lourde d'heure en heure,

Se détache sur le gazon,

Et cet ombre, couchée et morte

Est la seule chose qui sorte

Tout le jour de cette maison."

CHAPTER XXIII THE SORCERESS OF THE ALPILLES

"And midst the thyme

They drink from golden bowl

And circle round in goblin farandole."

Mistral.

AT LES BAUX. By E. M. Synge.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SORCERESS OF THE ALPILLES

Music in a dead city!

We stopped abruptly. Out of the deepening stillness there grew slowly, solemnly, the muffled, mournful trembling of an organ issuing from the closed doors of the church on the platform. The sound swelled, ebbed, fell into low troubled mutterings, then swelled again; never was any strain more plaintive, solitary shadowed: all in subdued undertone, but heart-breaking.

Surely a human soul despairing and unable to find expression!

In this wild scene it was unearthly in its intensity of mournfulness. Looking back we saw the figure of a nun crossing the space from the house of the Porcelets to enter the church, and as the doors opened, the sound poured out in fuller volume, but always in that strange, tense undertone.

The city seemed to be steeped in melancholy, as if a grey mist of grief had fallen upon it.

We commenced our homeward journey on foot, making a little circuit to visit the "Pavillon de la Reine Jeanne" in the gorge below, leaving our vehicle to follow.

La Reine Jeanne was the famous and beautiful Queen Joan of Naples, heiress of Provence, whose father on his death-bed counselled her to hand the country over to the Pope, then at Avignon. He in his turn bestowed it on the Count of Anjou, and thus Provence came to belong to that powerful family.

The Queen is said to have often visited Les Baux, and to have held Courts of Love and various revelries in the now weed-grown enclosure where the Pavilion sadly stands in the corner of what was once a garden; a fine, highly-bred little piece of architecture well fitted for its purpose.

On our way to rejoin our trap we were overtaken by two wayfarers: a young man and woman somewhat poorly clad and carrying bundles. They were looking about them intelligently as if interested in the scene.

The man's bundle was evidently a musical instrument, and as they came nearer we heard snatches of song, sometimes gay, sometimes sad. The man pointed to Les Baux as if astonished at its extraordinary aspect, and the woman stood looking up at it curiously. Sometimes they left the road to explore some of the clefts and rock passages, and among the bare walls of limestone and the narrow galleries, their songs—with which they had doubtless delighted Marseilles audiences—reverberated most fantastically. Evidently they were strolling minstrels tramping the country, and were now probably on their way to St. Remy, Tarascon,

and Beaucaire, and on to Avignon and the cities of Languedoc; modern troubadours following the ancient calling in the ancient country.

But ah, if Raimbaut de Vacqueiras had seen his successors!

It was a touching little scene: the two footsore troubadours—jongleurs, perhaps, one ought to call them—passing wondering but unconscious below the city where once their forefathers of the craft were welcomed and honoured guests.

If the passes of the Alpilles were as desolate as a moon landscape in the full blaze of a Provençal midday, what were they in the grey of evening? The human spirit is not fashioned to endure the aspect of these abysmal regions of nature.

Masses of rock rising out of unknown deeps of shadow take on the aspect of some lawless architecture, the handiwork of an alien race: fantastic earth-born peoples raising mad palaces half sublime, half grotesque:—

"great plinths, majestic porticoes."

colonnades whose capitals are sculptured by the wind spirits: strange half-finished cathedrals with pinnacles and fretwork, flocks of gargoyles wrought by goblin sculptors.

There was one sublime insane cathedral looming crazily through the dusk, with an encumberment of caricatures of saints and angels, grinning faces, half defined, half suggested—it seemed like some great Temple of Evil.

From the Gorge of Hell, high up among the recesses of the hills, opens the Witch's Grotto amidst "tortured shapes which rise up, sink down, stretch into great entablatures and gardens in the air."

This is the dreaded domain of Tavèn, the famous sorceress of the Alpilles. She plays an important part in Mistral's epic poem Mireille (or Mirèio, in the original Provençal).

To this maiden and her lover Vincent, who visited her cavern which stretches for

long distances underground, Tavèn gives extraordinary experiences. They have come to her for aid in their love affair which Mireille's father, a wealthy farmer on the outskirts of the Crau, violently opposes. Vincent has been treacherously wounded by his rival, an owner of cattle on the Camargue; a brutal but wealthy suitor favoured by the father.

The sorceress is found at the bottom of the grotto amid a "cloud of dreams," with a sprig of broom-grass in her hand, which is called the devil's wheat. Above her head is a raven perched on a beam, and beside him a milk-white hen; also (for magical reasons) a sieve tied to the wall.

She leaps down a deep crevice, and her clients follow her. She directs them to gird round their brows the leaves of the mandrake, the gruesome plant of human contours that shrieks aloud when its roots are torn out of the ground.

Tavèn tells them that it is the blest plant of her master-in-magic Nostradamus. The astrologer and magician lived at St. Remy, and so was within easy reach of his famous pupil.

Then the witch urges further descent into the depths, crying,

"Children, all regions exquisite and bright

Are but through woeful purgatory neared"—

a saying suggesting an idea of philosophic significance.

Indeed, the whole fantastic story seems to have more meaning in it than is ostensibly claimed, and contains many hints of the deeper reaches of experience.

LES BAUX FROM LEVEL OF THE TOWN. By E. M. Synge.

As Tavèn and her charges penetrate further into these wilds, a blast of wind and a "pack of elves shriek through the crypt," which is full of wailing.

Tavèn warns her scared visitors to keep on their "charmed crowns," and to be undismayed by the huge apparition that they see in the dusk: la Lavandière, "whose

throne is on Ventoux," where she makes rain and lightning.

The whole dark factory of Evil is shown to the adventurers. They are told how, on the last three days of February and the first three of March, the tombs all open and the tapers kindle, and

"the drowsy dead

In ghastly order bend their knees to pray."

A phantom priest performs mass and the church bells ring themselves of their own accord.

But one can hear the bells of Les Baux ringing thus on wild March days and nights!

In the Grotto, Tavèn looses the "swarms of ill," and they rush forth and hold a sort of Carnival, with wizards from Varigoule, in the Luberon range, and ghouls from Fanfarigoule on the Crau.

And in the midst of this appalling Desert of Stones, where the wild thyme makes here and there a fragrant carpet, this mad company dances the farandole.

It was with a pleasant human sense of comfort and cheer that we found ourselves once more driving through the streets of St. Remy. Quieter now than ever these little streets in the dusk, so that we could almost hear the falling of the great yellow leaves of the plane-trees, softly, occasionally, in the avenues. Quite from the other end of the tiny town we could catch the rumble of the homing omnibus, bringing its last freight of passengers from the station, or more likely returning empty, to earn its rest in the outhouse behind the hotel—happy, simple omnibus, without a care in the world!

We were thankful to wash off the dust of the day, and with it half our fatigue, and to hasten down to the salle à manger, pleasantly tired with the long hours in the open air, the long stream of strong impressions. And how hungry we were! Impressions seem to need a large amount of sustenance.

I think the waiter must be accustomed to famished visitors returning from Les Baux, for he simply flew as we appeared, dashed the menu down on the table, murmuring, "Tout de suite, Mesdames," and was scurrying back the next minute with two small tureens of smoking soup. Never did soup taste so good or so comforting!

Life indeed has its contrasts! We thought of Les Baux among the abysses of the Alpilles under the shroud of night, with a light or two from the Chevelure d'Or and the few neighbouring houses twinkling mysteriously on the height, and perhaps that strange music stealing into the darkness of the valley—while out on the Crau—

"Si Mesdames désirent du vin blanc ou du vin rouge?"

Thus sharply roused, we make a random choice, (Barbara accused me of having replied "du Crau, s'il vous plait,") and the waiter placed on the table a bottle of good Provençal wine which tasted like distilled sunshine, which indeed it was, just tempered with a breeze from Mont Ventoux.

After the meal we were conducted once more to the parlour, where the same little party was collected, all interested to hear what we thought of Les Baux.

We expressed ourselves with warmth.

"Oui c'est belle," observed Madame, giving a hitch to her work to bring it more under her fingers, "Voilà une petite excursion ex-cess-ive-ment in-ter-ess-ante."

A desire to laugh became insistent, not at Madame, but at the whole situation. But that was out of the question. Had I been allowed to cry it would have done almost as well, but that would have created still more consternation, so I played up to Madame and said—

"En effet, c'est une excursion la plus charmante que nous avons fait en Provence," and happily no one seemed to see how ridiculous the observation was.

We returned to the subject of St. Remy, of which Madame knew a good deal—learnt, as she told us, from some esteemed and instructive American clients.

Of Nostradamus and the troubadours and the Counts of Provence her information was not exhaustive; though she had some anecdotes and a personal feeling about the Good King René who has made himself loved and remembered by his countrymen for four centuries by his goodness and the quality that we well call charm—recognising in it an element of natural sorcery.

St. Remy must have been a bright little city in the days of the Counts; the scene of many gay and knightly doings.

And there were doings neither gay nor knightly in one grim old house covered with demoniac gargoyles where Nostradamus worked through the clear Provençal nights.

Doubtless it was in this narrow ancient street in that gloomy, haunted house that Tavèn the witch came to learn the mysteries of the art of magic. Perhaps it was here that the philosopher on his side learnt many things from his pupil, as wise teachers are apt to do.

One can but wonder how far the legend was founded on fact and what actual part the Enchantress of the Alpilles played in the life of the great astrologer.

Barbara, who had a good healthy appetite for romance, hoped it was a love affair—which was startling indeed!

Nostradamus in love seemed a most profane idea, and it took one some time to recover from the suggestion. And it was almost as much a comedown for Tavèn. It removed so much of her ghoulishness.

We consulted our hostess. Madame knitted her brows. She had heard about "ce Monsieur là," from the instructive Americans who came to St. Remy for a visit of three days and stayed three years—an extravagant American sort of thing to do!

"Mais jamais avait on remarqué que Monsieur Nostradamus était amoureux de la sorcière des Alpilles; jamais, jamais!"

OLD HOUSE, ST. REMY. By E. M. Synge.

It sounded much more feasible in French and I began almost to tolerate the preposterous theory.

"Néanmoins cela se peut," added Madame, who knew something of life and that even magicians were human.

We were shown various relics and gifts of the American clients and listened to many anecdotes, all testifying to a most happy and unusual relationship, savouring of olden days, between the hosts and guests of an inn. But as a matter of fact, the American, the most modern of all men, is curiously apt to bring about something of old-time relationships, something of the cordiality and freedom, the simple humanness that very old civilisations may tend to weaken.

From talking of her clients, our hostess came to talking of their friends among the Félibres and of Mistral's Mireille, the modern epic of Provence. It breathes the very spirit of the country.

It is the Homeric character of the life that has inspired the poet; he saw in it a grandeur that we have been taught to imagine belongs only to the times of the ancients; probably because those times have been shown to us through the eyes of genius. But the Provence of to-day has also its seer who reveals its qualities of grandeur: the poet of Maillane.

After our visit to Les Baux we lost no time in reading the translation of the cantos in Mireille telling of the descent into the Witch's Grotto. Vincent and Mireille are there introduced to the Thirteenth Cavern, where they find domesticated on the hearth seven black cats and two dragons quietly emitting jets of blue flame without the slightest signs of arrogance, but simply as part of the day's work. Tavèn makes a brew in her cauldron and heals the wound which Vincent's rival had inflicted. Then they return to their homes, solaced for the time. But tragedy awaits them. The father's opposition is brought to a head when Vincent formally proposes for Mireille, and her parents are so angry and so resolved to marry her to the wealthy

cattle-owner of the Camargue, that one dark night she runs away from her home, directing her steps to the church of the Saintes Maries, to seek aid by her prayers. We find her in the last canto a desolate, fragile figure crossing the Crau. She arrives at last in the island of the Camargue, and reaches, dying, the white church where the three holy women float down through the roof in answer to her prayers.

"We are Baux' guardian saints," they cry, bidding her take comfort.

And they go on to tell her that she would not fear death if she knew how small her little world appears from their high dwellings: "how ripening hopes are washed away with tears," while hatred and cruelty breed sorrow where love should shed peace over all the world.

However, before they understood all these things, they had, like Mireille, to drain bitter cups to the dregs. They tell her of their hopeless wanderings; how they were delivered over to the mercy of the waves and landed in Provence where their task was to convert the people to Christianity; how St. Martha was impelled to go to Tarascon to lure the Tarasque from its wicked ways; and how she afterwards went to Avignon, "striking the rock with her virginal discourse," and willing the waves of faith to pour from it, whence long afterwards "Good Gregory drank, and Holy Clement filled his cup with life."

Just at the last, when Mireille is dying under the care of the Saints, her distracted father and Vincent, broken-hearted, arrive, but only just in time to see her pass peacefully away into the silence.

From the windows of our rooms one can see above the trees the fantastic summits of the Alpilles. They are clear against a "jewel-enamelled sky."

The roses are exhaling their fragrance in the dark garden just below; now and then the omnibus horses peacefully move in their stalls, perhaps going over again in their dreams the happy homeward journey after the last train.

It is not yet late, but St. Remy has gone to its rest; only the stars are awake and

watching.

The sweet night air comes in quietly at the window which has been unbolted and thrown open—not without giant efforts, for French precautions against the dangerous element are thorough and hard to circumvent.

The whole scene—black trees, mountains, stars—shows through a mist of oncoming sleep and has the appearance of some unearthly vision. The whole riddle of the universe seems to be out there in the darkness; the answer is there too, just behind the veil; only just behind——

One—two—three—four——eleven o'clock! The big church in the Market Place strikes the hour with that particularly solemn note of a clock striking in a sleeping town.

"Hour for rest, hour for rest," it seems to admonish the wakeful few.

Over all things Night and Peace spread wide their wings——

CHAPTER XXIV ACROSS THE AGES

"Pas de chantar m'es pres talens,

Farai un vers don sui dolens,

Non serai mais obediens

De Peigtau ni de Lemozi.

Ieu m'en anarai en eyssilh;

Laissarai en guerra mon filh,

E gran paor et en parilh;

E faran li mal siey vozi."

("A desire to sing has seized me,

And I shall sing of that which afflicts me;

I shall no longer be obeyed

By either Poitou or Limousin.

I shall depart into exile;

I shall leave my son behind me in war,

In great fear and peril,

At the mercy of those who wish him ill.")

By William IX. Count of Poictiers (The "First Troubadour"). Born 1071.

CHAPTER XXVII

ACROSS THE AGES

There is a vast work on Provence by le Sieur Honoré de Bouche, Docteur en Theologie, A.P.D.S.I., printed at Aix, by Charles David, "printer to the King, the clergy and the town," MDCLXIV. It is bound in ancient brown leather;—two majestic volumes which have to be propped up against something substantial or laid upon a family dining-table in order to be read in any sort of security. Less serious treatment, such as an attempt to balance the tomes on the knee between the arms of a chair, however solid, always results in a temporary eclipse of the student. The difficulties of acquiring erudition in this case are physical as well as intellectual. But the dangers of the road are worth braving even if one does come off with an aching head and some few marks of conflict.

The author, as beseems a doctor in theology, begins the history of his country from the creation of the world, and goes steadily on with a really terrible staying power till the reign of Louis XIV., where he is forced to stop, having arrived at his own times. The height of the volumes is such that the reader has the sensation (and almost the necessity) of alternately stretching and collapsing like a telescope in order to read a page from top to bottom; and this movement seems to emphasise the sense given by the narrative of journeying through the centuries in company with the

whole brilliant procession of Counts and Kings, rulers and high sovereigns of Provence.

Roman governors, Pagan Emperors, Christian Emperors, Burgundian and Visigoth Kings, Ostogoths and Franks, Merovingians, Carlovingians, Kings of Arles and Burgundy, Kings of Arles "high sovereigns"; Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire; Counts Proprietary and Hereditary of Arles and Provence, Counts of Anjou of the 1st Race of the House of France, Counts of Anjou of the 2nd Race, in the direct line of St. Louis; and finally, from Louis XI. onwards—Kings of France: the long pageant streams by in ordered magnificence, picturesque in setting, rich in colour and attire, with splendid names and sad, splendid destinies.

The Sieur de Bouche heads his first book in the following full-blooded manner:—

Provence.

"Sous ses premiers et plus anciens maitres depuis la création du monde jusqu'a á ce qu'elle ait este soumise à la domination des Romains durant l'espace de 3,927 ans."

This is a mere preliminary, a slight introduction to the body of the work.

The next Book treats of the country under the Romans during 591 years, from 125 b.c. to 466 a.d. This period is divided into three sections.

I. Provence under the Republic. II. Provence under the Pagan Emperors. III. Provence under the Christian Emperors

until the arrival of the Burgundians and Visigoths.

Then comes Provence under the first barbarian kings, Burgundian and Visigoth.

The period of the Frankish kings is again divided into Sections (and let no one who has not tackled le Sieur Honoré think lightly of a Section!)

THE CHURCH DOOR, SAINTES MARIES. By Joseph Pennell.

The first Section gives 127 years of Carlovingians till 879, when we enter upon the important era of the Kings of Arles and Burgundy, and the beginning of Provence as

an independent territory.

Here again we have three Sections:—

Kings of Arles of the 1st Race, Kings of Arles of the 2nd Race, Kings of Arles of the 3rd Race,

the latter also being Kings of Burgundy.

Book III. treats of the "Kings of Arles (without property in Provence or Burgundy)."

Section I.—Kings of Arles, high sovereigns, relatives, and heirs testamentary of Rudolph the last King of Arles and Burgundy.

Section II.—Kings of Arles calling themselves high Sovereigns "en qualité d'Empereurs estimant que ce royaume a esté uny a l'Empire."

There were 254 years of this dispensation, and among these rulers occur the names of the Emperor Lothair II., Frederick Barbarossa, and so forth.

Then comes the division into "Fiefs of the Kingdom of Arles."

1st Fief. The County of Arles from the Durance to the sea. 2nd Fief. The County of Forcalquier. 3rd Fief. The County of Venaison or of Avignon. 4th Fief. The County of Marseilles. 5th Fief. The Principality of Orange. 6th Fief. "Le Dauphiné." 7th Fief. The Duchy of Savoie. 8th Fief. The Sovereign Principality of Meurgues (Monaco), the County of Grignan, the Barony of Les Baux, of Castellane, &c.

All this wide territory constituted the ancient Kingdom of Arles.

Book IV. treats of the Counts Proprietary and Hereditary from 910 until Provence is reunited to the Crown of France (1481). To these the Sieur de Bouche devotes many of his formidable Sections. There are long lines of Bozons and Rothbolds of the 1st Race, and of Raimonds and Raimond Berengers Counts of Catalonia and of Barcellona and Kings of Aragon—beings of a most strange personal appearance if one may judge by the quaint old engravings which head each of the Sieur's Books of Chapters. They stare out of their medallions with a grotesque expression of royal

blankness combined with a dull, obscure form of indignation which speaks ill for the "agréments" of the post of ruler of Provence in the later Middle Ages. The complication of names and races and titles is almost hopeless at this period. Even our dauntless author says wearily, "nous sortons d'un lieu fort nuageux pour entrer dans un plus tenebreux."

There are three different genealogies of the Counts of the 1st Race, and very little seems to be known of the Counts themselves with the exception of William I.

"It was by him and his valliance that this faithless and barbarous nation of Saracens was driven out who for nearly 100 years occupied the famous fortress of Fraxinet la Garde, whence they issued to make plundering expeditions by sea and land; their fort of Fraxinet and all Provence was entirely delivered from this impious and cruel race of robbers...."

Travellers on the Riviera may see the little village of Garde Freinet—as the ancient hornet's nest is now called—peacefully dreaming among the mountains of the Moors, that magnificent range whose name records for ever the long domination of those irrepressible brigands.

The inhabitants to this day are of obvious Saracen type and the grey hill-top villages of this region are living relics of that mysterious race.

As acknowledgment for his great services to his country William I. was presented by the Seigneur Grimaldi of Monaco with the lands contiguous to the fief of St. Tropez.

So uncertain seem to be the records of the dynasties of Provence that the author has to prove the existence of one of the Counts (Count Bertrand) by means of a document in which he "restores, restitutes, and gives" the Church of Notre Dame des Rats (qui est l'Eglise des Trois Maries en la Camargue) "to the Church of Saint Etienne and Saint Trophime of Arles."

The Catalan Counts of Provence: that is the 2nd Race of Proprietary Counts who were also Counts of Catalonia and Barcelona, give the same difficulty to their

historians, who do not agree among themselves. They seem to have become confused by the multiplicity of the names of Raimond Berenger and of Ildefons and Alphonse—"qu'a moins d'avoir le filet d'Ariadne il est impossible de sortir de ce Labyrinthe."

Among these confusing Counts, Raimond Berenger I. stands out for his great virtues; and particularly, says the theologian, "for his great piety towards the Catholic religion and for the great pains he took for the destruction and conversion of the Moors to the Christian faith": "destruction and conversion" being apparently regarded as part of the same pious process.

He is followed by a procession of Raimond Berengers and Berenger Raimonds under whose reign were waged wars with the House of Les Baux alternating with conventions and agreements: long documents in Latin which the Counts of Provence and the Princes of Les Baux would meet in pomp to sign at Arles or at Tarascon.

About this date, late in the twelfth century, was held the great Council at Albi which condemned the Albigenses, so called from that incident.

The placing of the remains of St. Martha in a beautiful church at Tarascon where these had been hidden from the Saracens and the Goths and Vandals, is noted as an important event during the period.

Wars against the Vaudois and Albigenses are spoken of in the reign of Raimond Berenger V., and it is curious to see the account of these hideous persecutions given by a doctor of the Church. The Pope, one would suppose, had been an angel of patience, wearied out at last by the aggressions and crimes of a set of unmanageable criminals.

"Voyant que le douceur exasperait le mal il se resolut de venir aux remèdes violants et extremes;" a resolution which his Holiness thoroughly carried out.

In all these vast volumes there is not one word of the unspeakable deeds of the Church during those awful wars.

The Counts of Provence were ardently orthodox and fought against Raimond, Count of Toulouse, the sole friend of the Albigenses (as we have already seen).

The troubles of this noble and tolerant race came to an end on the accession of St. Louis by the absorption of the County of Toulouse in the Crown of France, the brother of the king marrying the daughter of the Count, and as they had no children, the lands of the heiress of Toulouse (by compact) were ceded to the throne. Soon after this, Provence also came under the government of the House of France, for the brother of St. Louis, Charles, Count of Anjou, married Beatrice of Provence, and their union inaugurated the reign of the first race of Angevins in Provence.

The ambition of these two brought about the fierce dramatic struggle of Conrad and Manfred and Conradin and the Sicilian Vespers, which ended by making Charles of Anjou and Provence also King of Naples and Sicily.

It interests lovers of Provence to know that only one Frenchman escaped the massacre of the Sicilian Vespers, a Provençal of the great name of Porcelet (whose sombre old house still stands intact at Les Baux) and he was spared because of the great benevolence and nobility of his character.

One of the great events in the history of the country is the transference of the Papal Court to Avignon. Philip le Bel successfully intrigued to place on the Papal throne as Clement V. a Frenchman living in France: Le Gotto, Archbishop of Bordeaux. Having quarrelled with Boniface VIII., Philip desired to have the management of the Papacy in his own hands. Avignon goes back to the Stone Age, so its claims to antiquity were as great as those of Rome herself.

"In the air was ever a clashing of bells, mingling with the sound of fife and drum; the people danced for joy, danced day and night on the famous bridge, while the fresh air blew about them and the rapid river flowed beneath. Such was Avignon, says tradition in the days of the Popes."

But to return to the Angevin rulers of Provence. The most famous of these were "la

Reine Jeanne" (Queen of Naples and Sicily and Countess of Provence) and the good King René: both of them beloved and admired by the Provençals to this day: Queen Jeanne because of her wonderful beauty and grace, and King René for his goodness, his charm, his bonhomie, his genius.

There are accounts of the coming of the brilliant Queen to Avignon in order to obtain a dispensation from the Pope to marry Louis of Taranto. "Ravishingly beautiful, she arrived with great pomp, with a retinue on the Rhone," met doubtless by the Cardinals in their scarlet robes, and proceeding amongst the acclaiming people to the palace.

Froissart, in an account of a later interview, makes the Queen tell his Holiness that her father, son of Robert the Good of the first Angevin Counts of Provence, had advised her on his death-bed, if she had no heirs to yield all her territory to whomsoever should be Pope. "In truth, Holy Father, after his decease, with the consent of the nobles of Sicily and Naples, I wedded Andrew of Hungary—he died, a young man, at Aix-en-Provence...."

LA LICE, ARLES. By Joseph Pennell.

(As the Queen had had him murdered and thrown out of a window at Aversa, her account of his death lacked completeness.) She then casually mentions her next husband, Prince of Taranto, and in the same sentence alludes en passant to his successor, James, King of Majorca.

"Holy Father," she adds demurely, "I then married the Lord Otho of Brunswick."

The Sieur de Bouche, always methodical, arranges Queen Jeanne's husbands in a list according to priority (not alphabetical).

It is as difficult to arrive at the real story of this famous lady as at that of Mary Queen of Scots. Both were renowned for beauty, but both must have possessed a quality of charm less easy to define or they could not have exerted so powerful a hold on the imagination of their contemporaries. Both were accused, if not

convicted, of great crimes, and both came to a tragic end; Queen Jeanne dying in prison in her own kingdom of Naples.

King René, the kind, merry, artistic, unpractical monarch, who is said to have been able to do all things except govern a kingdom, is remembered with real love by his people. There is a romance attached to his name. His first marriage was merely one of State policy and during his wife's lifetime he is said to have loved Jeanne de la Val, to whom he gave the "celebrated and illustrious barony of Baux," in 1458.

On the death of the Queen Isabel, he married the lady of his heart, and there appears good reason to believe that this love-match was a deeply happy one, King and Queen though the lovers were.

René the Good seems to have been made of that sort of fibre that radiates happiness as the sun radiates warmth.

During this reign the town of Orange gave birth to an institution which seems curiously out of keeping with the spirit of the time and place, viz., the Provençal Parliament, the creation of Count William of Orange.

It was regarded popularly as one of the scourges of the country,

"Parlemant, Mistral et Durance

Sont les trois fléaux de Provence";

and later we hear complaints against the Parliament to the Council of the Lateran for attacks made by it on the "liberty of the Church," interference in the functions of the bishops, and so forth.

But this is after the death of René, and after Charles III., his nephew and successor, had left all his territory to his cousin, Louis XI., and Provence once more lapsed to the Crown of France.

From this point French history and Provençal history become one, and Provence has for her Counts Louis XI., Francis I., Henry II., Francis II. ("Roy de France et

d'Ecosse," as de Bouche entitles him). Then come the religious wars in Dauphiny and Provence, the suspension of the Parliament, the Great Plague in the time of Henry III., and the "birth of the Ligue, which has caused so many evils in France," according to our historian.

The Etats Généraux de Provence were held at Aix in the reign of Henry IV.

From this time to that of Louis XIV. the country is hopelessly given over to religious troubles. Religion, or the passions that are let loose under that name, have been the scourge of this distracted land made by nature for happiness and peace.

Such are the bare outlines of Provençal history during the times that, in this country of ancient lineage, present an aspect almost modern. Those authors who have studied the drama of its farthest past treat familiarly of ages in which the Glacial Epoch plays a quite juvenile rôle.

One writer (Berenger Feraud) divides the Paleolithic Age into several epochs, one of which (Epoque Solutréen) he alludes to as a relatively short one of 11,000 years; generally they are about 100,000 years or so.

In Provence the human story can be traced to the earliest of those geological epochs when man could only express himself by "modulated cries." It took centuries and centuries to acquire a rudiment of words.

From the second epoch, when the country had become colder, dates our venerable Hearth and Home; the family living in caves (such as are still to be seen at Les Baux, for instance), and sleeping or crouching round the wood fires on long winter nights and days, slowly developing speech from the increased need of exchanging sequent ideas.

Then came the awful darkness and death of the Glacial Period, changing still further the contours of the country.

The retreat of the glacial cold ushered in the "Epoque Magdalenienne," when life became comparatively easy, though the climate of Provence was still "colder than

that of St. Petersburg." The Magdaleniens had arrived at sculpturing rough figures on the rocks, and from those records it is concluded that they were gay, jovial, and inclined to pleasantry; the sort of person apparently who makes a dinner-party go well. Strange dinner-parties they must have had in their wild nooks and caverns in the mountains of Provence!

Gradually from these mysterious days we emerge upon centuries less absolutely hidden from our curiosity: the time of the invasion of the Ligurians, Iberians, Celts, and other races, from about the fifteenth century b.c. to 600 b.c. This brings us almost back to the light of day, with the rather startling consciousness that the ancient Ligurians, who represented to the imagination the beginning of all things Provençal, suddenly appear as modern innovations.

A long stretch of time had still to pass, filled with a hundred half-fabulous events, before the Roman Conquest brought the country within the domain of actual history.

And during all those ages what language was being used and developed by the multitudes of races that passed like phantoms across the country, phantoms to our imagination, yet each race, each individual, driven to wild and eager deeds and desires by the strange life-force, the "will to live," that sets the whole extraordinary pageant of things in motion?

From the "modulated cries" of the men who lived in holes in the earth—not yet in the comparatively elegant cave-dwellings—to the exquisite language of the troubadours, what has been the course of its growth? No one knows. The only real guide that remains is the language itself, a confusing phonographic record of the whole troublous existence of the country of its birth.

The nearer a language is to its origin the more it is complicated. Ingenious and subtle grammatical forms prove an ancient tongue.[25]

The natural progress is from synthesis to decomposition; and this decomposing force is nothing more nor less than the natural laziness of the human being, one of the

most tremendous forces of the universe!

"All dialects originate from this germ of decomposition, in opposition to the antique synthetic principle of the language," says M. Fauriel.

Thence progress can be studied by following backwards a language to its source, that is to its more complex form. But for long stretches of time no specimens of written language existed. Most of the popular songs and stories were transmitted orally, and so there is only a document here and there to reveal the slow development.

The influence of Rome as a civiliser was so enormous that it acted as a break on the new movement which was destined in time to create the world we call modern. That new world which the Barbarians were to bring into being was postponed in the making by the very excellence of the institutions that it gradually superseded.

This slowness of pace affected the language. It took six centuries to transmute the Latin into the Romance tongues, a process as tremendous in its way as the formation during geological eons of the limestone and the chalk.

Two great movements had taken place in the speech of Gaul and Spain; first the imposition of the Latin tongue on the conquered provinces and then the reversal of the process till the Latin was again corrupted back into dialects. In the return journey the Latin remained as a foundation and in it were left many words belonging to the ancient language of the country, so that non-Latin words in Romance may date from either before or after the introduction of the classic tongue.

It was not until the fourth century that it showed signs of giving way. It broke up gradually into modern French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Roumanian Provençal. The tribes of the Acquitani gave the character to the dialects of the South-west, where, according to many writers, their speech still survives in the Basque language.

It would be a long story, that of the great Romance tongues from the earlier waverings of the Latin in the fourth century, to the eleventh century, when the first

troubadour, Guillem de Poictiers, delighted the knights and ladies of Limousin and half France with his songs.

The langue d'oc was by that time ready to his hand, or so it would seem, for it is a remarkable fact that there is scarcely any difference between the language of this pioneer troubadour and that of his latest successors in the thirteenth century, whose voices were so soon to be drowned in the din and horror of the Albigensian wars.

Two hundred years of dance and song! Something at least saved from the gloom and folly of the human story!

During the six hundred years from the fourth to the eleventh century modern Europe, its religion, its institutions, its language, its destiny were in process of formation. And a rude process it was.

A PROVENÇAL FARM. By E. M. Synge.

During these centuries, "deluged with blood," the language must have been in a state of fusion. We know that, for the earlier epochs at least, no one could write his name except a cleric, and agreements were all signed with a cross. There was no general social movement, only incessant changes in the balance of power between kings and nobles. Brutal, unreasoning, material in the real sense of the word, despite their reputation as ages of faith, these centuries were destitute of progressive elements, and there was little or nothing to cause the speech to refine or develop. Literature and Latin died together. The Gallic tongue left traces in the speech of the South and there are several Provençal words in Irish and Welsh and in the language of the districts of the Vaudois showing their common Celtic origin, if one may judge from the first words of the Lord's Prayer:—

Vaudois. Irish. "Our narme ata air neambh "Ar nathair ata ar neamb Beanish atanim." Naemhthar hamin."

Strange to say, the Franks left scarcely any trace in the speech of the country. Wide as were the conquests of this people, with Charlemagne for Emperor in later days,

their victory did not extend to the language.

Latin, as we have seen, flagged in the fourth century, and was finally extinguished about the middle of the ninth century.

This breaking up of the speech of the Romans into Romance forms a curious analogue to the breaking up of the Roman architecture into Romanesque. This latter change took place after the formation of independent States had superseded the old centralising Imperial idea.

Architecture, in its turn, developed different local styles, all deriving their character from the Roman and all called by the general name of Romanesque.

The chief peculiarity of Provençal Romanesque is in the pointed vaultings of the churches as distinguished from the familiar round arch of the Roman work.

The date of the introduction of the pointed arch into Gaul is a vexed question, but it is certain that it arrived earlier in Provence than in the North of France. It was found easier to build, and it "exerted less thrust on the side walls."[26]

But it was used in Provence for utilitarian reasons only, and it curiously happened that the South abandoned the pointed arch just when the North began to adopt it for decoration. The South preferred the round arch for this purpose, and as the architects grew more skilful they were able to cope with its difficulties, and thus—contrary to the usual rule—the pointed form in Provence denotes greater antiquity than the round vaulting. In the North, of course, it is exactly the reverse.

Byzantine influence was introduced into the South by the trade channel through France with the Levant, of which Perigueux in Acquitaine was a centre, and here the Venetian traders built a church on the plan of St. Mark's at Venice. This church of Perigueux was taken as a model by local architects who introduced the Byzantine dome and the aisleless nave; this latter being also a Byzantine feature, which may be seen in some of the churches of Toulouse for instance. Byzantine, or possibly merely late Roman influence is shown in the polygonal form of the apses and

cupolas, "in the flat arches employed to decorate the walls, in the mouldings with small projections and numerous members; in the flat and delicate ornament; and in the sharp and toothed carving of the foliage."

Another feature of Provençal work is the strikingly Roman character, produced, it is supposed, by the great number of fine Roman buildings in the country. These architectural models, according to the authoritative opinion of Ross and McGibbon, while stimulating the growth of the art of the South, probably prevented it from developing on original lines by "impressing on it the stamp of the classic trabeated style," that is the construction founded on that of the archaic buildings formed of wooden beams.

This process of architectural development, while analogous to that of the language, is naturally much simpler and much easier to follow. The history of the speech of this great continent is wearisomely obscure and complex.

Gaston Paris[27] writes as follows:—"There were in Gaul at the Merovingian epoch, without mentioning the Basque and Breton corners, three languages: (1) grammatical Latin, become a dead language; (2) the vulgar Latin or Romance spoken by all the indigenous population; (3) the German represented by the Frank, the Burgundian, and the Gothic."

But the Germans in Gaul, mixing with the ancient Gallo-Roman families, ended by speaking Romance, all distinctions between the two races disappearing. The writings of Gregory of Tours throw light upon this transitional period, the lingua rustica having by that time encroached upon the would-be grammatical Latin.

"... There were profound alterations suffered by the speech of the people in the vowels and consonants during the Merovingian epoch," and during that same epoch new principles of rhythm which permitted of versification in the Romance tongue were being slowly and laboriously adapted to these alterations of sound.[28] From this the author concludes that there existed a "poetic activity," though we have no

detailed remains to prove it. We know only that at the spring festivals (survivals of antiquity) there were popular songs and dances. Those who recited and sang were called joculares—and caused much scandal to the Christian moralists!

The lighter German songs of love and wine have left no obvious trace, but the elements of their epics are embedded in the French epopée which Gaston Paris thinks owes to them its existence. He speaks of it as the outcome of the national spirit—which had arisen after the Franks had given a sort of unity to the country—and of the more individualist inspiration of the German epics. Thus the popular language must have been under a smelting or moulding process, passing through the poetic crucible for many a year of which we have no record.

There are but few milestones on this ancient road, but if all were carefully examined in order of time, it is probable that the gaps might be bridged over by the eye of learning and the line of development made plain.

An anecdote of the tenth century, given by M. Fauriel, illustrates the condition of the language of that date.

A Gaul who had been present at several of the miracles of St. Martin, being asked by some Acquitanians to give an account of them, is diffident, and says he is illiterate.

"Speak as you please," said one of the Acquitanians, "speak Celtic or Gothic if you prefer it, provided only you speak of St. Martin."

It was at this time that the language of Acquitaine which has lingered in the valleys of the Pyrenees began to be called Basque. The rest of the country was speaking the Romance, with its 3,000 "barbarian words." Among these are some Acquitanian, a few of which are below:—

Basque Words in Provençale.

Aonar to aid Asko much Rabbi river Biz black Grazal vase Enoc sadness Nec gloomy Gais evil, misfortune Gaissar to injure

Unlike the languages of the so-called Sanscrit type (to which belong Greek, Latin, Celtic, and even Slavonian), the Basque—as is well-known—cannot be traced back to any common origin: this mysterious aboriginal tongue of the Acquitani is an orphan and an alien without kith or kin, unless indeed the adventurous writer who claims for it an Etruscan origin be in the right.

Acquitaine took a large part in the wars with the invading Arabs of Spain, and their Duke Eudes, after many victories, was finally defeated by the famous Abderrahman and the county was left at the mercy of the conquerors until Charles Martel at length expelled them.

It was in these wars that Charlemagne made his famous and disastrous expedition to Ronçevalles which inspired the poetic imagination of the day.

The many wars of these times of transition and the long struggles of the Gallo-Romans and Acquitanians against the Franks formed subjects for the popular poetry which was slowly working towards the literary outburst of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

COW-BOYS OF THE CAMARGUE. By Joseph Pennell.

The people of Acquitaine seem to have been leaders in the revolt against the Frankish dominion; their country had been left by Charlemagne as an independent kingdom, but on his death they at once went to war with the Franks and led the way to the dismemberment of the Carlovingian Empire. There is an ancient poem whose name and hero is Walter of Acquitaine—related to the Nibelingen and Scandinavian sagas—which seems to represent the national and anti-Frankish spirit of the Acquitanians and of all the Gallo-Roman epoch.

It was in Limousin, as we have seen, that all these movements of popular literature finally arrived at a sort of culmination, and we find ourselves suddenly in a brilliant world of gaiety and song.

Count Ebles III. of Ventadour was then composing his verses of "alacrity and joy,"

and the Châteaux of Limousin were enthusiastically cultivating the new poetry; and a little later William IX. of Poictiers, the "first troubadour," was born, the gay, courteous teller of stories and singer of songs, of whom the already quoted saying was abroad that "he went about the world to impose on the ladies."

He had the audacity to refuse to join the Crusade, perhaps because he was a "free-thinker"—a rare being indeed in those days—denying the existence of God.

But when Jerusalem fell and the Christians were forming a kingdom there, he went out with a multitude of knights to join them, though apparently with a heavy heart.

On the eve of departure he composed a lyric to his native land.

"Adieu, now diversions and sports!

Adieu now furred robes of vair and of grey,

Adieu ye fine vestments of silk,

I shall depart into exile...."[29]

And so, in this confused struggling fashion, during the course of centuries, the langue d'oc came to be the language of chivalry and romantic love: the language in which are written the laws of courtesy and of honour that we reverence to this day. The transition from the rudeness which was fitted to express the few ideas of early mediæval life to the fineness and polished charm of the troubadour poetry remains always more or less of a mystery; but however it came about, it is certain that when the troubadours and the chivalrous knights were born into the world by the "grace of God," the beautiful characteristic tongue which had been forged for their use by the beating of the ages of events was waiting and worthy to carry the thought and the emotion of an awakening people.

CHAPTER XXV THE SONG OF THE RHONE

"Salut, empèri dóu soulèu, que bordo

Coume un orle d'argènt lou Rose bléuge!

Empèri dóu soulas, de l'alegrìo!

Empèri fantasti de la Prouvènço

Qu'emé toun noum soulet fas gau au mounde!"

("Hail, Empire of the sun, which the dazzling Rhone borders like a silver hem! Empire of happiness and gaiety, fantastic Empire of Provence, thou who with thy name alone charmest the world!")

Mistral, The Poem of the Rhone (Canto Second—xviii.).

CHAPTER XXV

THE SONG OF THE RHONE

With the spirit of the country, the whole crew and company of the Caburle—Maître Apian's barge in Mistral's poem—seems to be imbued. Even the little maiden Anglore—in love with a water-sprite—even she has caught something of the large abandon of the great stream.

Warned that the Prince—whom she believes to be the Drac—will fascinate and then desert her, she cries: "Eh! bien qu'il me fascine. Si mon destin est tel, moi, je me laisserai choir a la pipée, comme au gouffre béant tombe la feuille."

The whole poem is steeped in the movement and sunshine of the river: the charm of the life on its banks, especially in times now past; the plying of the barges up and down, laden with merchandise, the towns and ancient castles that they pass, the gay spirit of the passengers along this buoyant thoroughfare, "l'ornière du monde" as Maître Apian calls it, the owner of the "most famous equipage of the whole river"—seven barges and forty horses for towing. In the finest of them, the Caburle, he sets forth from the neighbourhood of Lyons to descend the river to Beaucaire for the great fair, his other barges following, with cargo and with food for the horses.

"Que sus la dougo, au retour de Prouvenço.

Gaiardamen remountavon la rigo."

(Qui sur la berge, au retour de Provence,

Gaillardement remontaient la convoi.)

And so the little flotilla goes on its way down the current, the Caburle leading, with the image of St. Nicholas at its prow, and at the poop, placed high on the rudder, the mariner's cross, painted red and carved (one winter when the waters had been caught in the grip of the frost) by Maître Apian himself. And the instruments of the Passion: nails, lance, hammer, and all associated with it directly or indirectly, are piously represented.

"En cargo pèr la fiero de Bèu-Caire,

l'a cènt batèu que vuei soun de partènço."

(With cargo for the fair of Beaucaire, there are a

hundred barges starting to-day.)

And there is a friendly rivalry between them, for the first boat to arrive at the meadow of Beaucaire receives, as a welcome from the citizens, a fine sheep. Alas! as we know, the days of the fair of Beaucaire are over!

"Despachatiéu, en aio, fourro-bourro."

"In haste, agitated, pell-mell," the mariners bestir themselves, and the merry, busy procession moves down stream. Maître Apian lifts his cap.

"Au noum de Dieu e de la Santo Viergo,

Au Rose."

"To the Rhone!" he cries, and all who are with him uncover their heads, and make the sign of the cross, dipping their fingers in the wave—for the river is blessed every year, with a fine procession at the Pont St. Esprit, and so it is holy water.

A most singular and very "mixed" company the Caburle carries with her down the river during twelve long cantos: among them, curiously enough, William of Orange,

son of the King of Holland, who had been sent to Provence for his health. Besides him there are three Venetian ladies who keep their companions lively with songs and jests. And this little blond prince—whom the doctors think the mistral is likely to benefit—has come to seek the flower of the Rhone of which he has heard so much—

"Flour de pantai, de gentun, de belésso,

que, pèr tout païs ounte s'atrovo,

L'ome i'es gai e la dona i'es bello."

("Fleur de beauté, fleur de grace et de rêve

Par tout pays ou on la trouve,

L'homme est joyeux, la femme belle.")

Then they all tell him that it is the flowering rush that nourishes itself in the water—which "l'Anglore" loves to gather. And the little blond prince pricks up his ears and wants to know who or what is l'Anglore. And thereby hangs a tale.

"La voilà, la voilà," they all cry on the barges.

Her hand on her hip, Anglore, with a branch of the flower of the Rhone in her hand, stands on the bank waiting and smiling. Since her infancy she has come to watch these boats arriving, the great flat boats that they call sisselands on the river. Well known to all the sailors, she would exchange greetings and friendly badinage with them as they passed. And the men would throw apples and pears into her apron as she held it out to catch them. She was a familiar figure along the water-side, and bore the nickname of Anglore, the lizard, because she was always basking in the sun on the banks. But she was not idle. Assiduously she sifted with her little sieve the grains of gold that the Ardèche brought down after the rains. Her father was a pilot at the Pont St. Esprit to guide the boats past the "spurs of the treacherous buttresses." And the sailors, having passed the Trois Donzelles and the Îles Margeries, would

say joyously—

"Allons, ... nous allons bientôt voir

Au Malatra papilloner l'Anglore."

And there, sure enough, she was, with her red handkerchief on her head, busy at work. And they would cry, "Ohé, has she not made her fortune, l'Anglore?"

And Anglore replies, "Aïe! pauvrette, ils n'en jettent pas tant d'or dans l'Ardèche, ces gueux de Cévennols! Mais vous passez bien vite."

"Le Rhône est fier (high) there is no stopping, belle jeunesse! But when we go up stream on our return, and the horses pull at the ropes, then we will bring you some dates."

"Bon voyage aux marins," she cries farewell.

"Adieu, Mignonne!"

And one of the crew, Jean Roche, throws her several kisses as the barge moves away. He has a tender interest in the maiden, who however has no heart to give him, for she has been fascinated by a most singular lover, the Drac, or Spirit of the Rhone who lives under the green waters and entices unwary maidens down and down to his shimmering home beneath the flood.

"Oh! lis atiramen de l'aigo blouso

Quand lou sang nòu espilo dins li veno!"

("Oh! l'attraction du liquide élément

Quand jaillit dans les veines le sang neuf!")

ANGLORE ON THE RIVER BANK. Scene from Mistral's Poem of the Rhone. By E. M. Synge.

It seems to intoxicate the children of the riverside.

"L'aigo que ris e cascaio ajouguido

Entre li coudelet...."

("de l'eau qui rit et gazouille enjouée

parmi les galets....")

The mother of Anglore tells her children of the dangers of the river; of "the blues" of the calm water where it is of profound depth. It is here that the Drac loves to disport himself: a fishlike creature, svelte as a lamprey, twisting himself joyously in the whirl of the waters, with greenish hair which floats on the waves like seaweed. Anglore hears the story of the young woman of Beaucaire beating her linen on the river banks, when she suddenly sees the Drac in the water, and he makes a sign of invitation to his palace of crystal where he promises to show her all his riches, the wreckage of shipping for many a year. And the maiden, unable to resist the strange fascination, is drawn under the waves in a sort of dream; and for seven long years she lives with the Drac in his fresh green grotto filled with watery light.

And Anglore, on one hot, still night, goes down to the banks in the moonlight. In the profound silence she hears the murmur of the river. The glowworms are throwing their strange glamour on the grass and the nightingales are answering one another in the woods; and then suddenly the girl seems to lose her head, and flinging off her few garments, plunges into the stream.

It is a half fearful pleasure as she moves through its cool freshness. If a fish ricochets over the surface in pursuit of a fly, if a little whirlpool makes a tiny sound of in-sucking as it twirls in the rush, if a bat cries, her heart gives a sick beat. But it is joy to be thus clothed by the sumptuous mantle of the torrent; "to be mingled, confounded with the great Rhone." Suddenly, in the moonlight, deep down, stretched upon the moss—the Drac! His eyes fix her, fascinate; and fearful, stupefied, she has to go towards the sorcerer who murmurs words of mysterious love. And then, all at once, Anglore, feeling his cold arms round her, springs up and sees gliding through the water a vague shadow, serpentine and white, and floating

on the surface a flowering reed!

A narrow escape! But the quaint part of the story is yet to come. When the barge of Maître Apian makes its return journey the crew throws the rope ashore and Anglore knots it round an old stake. Then Jean Roche takes Anglore in his arms and lifts her on board, and every one crowds round to welcome her.

"Eh bèn, que dis Angloro?" they cry.

"Dise tout bèn de vous," she replies politely.

Then Jean Roche says, "Santo que canto! If thou wert not more sensible than I, Anglore, dost thou know what we would do?"

"Pancaro, digo" (Pas encore, dis).

"Well, to-morrow evening we would go together to see the plays at Beaucaire, the two of us, arm in arm, on the meadow we would go and see the gypsies who tell fortunes; we would stroll round to all the booths, and I would buy you a beautiful ring."

"Of glass?" asks Anglore.

"No, of gold. And at the end of the fair I would bring you back as my wife at Saint Maurice."

But Anglore laughs and puts him off, and finally tells him that he has been forestalled by one who would drown him in the depths of the Rhone if he caught him fishing in his "lone."[30]

So poor Jean Roche relapses into dismal silence. Presently the Prince of Orange, radiant, and carrying a branch of the flower of the Rhone, issues from his tent on the barge where he has been sleeping, humming, still half asleep, the Venetian song of the three lively ladies—

"Sur mon bateau qui file

Viens, je t'enlève au frais:

Car, prince de Hollande,

Je n'ai peur de personne."

And Anglore suddenly turns very pale and nearly faints.

"C'est lui! c'est lui!" she cries wildly; and it turns out that she takes the prince for the Drac! And he, with his mind turning on the object of his search, says that he recognises her. "O fleur du Rhone epanouie sur l'eau."

"Drac, je te reconnais! car sous la lone

Je t'ai vu dans la main le bouquet que tu tiens.

A ta barbette d'or, à ta peau blanche,

A tes yeux glauques, ensorceleurs, perçants,

Je vois bien qui tu es."

Rather embarrassing for Monsieur le Prince! However he is quite equal to the occasion. He presents her with the flower, and then—suddenly he trembles! It is scarcely necessary to add (we are in Provence) that the next canto is occupied with the loves of Anglore and the blond prince.

These go simply and smoothly on board the barge, where the mariners show the most astonishing tact and never seem to get in the way. When the Prince asks Anglore what she would say if he told her he was really the son of the King of Holland, she replies, "My Drac, I should simply say that you can transfigure yourself into any form that may be agreeable to you, and if you have taken that of the Prince of Orange it is for some freak or mad fancy. Oh! my Drac, of what use is it to try to hide yourself?"

What was there to be done (the poem demands) but instantly to embrace "la folatre"? It is hard to say, adds the poet, "which is the more intoxicated, more under the spell of enchantment."

And so, in their great happiness they float down stream.

"radieux et ivres de votre luminière du Rhone."

Fields, vineyards, olive-groves, castles, cities, drift by as in a beautiful dream.

All the while the hot Provençal sun is beating on the barge, and the sorceress river is flowing and flowing: the whole scene a symbol of the country and its magic. After one has swept down and toiled up the Rhone in the Caburle, one knows a little more of what it all means, this fief of the sun and wind, this Land of the Passionate River!

CHAPTER XXVI THE CAMARGUE

"Not a growing thing

Save stunted tamarisk.

Salt-wort, sea poppy"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CAMARGUE

Sometimes a lonely sea-mew breaks the monotony of the sky, or, some huge-winged bird, the "stalking hermit of the lagoon," casts a flitting shadow.

"One vast desert ...

The sole confine some distant glare of sea."

In summer there are no flowers in this forsaken region, only the white inflorescence of salt crystals—frozen tears of generations of vanished peoples one might fancy them. And, as if in mockery, a mirage, born of those bitter tears, hovers on the horizon as the hot sun breeds an invisible vapour from which arise distant cities and a labyrinth of smooth lagoons that shimmer alluringly across the white solitude.

Such is the Camargue. The description, however, applies in strictness to the summer season. In winter the salt with which the ground is saturated is not visible; there is only a moist oozy-looking soil, growing reeds and stunted bushes.

PORCH OF CHURCH OF ST. GILLES IN THE CAMARGUE. By E. M. Synge.

Mistral's heroine, Mirèio, who dies in the Camargue at the Church of Les Saintes Maries, falls down exhausted before she arrives there, by the shores of the great lake of the Camargue and is awakened by the stinging of the dangerous gnats which infest the whole region in the hot season, and perhaps account for the malaria which lies in wait for the careless traveller.

The driver of the carriage in which we traversed this river-encircled district, told us that in summer the water in these branches of the Rhone fell so low that the fish died in immense quantities, and this attracted great swarms of flies whose sting became very perilous in consequence of their gruesome banquet.

This deserted region is a near neighbour of the Crau, separated only by the river at the southern end from the Field of Pebbles; yet in all the Camargue, as the natives say, you cannot find a stone to throw at a dog—a mode of expression betraying the sentiment of the country as regards our four-footed friends and brothers.

Our journey was from Aigues Mortes to Les Saintes Maries, a drive across the Camargue of about 36 kilometres—36 kilometres of strange, silent, mournful country, well-nigh desert, for the salt in the soil prevents cultivation and all growth is stunted and wild and of little use except here and there for grazing purposes. From time immemorial it has been the home of herds of black cattle, "wild cattle" they are generally called, and in all the poems and accounts of the district, one finds highly-coloured descriptions of the driving of these ferocious creatures to pasture and of the exciting barbaric ceremony of branding them in the spring. They are always spoken of as being extremely formidable, and their appearance in great hordes, fierce and untamed, their dashing owners in pursuit on splendid steeds, is described with charming picturesqueness.

Our driver kept a keen look-out for these creatures as we made our way across the plain. At last, just as we were in despair of seeing them, he pointed out their

hoof-marks where they come down to the water to drink. It was a thrilling moment, and we scanned the distance with eagerness, listening for the thunder of galloping feet. Suddenly the driver pulled up and gave an exclamation.

"Les Voilà!"

Alas! a disillusion, the first we had met with in Provence.

A little way off, in quite domestic tranquillity, were some twenty or thirty amiable, decorous-looking black beasts who had presumably never "thundered" or dreamt of it in all their well-spent lives. Day after day, from byre to pasture and from pasture to byre, at no time even in their giddiest calfdom had they given their guardian—who was now superintending their repast—a moment's uneasiness! Fiery, untamed cattle, at any rate in the winter season, are not to be seen on the Camargue.

The red flamingoes, too, are really pink, and very pale at that; but it is beautiful to see them flying in great flocks over the lake of the Vaccares, and settling to feed or to exchange ideas on some wild islet on whose low shores beat white-capped fussy little waves which the smallest mistral quickly raises on its shallow water.

We visited this lake from Arles on another occasion, for the Camargue is too big to see all at one time. Even as it was, our day was crowded—to Aigues Mortes in the morning across the plain, visiting Les Saintes Maries, and back to Arles in the evening.

AIGUES MORTES, LOOKING ALONG THE WALLS. By E. M. Synge.

After Carcassonne one felt there was nothing more to experience in the shape of a mediæval city. Yet Aigues Mortes—the city of St. Louis, the City of the Marsh, with its wonderful ramparts and square towers, all unchanged since the days of the Crusaders—brought before the eye of the imagination yet another aspect of the fascination of the Middle Ages. The walls are said to be built on the models of the fortified towns of Syria and to be almost a repetition of those of Ascalon. Here, as in many mediæval cities, were originally wooden balconies overhanging the base of

the walls, the battlements being in fact a wall with ingress at intervals to the balcony. Later was substituted for the wooden balcony projecting galleries of stone on corbels, and these stone galleries or machicolations are comparatively recent.

To this scene belongs, among other historical events, the splendid procession of St. Louis and his followers as they embarked from this city of his founding for the first crusade.

The place is called Aigues Mortes from the dead branches of the river,[31] and its situation in this low-lying ground near the sea, with the whole Camargue lying flat and mournful before it, bears out the suggestion of the strange melancholy name.

Ancient writers of romance are fond of talking about the "frowning walls" of a city. On looking back at Aigues Mortes as one recedes from it across the Camargue one admits their justification. The dark high ramparts, with their stern-looking square towers—unlike the round extinguisher towers of Carcassonne—do most undeniably "frown."[32]

The city with its great gateway seems not to belong to our present life at all, in spite of its hotels and shops and the people in the market-place. It is as if a fragment of the tenth or eleventh century had been dropped by some accident when the Scroll of Time was being rolled up!

The illusion is almost painfully perfect, producing that curious bewilderment with which we provincial mortals (by no means yet citizens of the universe) are assailed when forced to realise—as well as intellectually to accept—the fact of a state of existence absolutely alien to our own experience.

Another delightful expedition in the Camargue is to the Church of St. Gilles on the outskirts of this extraordinary desert through which the main line runs at this point; and many of the trains stop at the little station only a short distance westward from Arles. By a singular chance the curé happened to be in the train on his way to Nimes, to read a paper about the many vexed archæological questions regarding this

famous and exquisite church, this "ne plus ultra of Byzantine art," as Mèrimée calls it; and he was much delighted to talk about the building of which he is immensely proud.

Such a Church for beauty and interest had never before existed! These were the sentiments of the good curé, a rosy-cheeked, comfortable, courteous old antiquary. It certainly merits his enthusiasm.

The three great richly sculptured arches of the façade are magnificent of their kind. It seems as if all the saints and angels of Christendom had alighted in a swarm upon these sumptuous portals. They cluster on frieze and cornice, on arch and bracket and niche, in multitudes, the whole work perfectly balanced and finely executed, and resulting in an effect of romantic richness combined with the pious simplicity of sentiment which is characteristic of all Southern Romanesque churches. The crypt is especially magnificent.

THE CHURCH OF LES SAINTES MARIES SEEN FROM THE CAMARGUE. By Joseph Pennell.

But the church of which one hears the most in Provence is "Les Saintes Maries," or "Santa Maria de la Mar," as it was sometimes called in the twelfth century. It is another of the fortified churches of the littoral, a sister to Maguelonne and still more famous. At one end of our long day's journey stood Aigues Mortes, at the other Les Saintes Maries. The little white speck above the level of the plain on the far horizon, which can be discerned when about ten miles from Aigues Mortes, grows bigger and bigger, till at last the strange, rude, characteristic outline of the lonely church by the sea fascinates and holds the eye till one reaches it after the 36 kilometres of desert.

The shrine of the three holy women is visited every year by hundreds of pilgrims, and many a sick person is cured by the power of the relics, say the curé and the Catholic Church—by the not less astonishing potency of the "unconscious mind" assert the more advanced of the modern schools of mental science.

The curé said that he had seen several hundred cures. Many paralytics and those who had been bitten by mad dogs came on this pilgrimage, and he had known only two cases of failure. The bones of Mary, mother of Jacob, and of her daughter, Mary Salomé, with those of their servant Sara, are all preserved in a richly painted reliquary, which is let down among the people from its shrine above the tribune. This is the moment of salvation, and hundreds of arms are stretched imploringly towards it, and hundreds of voices are raised in supplication; and judging by the many well-authenticated accounts some mysterious healing power is actually set in motion.

Anything more forlorn than the little village that has grown up around the church is difficult to imagine. There is not a soul stirring, and scarcely a sound is to be heard indicating human life. The Camargue stretches to westward. The sea beats on the sandy beach a little way beyond the village square. One hears the waves quietly running in upon the shore. In the middle of the square stands an ancient carved stone cross. The people of the place have the reputation of being rude and almost savage, and their ignorance is said to be incredible.

CROSS IN VILLAGE SQUARE AT LES SAINTES MARIES. By E. M. Synge.

The exterior of Les Saintes Maries is rude, warlike, even sterner in aspect than Maguelonne, and it stands bare and solitary on this desert spot with not a tree or a green thing near it; only the spectral, thinly clad, unearthly looking trees of the Camargue dimly in sight here and there in the grey distance.

The door of the church was open, and we entered. Again, as in Maguelonne, great arches and apses, sombre, religious, primitive, the candles and artificial flowers with which the altars were decked for Christmas standing out pathetically against the gloom.

In one of the side chapels the curé was busy painting the background of a crèche. He was occupied with the Star in the East when we arrived, and was so absorbed that he

did not hear our footsteps. When we came nearer he turned and descended from the ladder on which he had mounted, explaining that he had been appointed to the cure only a few months and found to his dismay that the benighted inhabitants had never in all their lives had a crèche at Christmas! So he was busying himself to redeem them from this state of spiritual darkness. The palm-trees and la sainte vierge were expected to-morrow from Nimes. Le Christ had already arrived.

The curé went forward to give a touch to the manger as he spoke.

"Vous voyez les vaches—qu'elles sont jolies!" He stood back to contemplate them. The boy who had conducted us to the church remained gazing in dumb admiration, and though he was peremptorily sent on a message by the curé, he returned almost at once to gaze anew, which brought down on him an impatient reproof.

"Va t'en, va t'en; qu'est-ce que tu fais la avec ta bouche grand-ouverte; sauve toi donc!"

And poor Jules had to shut his mouth and tear himself away from the alluring scene.

LES SAINTES MARIES. By E. M. Synge.

We visited the tomb of Sara and saw the sacred reliquary containing the bones of the saints, which were saved from peril at the time of the great Revolution by the faithful curé of that day, who took out the precious relics from the chests, leaving in their place some ordinary bones and hiding the real ones, which were afterwards replaced with great pomp when the danger was over.

The roof is formed of stone slabs, the same as that of Maguelonne, and the view from it is as extensive but far more solitary.

"La mer indéfinie, l'éternelle limite blanche à l'horizon, et la lande, toujours, aux salicornes basses et aux tamaris clairsemés. C'est une heure exquise de mélancholie, de pieux idéal ... l'immense arène jaune bordeé par la mer bleu et l'horizon de sable; les lagunes nageés dans une brume lumineuse d'ou rien ne surgit que vers le nord-est, le pic Saint Loup, comme une fantôme."

We left this lonely church with the twilight falling upon it, and the evening silence. In the village square little whirls of loose sand were coming up from the beach with the gusts of wind, harbingers of a coming mistral, and one could hear always in the strange quiet, the beat and retreat of the waves.

CHAPTER XXVII "ARTISTS IN HAPPINESS"

"Baseness rusts, wears out and seals up young-heartedness."

Raimbaut d'Aurenga.

CHAPTER XXVII

"ARTISTS IN HAPPINESS"

It is doubtful if there is a country in Europe where the spirit of the past is so strong as it is in Provence.

One needs not to dive down for it below the surface; it lives before one's eyes everywhere, every day. That strange cheer and blitheness that seems to belong to the centuries gone by has not yet been beaten down by the care and heaviness of modern life. The mere act of living is still joyful, the zest and charm of simple things still survives among the people. They live without hurry, yet they work to good purpose; far more quickly and efficiently than in England.

They seem to work hard, yet without toil; no doubt because they know also how to play.

This has all to be said with reservations, however, for the modern spirit is stealing into the country; it is like the little edge of the earth's shadow when the moon begins to be eclipsed. But the old is still dominant and will not easily be destroyed.

It is not merely the world of yesterday, of the Middle Ages that lingers, but—as we have seen—the world of the ancients. That is half the secret of the country.

It is this element that underlies and mingles so quaintly with the picturesque side of

religious mediævalism. No wonder men and women have passionately tried to recover the charm of that old, fresh, lost world. Perhaps that is why the Renaissance is so endlessly fascinating. It was a wild, brilliant, vain attempt to find happiness and the real goal of human life.

Men may indeed be turned from their natural quest by some harsh faith or blinding habit, but the hunger of the heart never leaves them.

One is constrained to believe in the possibility of a fresh Renaissance that will bring us further on our way towards the gates of Paradise, for have we not learnt since that earlier attempt, that happiness must be built on happiness, not on sacrifice and burnt offerings? This at least is certain: human cruelty leads to human woe. The misery and the cruelty below the glitter of a brilliant civilisation gnaws like some evil creature at its heart.

There was the flaw in that splendid claim on life made by the men and women of the Renaissance. Each age brings its contributions and commits its errors. But it is stupid to go on committing the old errors over and over again.

Maulde de la Clavière describes the attitude of the women during all these times of movement, which is very curious, very subtle, and very modern. "Properly to understand their spiritual condition," he says, "we should have to do as they did: solve the problem of feminism in the feminine way; be women, and more than women—arch-women. It was the conviction of all the sons of the Renaissance," he goes on, "that sentiment has higher lights than reason, and that certain intuitions of the heart unfold to us, as in bygone days to Socrates, horizons hitherto beyond our ken—a foretaste of the divine.... And now the new generations were no longer willing to regard earthly happiness as an illusion, ... and flattered themselves on finding a means of building life upon liberty.... People wished to live henceforth under a calm and radiant sky; they talked of taking the gifts of God as they found them, idealising everything. From that time it belongs truly to women to govern the

higher world, the realm of sentiment.... So many noble things lack the sap of life! They will give that sap, that vitality, that soul. The sap of love brings grapes from thorns. And thereby the transformation of the world is to be achieved."

In short, women were to take life into their hands and turn it into a fine art. They were to become priestesses in the Temple of the World, and the object of worship was to be the Beautiful. They were to become the creators of no less a thing than happiness. Our author quotes Ruskin's saying about a woman that "the violets should not droop when she passes, but burst into flower."

"Love is the sum of genius," the writer further quotes from Schiller, apropos of this astonishing outbreak of romantic thought. "The formula," he says, "is this: to live, that is, to love life, to attain a mastery of life, without allowing it to crush or dominate us.... In those days they sincerely studied to love life; they loved it, rejecting all negations and obstructions, all that overwhelms and paralyses...."

To treat existence—as some tried to treat it in the sixteenth century in Italy—from the point of view of the artist, must at least bring rich fruits—though it depends perilously upon the artist!

It was to the newly liberated women of the chivalrous age that all instinctively turned for the realisation of the universal longing. It was for them to add some treasure to the world that they had so lately entered. And more was done than perhaps we shall ever realise to make life liveable and human by the women of the troubadour days and their successors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Unhappily they lived too near to barbaric times, with the blood of mediæval savages still running in their veins, to be able to understand one essential ingredient in the magic philtre that they sought so eagerly.

They could not follow the counsel of their historian, who says "the woman must steep her hands in beauty, fill her eyes with love, and then look at things courageously and truthfully."[33] They followed and worshipped Beauty, but they

terribly sinned against Love.

"The first duty of woman," the author says, "is to exhibit in themselves every lovable quality."

"Oh! is that all?" asked Barbara, with genial sarcasm.

"They overlaid life," he adds, "with that varnish of wonderful singular sweetness which has never been wholly rubbed off."

Barbara listened in silence, whilst I read on.

"Love, and go straight on your way—that is the new formula—a very effective one, since it converts dogmas into sentiments." Again this definition: "The kingdom of God—that is a state in which every one's actions would be prompted by love."

"It sounds nice," said Barbara, with a sceptical note in her voice.

"All the possible definitions of beauty apply also to life; life and beauty are one and the same thing."

Barbara demurred at this.

But, after all, the somewhat grim-looking family which she adduced as refutation were really not exactly alive in any serious sense of the word. Truly living people are always in some way beautiful. I left her pondering this risky statement while I prudently hastened on.

Our gallant author seemed to see things after a fashion of his own. One might, of course, summarily dismiss it as sentimentalism, but that would be meaningless, for our whole life is founded on sentiment of one kind and another. It is monstrous without it.

"He seems to think sentiment very important; more so than most men do," said Barbara, whose male relatives were mostly of a solid order.

A proverb, he points out, says that "one does not die of love: perhaps not; but what we know with absolute certainty, what stares us everywhere in the face in letters of

fire and blood, is that one dies of the absence of love."

And it is always to women he looks for the founding of the gentler dispensation. He really does seem to appreciate us! He declares that we are one and all, without exception, "artists in happiness!"

"Oh! then he has never met Aunt Rebecca," said Barbara conclusively.

Only a few more days in Provence were now before us, and we had worked our way across country to the main line at Arles for the homeward journey.

It was a pleasure to find ourselves again in that strange flat country of the Crau and the Camargue, with the grey city on its hill above the Rhone.

We were wearied with the mad, sad doings of men and turned to the natural features of the surrounding country for rest and relief. And they did not fail us as far as interest was concerned. Only they, too, had their dramas and their tragedies. Those strange solitudes had a wild and stirring past; while the vast lagoons at the Rhone's mouth have a long story all to themselves.

Whole volumes have been written about their formation and the geological romance of this brilliant coast. Once, as we have seen, the Mediterranean washed the cliffs at Beaucaire and Nimes, and swept up to the base of the Alpilles. The country, in truth, seems to have retained something of the sea-song in its wide reminiscent spaces.

There were deluges and avalanches, and all sorts of exciting events of mountain and river; the Rhone and the Durance playing the principal parts in this melodrama of the elements. Those impulsive heroes carried off vast masses of stone and rubble from the mountains and covered the low-lying land with the "wreckage of the Alps."

Then the secondary characters trooped along: the Herault, the Ley, and other streams, and they helped to heap up great bars at the river's mouth, so that the monster could not find his way to the sea without much uneasy wandering; and always as he wandered, murmuring angrily, more and more mud and stones were deposited to heighten the bars. And so with the passing of the centuries the great

lagoons were formed so big and blue that the unwary traveller nearing Arles may almost mistake them for the Mediterranean. When at last the sea is found, there is another flinging down of Alpine spoils, for the difference in the weight and in the temperature of the salt and the river waters at their meeting, causes the river to drop what it carries rapidly—perhaps in joy at this final home-coming to the brightest of all seas.

Louis XIV., it appears, built miles and miles of dykes, and Adam de Craponne accomplished wonders of engineering work, and has become one of the heroes of Provençal history; but still the waters now and again come down in floods and do terrible damage. Indeed engineers are beginning to think that the system of dykes is a mistaken one, for by confining the river within narrow limits, the force is enormously concentrated and presses on the dykes, while there is always a tendency to raise the bed by the deposits.

Consequently the danger is constantly increased by the very means they have taken to avert it.

"C'est comme une grande passion. Le Rhone a toujours été audessus des forces de l'homme."

So must have thought the poor woman and her husband, guardians of the shattered bridge of St. Bénézet at Avignon, for they told us that the flood had risen to the second storey of their house. And this happened, and was bound to happen at intervals, when the ice broke up in the mountains. The Government might raise the dykes at vast expense till it was tired; the river rose too. Better let it spread quietly over the land and enrich it. But now the system was begun it could not be abandoned. Very dangerous it would seem, a big river—or a big passion! And if ever there was a big passion that river is possessed by it!

No dream too lovely, no joy too perfect to be within the scope of human destiny while the spirit is held by the incantation of those waters.

All things are possible! That is the song of the Rhone.

It knows so much, this child of the mountains, born to all the secrets of solitary places, and laden now with the sad, strange lore of its journeyings by city and strand, by quiet lands where the plough traces glistening furrows in the slant morning light, and the vines throw their arms to the sun with all the grace and all the enchantment that made men drunk in the old days when not one of them was afraid to be happy.

The race lived in communion with the things of the soil and the heavens, so that their religion was an ecstatic sense of life and beauty; "that tingling in the veins sympathetic with the yearning life of the earth, which apparently in all times and places prompted some mode of wild dancing."

Of the Bacchanalia we still have the fury and the terror, hidden in dark places, poisoning existence, but the splendour and the grace, the sweet freshness of those wild festivals are banished from the earth. How much of beauty they have given to the world only an artist or a poet here and there understands.

"It is from this fantastic scene," says one of the fraternity, "that the beautiful wind-touched draperies, the rhythm, the heads suddenly thrown back, of many a Pompeian wall-painting and sarcophagus frieze are originally derived." And the same eye sees in the figure of Dionysus the "mystical and fiery spirit of the earth—the aroma of the green world is retained in the fair human body." "Sweet upon the mountains" is the presence of the far-wandering god "who embodies all the voluptuous abundance of Asia, its beating sun, its fair-towered cities."

To see the sun shining through the classic vine-leaves in a southern land, is to begin to understand the emotions of the people who gave birth to the myth of Dionysus; and we may "think we see the green festoons of the vine dropping quickly from foot-place to foot-place down the broken hill-side in the spring."

Some mirage of the ancient world comes to us with the picture. And laughter—laughter, which was "an essential element of the earlier worship of

Dionysus," seems to be shaking the tendrils in some half literal, half symbolical fashion. The living curves, the little merry whirls and spirals are full of it.

The vine and the graver ivy crowned the white brow of Dionysus, plants dear to the Hamadryads, "spinning or weaving with airiest fingers, the foliage of the trees, the petals of the flowers, the skins of the fruits, the long thin stalks on which the poplar leaves are set so lightly that Homer compares them, in their constant motion, to the maids who sit spinning in the house of Alcinous."

And by road and river are great growths of reeds, the plant of Dionysus and the merry satyrs who make their pipes from the hollow stems.

It was surely this beautiful province of a beautiful land that inspired the first conscious determined effort towards the art of living that has been made by man since an evil fate had plunged him into the awful martyrdom of the Middle Ages. The spirit that came into being at that auspicious hour lingers like a presence. It is not due merely to bright sky and clear air. There are skies as blue and air as clear in lands where the very stones breathe forth tragedy. The Campagna of Rome is a case in point, nor is the siren country about the Bay of Naples untouched by this under-shadow.

Even here indeed, in Provence itself, the deep wound in the heart of Life inflicted by mediæval superstition has never quite ceased to bleed, and the country seems at moments to sadden and grow chill in the face of the sun; but this is the tribute paid to the spiritual Cæsar of the new Empire, and does not spring from the ancient genius of the country.

That genius presses upon the imagination, as if some hidden intelligence were playing the part of generous host, and sending forth the parting guest laden with gifts and valedictions.

These invisible hosts have no regard for any timid dread of enthusiasm and faith. They boldly whisper of a new Creed and Cult, a Temple of Happiness to be set up

even in our own indignant land!

They are quite unabashed at the audacity of the proposition; at doubts and limitations they laugh.

But the leave-taking traveller knows that he is under a spell, and asks himself if these dreams of powers and destinies will live under grey skies, grey creeds and customs.

Here it is easy to believe in exquisite audacities.

"Here a thousand hamlets laugh by the river-side, our skies laugh; everything is happy, everything lives," as the poet Jasmin sings of his native land.

At once inspiring and restful! This perfect balance is possible. Supremely good things may be in contrast but not in contradiction. So at least one believes in Provence.

The parting guest thinks wistfully of that delicious journey down stream, of the happy company in the Caburle, in Mistral's Poem of the Rhone; the old barge drifting with the current through the very heart of the country of Romance. Every city and hamlet, every bridge and ruin, the scene of a thousand stories....

He remembers with what an outburst the poet sings of the towers of Avignon, as the barge comes in sight of the city, flame-tinted with the setting sun:—

"e pinto

De resplendour reialo e purpurenco

Es Avignoun e lou Palais di Papo!

Avignoun! Avignoun sus sa grand Roco!

Avignoun, la galoio campaniero...."

("et pient

De splendeur royale, de pourpre splendide

C'est—Avignon et le Palais des Papes,

Avignon sur sa Roque géante!

Avignon la sonneuse de la joie.")

Always that word! Joie, joie! One meets it in story, in song, in the voices of the people. Provence must certainly have been its birthplace—or its sanctuary.

Driven from every other land, when the Goddess of Sorrow came to usurp the temples of the ancient gods, reviled, feared, stricken to the heart, the beautiful fugitive at last found shelter in the land of Love and Chivalry.

THE END.

Index

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Pronounce as in the English word crow.

[2] Translation by Duncan Craig, author of Miejour.

[3] It is difficult to find any but contradictory evidence about the frescoes of the Papal Palace, but most writers ascribe them to Giotto or Giottino, or their school.

[4] "Memoires pour l'histoire naturelle de la province de Languedoc."—Astuc.

[5] Some of these originally Celtic names appear to have been Romanised. My chief authorities for these details are Lenthérie and Paul Mariéton.

[6] In this author I have found the clearest short account of this period, and have taken the main facts in the following few paragraphs from his much-quoted volume.

[7] It is a curious fact, and somewhat difficult for the Western mind to realise, that just at this darkest moment of European history—or at any rate during the three later

centuries of the period—the woman of Japan "held a higher social and intellectual rank than she then did in any other part of the world."

In an interesting work on "Feudal and Modern Japan," by Arthur May Knapp, occur the following arresting passages:—

"Aston also, in speaking of the fact that the author of this classic" (the "Jôsa Nikki") "professes to write as a woman, calls attention to the extraordinarily preponderant influence of woman in the field of ancient Japanese literature. It has long been recognised that woman occupies a much higher place in Japan than in any other Oriental country, but it is none the less surprising, especially in view of the supposed lack of intelligence among the sex in Japan to-day, to be told that by far the larger number of works of the best age of Japanese literature were of feminine authorship."

The writer quotes from the transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan to the same effect: "that a very large proportion of the best writings of the best age of Japanese literature was the work of women."

This golden age in Japan was from the eighth to the eleventh century. During that time the men were chiefly engaged in pedantic studies in Chinese, while the women were developing a native and living literature. And during that time and for centuries before, the women of the West had not so much as arrived at the possession of human rights worthy the name!

[8] See "History of Provençal Poetry," Fauriel, Rowbotham, Hueffer, etc.

[9] "When Aurora enshrined in her robe of satin, unbars without noise, the doors of the morning."—Jasmin.

[10] b.c. 46.

[11] Gallienus made this edict of withdrawal a.d. 260.

[12] Mentioned by M. Fauriel in his work on Provençal Poetry.

[13] The story is given very fully by Duncan Craig in his book Miejour from which

these verses and details are taken.

[14] This translation is taken from a small volume, entitled "Some Poets of the People in Foreign Lands," by J. W. Crombie (Elliot Stock).

[15] The translation of this and the following songs is given by Hueffer in his book on the troubadours.

[16]

"It rains my father."

"Ah! well, if it rains, it is good weather for the sowing."

[17] Mistral's poetical version of the story occurs in his "Nerto" as follows:—

"Quand bastiguè lou Pont dóu Gard,

Lou prefachié dóu mau regard

S'èro reserva pèr soun comte

La proumiero amo, dis lou conte,

Que passarié sus lis arcas.

Pèr se tira dóu marrit cas,

Lou tour es devengu célèbre,

Jé bandiguèron uno lèbre.

Lou Diable, que tenié d'à ment,

Mando lis arpo vitamen;

Mai pensas-vous un pau sa tufo,

Entre counèisse qu'es la trufo!

De la maliço que n'aguè,

Sus la muraio l'empeguè.

Contro lou pont se vèi encaro.

Lorsqu'il bâtit le Pont du Gard,

L'entrepreneur au mauvais oeil

S'était réservé pour salaire

La première âme, dit le conte,

Qui passerait sur les grands arcs.

Pour se tirer du vilain cas,

Le tour est devenu célèbre,

On lâcha devers lui un lièvre.

Le Diable, qui était aux aguets,

Lance les griffes aussitôt;

Mais figurez-vous sa grimace,

Dès qu'il se reconnaît la dupe!

De la colère qu'il en eut,

Il le plaqua sur la muraille.

Contre le pont on peut le voir encore."

[18] The Crau is pronounced as the English word "crow."

[19] Lenthéric also mentions an analogous story in the Book of Joshua (x. 7, 8, 9): "The Lord caused stones to fall from the sky on the enemies of Israel." Moreover, it appears that Joshua's camp was called Galgal (Hebrew, rolled stone), and a few miles from Betheron has been found a "Crau" like that of Provence.

[20] Presumably the rhyme has reference to "Le guet de Saint Victor," a cavalcade that has taken place at Marseilles from time immemorial, just after sunset, on the eve of the fête, or procession itself; the latter a ceremony of imposing magnificence.

[21] Baux means cliffs in Provençal.

[22] The name of the inn has unfortunately been changed since the days of the

discovery of the golden hair.

[23] The story has already been sketched in Chapter VII.

[24] See Justin Smith's Troubadours at Home.

[25] See "History of Provençal Poets," M. Fauriel.

[26] Ross and McGibbon.

[27] Of the Académie Française and Professor of the College de France.

[28] Gaston Paris.

[29] Other verses of his on this occasion are quoted at head of chapter.

[30] An ancient bed of river, now deserted by main streams.

[31] When the Rhone makes new mouths it deserts its old course, leaving stagnant canals which are called Aigues Mortes.

[32] See illustrations, pp. 86 and 391.

[33] Maulde de la Clavière, "Women of the Renaissance."

Transcriber's Note:

Inconsistent hyphenation and spelling in the original document have been preserved. Obvious typographical errors have been corrected.

Inconsistent or incorrect accents and spelling in passages in French, Italian, and Provençal have been left unchanged.

On page 42, "ferrurues de portes" should possibly be "ferrures de portes".

On page 68, the Sonnet number should possibly be CCL.

On page 370, "Basque Words in Provençale" should possibly be "Basque Words in Provençal".

The index entry for "Béziers, Viscount of" is missing page numbers.

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